

Professional Social Work Education in the Asia Pacific Region

**Development of Registration Systems for
Qualification Holders**



Edited by Machiko Ohara, Viktor Virág and Mariko Kimura



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Foreword

Joachim Cuthbert Mumba

President

International Federation of Social Workers

It is with great respect and heartfelt appreciation that I write this foreword to an important and timely publication on professional social work education and the development of registration systems across the Asia Pacific region. This report is the outcome of a remarkable international research collaboration, led with insight and dedication by Professor Machiko Ohara and a team of committed scholars and practitioners. Their joint efforts have resulted in a valuable contribution for all who are engaged in advancing social work professionalism and education in this diverse and dynamic region.

The Asia Pacific region is home to a wide range of cultural, political, and institutional contexts, and this richness is clearly reflected in the varied approaches to social work across countries and territories. What connects us, however, is a shared determination to strengthen the foundations of our profession. The development of sound educational pathways and effective systems of registration for qualified social workers is central to that goal. These systems not only uphold the credibility and ethical foundation of our profession but also support our efforts in co-building shared futures together with the communities we serve.

This publication offers an insightful overview of the current landscape, with detailed country-level contributions that highlight both challenges and progress. Establishing registration systems is not only a matter of policy or procedure, but also a recognition of the vital role that social workers play in society and a reaffirmation of the standards we uphold. Ensuring that social workers are prepared, recognised, and supported through robust frameworks is essential for meeting the growing and complex needs of our time.

One of the most inspiring aspects of this initiative is the spirit of collaboration that underpins it. By bringing together academic knowledge, practice experience and cultural understanding from across the region, this project reflects the best of what international cooperation can achieve. The International Federation of Social Workers is proud to have supported this initiative, and we are particularly

encouraged by the emphasis placed on regional solidarity, ethical frameworks, and indigenous knowledge systems.

This publication also arrives at a critical moment. Across the globe, social workers are at the forefront of responding to crises related to inequality, migration, conflict, climate change and social exclusion. The strength and quality of our educational systems and professional standards directly affect our ability to respond to these realities with integrity and impact.

I trust that this report will serve as a valuable reference for educators, policymakers, professional bodies, and practitioners alike. It offers both inspiration and guidance for those seeking to strengthen the profession and enhance its recognition. I extend my sincere thanks to all who contributed to this important work and look forward to the continued growth of professional social work across the IFSW Asia Pacific region and beyond.

With warm regards,
Joachim Mumba

Chapter 1: Introduction and Framework

Machiko Ohara

President

International Federation of Social Workers, Asia Pacific

In recent years, professional social workers in Asia have been increasingly expected to possess the capabilities to respond effectively to a range of emerging social welfare challenges. Until now, governments in each country have primarily addressed social issues through public policy and institutional frameworks. However, these issues, which deeply affect people's daily lives, are inherently diverse and highly individualized. Under such circumstances, it has become crucial not only to strengthen the competence of professional social workers within each country but also to enhance international collaboration and solidarity among social work professionals across Asia.

Learning from Japan and other Asian countries, and encouraging the sharing of professional knowledge and perspectives, is expected to contribute significantly to the advancement of social work education and the development of professional systems in the region. To achieve this goal, it is essential to understand the current state of social work education and professional registration systems in each country, including their specific characteristics and emerging needs.

This study aims to clarify the current situation and key challenges regarding professional social work education in Asia, with a particular focus on the development of registration systems for qualified social workers. Across the Asia-Pacific region, many countries have been actively working to establish qualification and registration systems for social workers, tailored to their respective social contexts and needs. This research brought together 14 scholars who reported on the institutional frameworks, educational curricula, challenges, and prospects in their respective countries and regions. The findings are compiled here in a single report.

This project was carried out as part of an international collaborative research initiative led by Japan College of Social Work's Institute for Social Work Research: "International Comparative Study on the Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in Asia – Development of Registration Systems for Qualification Holders" (2023–2024, Principal Investigator: Dr. Machiko Ohara). We are also pleased to present this body of work as an e-book, which we hope will serve as a valuable resource for the Asia-Pacific region of the International Federation of

Social Workers (IFSW). We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the President of IFSW for their encouraging support, and to Dr. Pascal Rudin for his generous assistance throughout this project.

As social problems continue to grow in complexity and diversity, it is anticipated that the required competencies of social work professionals—as well as the systems for their education and accreditation—will become increasingly important. It is our earnest hope that the knowledge shared and the dialogues fostered through this seminar will contribute meaningfully to future institutional development and international cooperation in the field.

Finally, this project is supported by the Japan College of Social Work, International Federation of Social Workers of the Asia Pacific Region, and sponsored by the National Consumers' Co-operative Union of Japan, as well as the Community Chest of Japan.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my deepest gratitude to all.

Chapter 2: Bangladesh

International Comparative Study on the Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in Asia: Development of Registration Systems for Qualification Holders

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Historical, Social, Political, and Cultural Context of Professional Social Work Education

During the late 19th century social work emerged as a professional activity drawing from early social welfare initiatives, the charity organization movement, and the settlement house movement, which deals with different problems and issues scientifically and systematically (Mazid & Azam, 2023). The beginning of social work practice in Bangladesh is historically interrelated to the partition of India that happened in 1947. As a result, a transformation took place in the socio-economic framework of Bangladesh, the then time known as East Pakistan. Consequently, different social problems emerged, as urbanization increased during this period, accompanied by the arrival of a large number of migrated people from India, and also caused multifaceted problems in education, health, workplaces, etc. These problems were so widespread and too difficult to handle with limited resources and capabilities (Islam, 2010). To manage the situation in 1951, the Pakistani government sought support from the United Nations. In 1952, the United Nations sent a group of experts which were formed with six members led by Dr. James R.

Thompson to Karachi city of Pakistan to investigate the deteriorating situation under the United Nations Technical Assistance Program (Mihan, 2022).

For the same purpose after visiting Karachi, this group also visited Dhaka. In the same year on the basis of the recommendations of UN experts, and with the technical help of the United Nations, the Pakistan Government first introduced a 'Social Work education program' in Karachi. In Bangladesh, the initiation of social work education took place in 1953 during the period of former East Pakistan. In 1953, a three-month social work training course was started in Dhaka, a pioneering initiative in Bangladesh's history, which was recommended by UN experts for both wings of Pakistan. In 1955, an experimental course that focused on urban community development was conducted in Kaiyettuli, Dhaka, which was primarily for three months and later it was prolonged to nine months in that year (Samad & Das, 2014). In the other study, Rahman (2010) found two reasons that necessitated to introduction of professional education programs in Bangladesh. First of all, to realize the serious need for scientific leadership to minimize the significant problems confronting the newly independent country and secondly, through professional leadership and meeting various human needs to develop an effective social welfare system by implementing future development programs. The government decided to initiate educational programs at the university level to create skilled and qualified social workers in the country based on the success of the short-term training course in social work. In 1958, to evaluate this initiative UN expert Dr. J. O. Moore was commissioned to assemble a report which emphasized the necessity for educational institutes for social work. On February 20, 1958, this report led to the establishment of the 'College of Social Welfare and Research' (Rahman, 2010).

During the 1958-59 academic year with 15 students for a two-year Master of Arts program in social welfare the College of Social Welfare and Research Centre was started at Dhaka University (Azam & Mazid, 2022). In 1966-'67, by launching the BA honors program this institution prolonged its academic offerings (Shahidullah, 2024). In 1973, the College was included in the University of Dhaka and retitled as the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (Islam, 2010). Presently, this institute deals with various types of academic programs that include a four-year undergraduate degree, a one-year graduate program, a two-year specialized Masters Degree, a two-year M.Phil., and a three-year Ph.D. in social welfare. Moreover, just after the establishment of the College of Social Welfare and Research Centre, at the University of Rajshahi during the 1964-65 academic sessions the College of Social Work was established. In the beginning College of Social Work ran a three-year undergraduate course in social work, and offered a one-year graduate program in 1967. This College of Social Work later merged with the University of

Rajshahi and now offers four-year undergraduate, one-year graduate, two-year M Phil, and three-year PhD programs in Social work. In recent years, some other public and private universities have started social work education programs (Samad & Das, 2014). During the academic year 1992-'93, the Department of Social Work was launched at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet (Shahidullah, 2024). This university also offers a four-year undergraduate, a one-year graduate, a two-year M Phil, and three-year PhD programs in Social work. Whereas the Jagannath University offers a four-year undergraduate, a one-year graduate, a two-year M Phil, and three-year PhD programs in Social work. Social work has yet to get professional recognition although there are some enhancements in the educational structure and practice but the other dimensions of social work have not met adequate status (Azam & Mazid, 2022).

It is seen that at the beginning of the late 19th century, as a response to the charitable and voluntary initiatives towards social issues social work was gradually established as a profession in the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany. Later, in the 20th century, it was introduced to other parts of Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and the Middle East (Hua & Shafie, 2017). According to Ernest Greenwood (1957), all professions seem to possess: (i) a systematic body of knowledge; (ii) professional authority recognized by its clientele; (iii) community sanction; (iv) a regulatory code of ethics; and (v) a professional culture sustained by formal professional associations (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). Social work requires a specific body of knowledge to obtain professional credentials like both theoretical and practical knowledge about social issues, human behavior, values, and the particular methods and techniques pertinent to the field of social work (Rahman, 2010). Moreover, social work should also have professional authority recognized by its clientele. Public recognition encompasses the acknowledgment by the administration of the importance of identifying those competencies to perform professional social work, and the acknowledgment of the public of the important role of social work within society (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). A profession should have some specific code of ethics. Social Work has also some codes of ethics to control professional conduct and activities (Rahman, 2010). Whereas, every profession functions within a structure of formal and informal networks like different organizations through which the profession performs its services; these provide the institutionalized setting where professionals and clients meet (Greenwood, 1960).

In Bangladesh, social work possesses a few of the universal characteristics of a profession but some of the features are lacking which hinder to establishment of social work as a profession in Bangladesh such as lack of public recognition, insufficient contextual and local theoretical knowledge base, lack of strong

professional national organizations, lack of collaboration with the international bodies such as the International Federation of Social Workers, the Council of Social Work Education, etc. The study of Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008) further found that the United States, the United Kingdom, and Hungary have established or embraced a unified, formal, national code of ethics to align with the values and priorities specific to social work in each nation, and these codes are constantly revised. However, it is so far clearly understood that there is an absence of a national code of ethics for the social workers in Bangladesh that is caused for the lack of strong national associations or organizations of the social workers.

It is found that in developed countries like the United States since the 1980s social work licensure has evolved, and is now available in all the states (Morrow, 2023). The beginning phase in the professionalization of an activity is the licensing (issued by an official authority) through which professionals obtain an appropriate document or work permit that meets particular foundational criteria for the professional performance of the social activity (Pavlovski & Stanojkovska, 2023). But in Bangladesh, it is yet to get a license for practicing social work as a profession. There are some reasons why in Bangladesh social work has not been developed as a profession. Students who graduate with this subject are not recognized as professional social workers, and at this time there is no accrediting institution for the social work profession (Zaman, 2012). There exists a huge gap between the academic teaching-learning culture and field-level practice trends of social work in our country. Social work academia and practitioners in Bangladesh must establish a functional professional organization because underdeveloped social organizations and the availability of social work literature cannot adequately satisfy the needs of students, educators, and practitioners which are vital for the advancement of social work (Azam & Mazid, 2022). So, it is immensely necessary to advance social work contextual literature focusing on indigenous knowledge and skills, develop national-level professional organizations, and promote state policy formulation in favor of social work professionalization in Bangladesh.

Professional Education Curriculum, Qualification/ Registration System, and Related Legislation

In this country Institute of Social Welfare and Research (ISWR) at Dhaka University, along with the Departments of Social Work at Rajshahi University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), Jagannath University (JnU), Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST), the Barishal University (BU), the National University (NU) are the leading universities for providing social work education.

Almost all the universities are providing an inclusive curriculum that includes a four-year Bachelor of Social Sciences (BSS) with honors, a one-year Master of Social Sciences (MSS), a Master of Philosophy (MPhil), and a Doctorate (PhD). A two-year evening masters program in Social Welfare since 2004 has been launched at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research. Students who have passed their higher secondary school certificate (HSC) examination can apply for the BSS program, which is a four-year course. In ISWR, BSS Honors spans eight semesters over four years and includes a curriculum of instructions, field practice, seminars, practice research with assignments, mid-term and terminal evaluation, and a total credit is 160 (Samad, 2013). In the syllabus of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, there are two semesters in an academic year, and BSS honors similarly spans eight semesters over four years. The duration of each semester is- 12 weeks for classes, 2 weeks for recess before the final examination, and 5 weeks for the final examination, grading, etc. (SUST, 2012). These educational institutions offer a wide curriculum that encompasses social work methods, social administration, policy, social research, international social work, community intervention, social action, social development, human psychology, gender issues and social work practice, disability, and social work practice, different legislations, field practicum for practical experience etc. Furthermore, it also emphasizes ethical standards, norms, values, human rights, social justice, respect for diversity, welfare for families, women, children, youth, old and labor, etc.

Curriculum for BSS Honors in Social Welfare in ISWR (Session: 2020-2021 and 2021-2022)

The study focuses on the curriculum of ISWR as it is the oldest and largest school of social work in Bangladesh and almost all the universities maintain similar types of procedures.

Table 01: Required Courses and Credits for Bachelor's Degree in Social Welfare (Session 2020-2021)

BSS Hon's 1st Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 101	Introduction to Social Welfare and Social Work	4
BSS 102	History and Philosophy of Social Welfare	4
BSS 103	Economics and Development	4
BSS 104	Psychology and Human Behavior	4
BSS 105	English Language and Academic Writing	4
Total		20

BSS Hon's 2nd Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 201	Bangladesh Studies: History and Heritage	4
BSS 202	Human Growth: Physiological and Behavioral Aspects	4
BSS 203	Social Work with Family and Children	4
BSS 204	Society and Culture	4
BSS 205	Youth Welfare	2
BSS 206	Seminar	1
BSS 207	Viva-Voce	1
Total		20
BSS Hon's 3rd Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 301	Public Health Issues and Services	4
BSS 302	Demographic Issues: Policy, Planning and Services	4
BSS 303	Human Rights, Social Justice, and Social Welfare	4
BSS 304	Disability and Social Work	4
BSS 305	Social Problem Analysis and Social Welfare Services	4
Total		20
BSS Hon's 4th Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 401	Voluntarism and NGOs in Bangladesh	4
BSS 402	Disaster Management and Rehabilitation	4
BSS 403	Gender Issues and Women's Development	4
BSS 404	Crime, Victim, and Correctional Supports	4
BSS 405	Seminar	1
BSS 406	Comprehensive	2
BSS 407	Viva-Voce	1
Total		20
BSS Hon's 5th Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 501	Social Action, Social Legislation, and Social Change	4
BSS 502	Rural and Urban Development in Bangladesh	4
BSS 503	Globalization and Social Work	4
BSS 504	Social Policy and Planning	4
BSS 505	Project Designing and Management	4
Total		20

BSS Hon's 6th Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 601	Social Case Work	4
BSS 602	Social Group Work	4
BSS 603	Community Social Work	4
BSS 604	Organizational Behavior	4
BSS 605	Seminar	1
BSS 606	Comprehensive	2
BSS 607	Viva-Voce	1
Total		20
BSS Hon's 7th Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 701	Social Research	4
BSS 702	Statistics in Social Research	4
BSS 703	Human Resource Management	4
BSS 704	Counseling and Psychiatric Social Work	4
BSS 705	Field Education	4
Total		20
BSS Hon's 8th Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
BSS 801	Practice Research	4
BSS 802	Field Practicum	8
BSS 803	Seminar	2
BSS 804	Comprehensive	4
BSS 805	Viva-Voce (Theoretical and Practical)	2
Total		20

Grand Total Credits: 20+20+20+20+20+20+20+20=160 (Includes Theoretical and Practical Courses). (ISWR, 2024)

The students who have passed their BSS program are eligible for the MSS program and the MSS program lasts for one year. In ISWR, the MSS program spans two semesters over a one year period and includes instructional courses, field practice, practice research, seminar, thesis with assignment, mid-term and terminal evaluation and total credit is 40 (Samad, 2013).

Curriculum for MSS in Social Welfare (Session: 2020-2021 and 2021-2022)

Table 02: Required Courses and Credits for Master's Degree in Social Welfare (Session: 2020-2021 and 2021-2022)

1 st Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
MSS 101	Social Organization Management	4
MSS 102	Social Development and Social Work	4
MSS 103	Social Work Approaches and Practice	4
MSS 104	Advance Social Research	4
MSS 105	Statistics in Social Research	2
MSS 106	Seminar	2
Total		20
2 nd Semester		
Course No.	Course Title	Credits
MSS 201	Field Practicum	6
MSS 202	Practice Research	4
MSS 203	Comprehensive	4
Optional Courses (Any One of the Following Courses)		
MSS 204	Thesis (to be offered to the selected number of students)	4
MSS 205	Justice System in Criminology and Victimology	4
MSS 206	Clinical Social Work	4
MSS 207	Gerontological Social Work	4
MSS 208	Industrial Relations and Labor Laws	4
MSS 209	International and Comparative Social Policy	4
MSS 210	Viva-Voce (Theoretical and Practical)	2
Total		20

Grand Total Credits: 20+20=40 (Includes Theoretical and Practical Courses) (ISWR, 2024)

This structure is almost the same in all the universities. According to the syllabus of the department of social work of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (2012), different theories, models, perspective and approaches relevant to social work education are also offering which includes theories of personality, classical conditioning theory, theories of social change, evolutionary theory, role theory, attachment theory, social exclusion theory, labeling theory, cognitive-behavior theory, crisis intervention theory, task centered model, psychodynamic theory,

general system theory, communication theory, anti-discriminatory theory, functionalist theory and conflict theory, social learning theory, structural theories, the environmental model, cognition model, behavioral model, psycho-analytical model, solution-focused model, strength approach, community development theories and approaches, approaches of major NGOs in community development, community organization approaches, community participation approaches, human development perspective, structural social work perspective, radical social work perspective, critical social work perspective, human development perspective, ecological perspective etc.

According to the same syllabus, major social legislations in Bangladesh are also included in the curriculum. Such as The Family Court Ordinance 1985, The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961, The Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act 1974, The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939, The Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, The Women and Children (Special Provision) Act 1995, The Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Act, 2003, The Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, The Probation of Offenders Ordinance 1960, The National Children Act 2011, The Children Act 2013, The UN Charter for Children, The Women Compensation Act 1923, The Maternity Benefit Act 1939, The Disability Welfare Act 2001, The Labor Act 2006, The Labor Welfare Foundation Law 2006, The Bangladesh Labor Law (Amendment) 2010, The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995, and The Environment Court Act 2002, as well as The Environment Conservation Rules 1997 etc. But, there is so far no legislation or policy yet formulated to establish social work as a profession. Within all universities, a good harmonization and academic system persist and the syllabus and academic procedure are almost similar (Zaman, 2012). The contents of the syllabus play a pivotal role in making competent and active social workers. But in Bangladesh despite passing the fifty years of the beginning of the first social work course, the curriculum is still not gaining the equal level as international standards. The theoretical frameworks applied in developing countries often fail to address Bangladesh's local situations and challenges (Hossain & Mathbor, 2014). Localizing concepts in the practice of social work is a real drawback in our country. Evaluation of students' qualifications for admission only in the social work department in the university or college no different aptitude or attitude assessments are conducted. In recent times, there is no similar type of professional organization alike the accreditation body for social work education for example the Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Social Workers, and there is no licensing board that exists as well (Azam & Mazid, 2022). Identity crisis as a social work graduates are the main concern due to lack of job offer in the same discipline, specialized practice field, and no state of professional recognition by the community or of the state in Bangladesh.

Actual Conditions of the Field Placement (Practicum) Training in Professional Social Work Education

The students of social work utilize the theoretical knowledge learned from the classroom while engaging with social welfare organizations during field placement as part of the existing curriculum. This is known as an internship field work or field practicum in social work education. It allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. For fieldwork each student of BSS and MSS programs is allotted to different governmental and non-governmental organizations under the supervision of two supervisors- one is a faculty member who is called academic/institutional supervisor and another one is a representative from the agency to supervise and support the needs of the intern at the agency.

A study conducted earlier expressed that students are placed in diverse social work agencies such as Rural Social Service Project, Urban Social Service Project, Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Income Generating Centres for Women, Medical and Psychiatric Social Work at hospitals, Family Planning Services Centres, State Run Children Homes, Physically Handicapped Training Centres and in NGOs doing different welfare activities both at urban and rural areas (TaHER & Rahman, 1993). The scope of work has been expanded with the passage of time as well as the changing pattern of development dynamics across the globe.

This program of field practicum takes 60 working days which is a total of 480 hours. During this time students are to write a thorough report which includes the agency's goals, working methods, and the results of the interventions. Students gather skills and proficiencies for their future professional activities after concluding all fieldwork activities. There are various challenges for social work students to complete their field practicum. Fieldwork is two types- concurrent fieldwork and block fieldwork. Block placements are preferred for students over concurrent placements because of compressed academic schedule, some agencies' reluctance to engage in concurrent placements, limited transportation facilities, and distance between the social work institution and the agency's operational area and on the other side, when resources and logistical support are limited in that situation block placements are often preferred though it also has some limitations (Hossain, Islam, Ali & Azman, 2024). Professional social work education turns into general education without field practicum. In Bangladesh, field practicum in social work education is compulsory though it faces various problems which are discussed below:

According to a study conducted by Samad (2013) found that-

- In our country, social work lacks professional recognition so, in many organizations, agency supervisors are from non-social work backgrounds and sometimes they are found not serious in guiding students which adversely affects students' performance.
- A large number of students cannot apply their academic knowledge, skills, and techniques in the field because of the scarcity of both government and non-government social service agencies, particularly outside of major urban areas. They are placed in rural settings which restricts their opportunity to access a broad spectrum of contemporary knowledge.
- A small committee composed of faculties allocates the field placement which restricts students' choices to practice in their preferred organizations which creates obstacles to becoming good social work practitioners in the days ahead.
- Students are found unintended in field practicum because in other countries like the United States graduates with social work backgrounds are employed immediately after accomplishing their courses and obtaining degrees but in our country, they can hardly get jobs though they have practical skills and knowledge, and experiences which they gather after completing field work.

In another study Hossain, Islam, Ali, and Azman (2024) stated that-

- Lack of evidence-based practices students are facing different difficulties. Furthermore, students feel demotivated from actively participating in field practicum because of the non-cooperation of supervisors, and lack of adequate guidance.
- In terms of international exposure and collaboration Bangladesh exhibits a significant shortfall. Even though there may be some probability for partnerships with neighboring nations or within the region, the overall access to global practices, research, fieldwork, and knowledge remains fairly limited.
- Due to the lack of proper, adequate social work agency, students face difficulty in applying social work skills, knowledge, and theories into practice.
- There is a lack of motivation among students about their fieldwork. Rather than an opportunity for personal and professional development, many students complete this only to accomplish their course requirements for graduation.

Post-graduation (Post-qualification) Workplaces and the State of Employment

Today people are facing some interrelated and complex socio-economic problems that widely hinder social progress and welfare such as illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, population growth, unemployment, crime, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, etc. Post-graduated social workers can play a significant role in addressing, preventing, and raising awareness about those issues.

A social work graduate student can also work in different programs of the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Government of Bangladesh focuses on some social welfare projects. In their study, Mazid and Azam (2023) found the welfare programs which are implemented by the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of Bangladesh include the following-

- Rural Social Services (RSS) Program
- Rural Mother Care Centre (RMC) Program
- Allowance Program for Destitute Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)
- Disability Identification Survey, ID and Certificate Distribution to PWDs
- Rehabilitation Program for Acid-Burn Victims & PWDs
- Medical Social Service Program
- Old-Age Allowance Program
- Livelihood Development Program for Bede Communities
- Livelihood Development Program for Trans-genders
- Financial Assistance Program for Cancer, Kidney, and Liver Cirrhosis Patients
- Livelihood Development Program for Tea-Garden Laborers
- Alimony and Rehabilitation Program for Babies at Baby Homes
- Training and Rehabilitation of Destitute and Orphan Children
- Protection Program for Vulnerable Children
- Integrated Education Program for Visually Impaired Students
- Education Program for Hearing, Speech, and Visually Impaired Children
- Education and Rehabilitation Program for Physically Handicapped Persons
- Training and Rehabilitation Program for Orphans and PWDs
- Development Program for Children facing Law Enforcement or in Conflict with Law
- Training and Rehabilitation Program for Vagrants
- Probation & After-Care Program for the People Involved in Crime
- Training and Rehabilitation Program for Socially Disadvantaged Girls
- Safe Home for Women and Adolescent Girls under order of Safe Custody
- Registration and Control of Voluntary Social Welfare Organizations

- Distribution of Capitation Grants to Non-Government Orphanages

With the other graduate students post-graduated social workers are working in these programs and also they have the opportunity to work in these social development and human service activities. Besides these, to enhance the livelihood of the disadvantaged population in the country social workers can also work in child welfare programs, blind training and rehabilitation centers, urban and rural development activities, schools, hospitals, industrial agency settings, prevention of human trafficking, disaster management, family planning, immunization, primary health care, counseling, sanitation, environmental protection and in different NGOs, government agencies, such as the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, contributing to policy formation and implementation of social welfare programs, international organizations such as the United Nations, which actively engage in developmental projects and humanitarian assistance, in community development, in academia, teaching, and investigating social issues pertinent to the Bangladeshi context.

For various social welfare programs taken up until 1973, the Department of Social Service (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare employed social work graduates. However, in 1974, the government of Bangladesh changed its recruitment procedures, where individuals with undergraduate and master's degrees in any academic discipline were allowed to apply for these service sectors along with graduated students of social work (Azam & Mazid, 2022). In another study, the absence of specific employment for social work graduates was highlighted (Jalil & Hussain, 2023). There is a limited application of social work knowledge and services at the administrative level and it leads to inadequate public welfare programs. Formal social work practice is not seen for the lack of acknowledgment but informal social work practices are visible in development, medical settings, and clinical contexts and through the welfare activities of governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, all of the practitioners are not from social work backgrounds which prevents them from utilizing the necessary knowledge, values, and skills to minimize the problems faced by client systems and related sub-systems because of their limited academic and research background in social work. As social work has not developed as a profession in Bangladesh yet, the graduates of this discipline are employed in different jobs that may be academicians, either it is in the government sectors or non-government sectors (Mazid & Azam, 2023). A study conducted by Zaman (2012) found that due to the lack of professional recognition and enough job opportunities in the field of social work a large number of graduates are looking for employment in unrelated sectors. For example, they are doing jobs in financial institutions, government services, private commercial enterprises, and so on. A small part of graduates are working in non-governmental

organizations and national or international development agencies, but they are not considered professional social workers due to the lack of professional recognition. Only those graduates who are in teaching within the social work discipline are regarded to be professionals in this field (Zaman, 2012).

Furthermore, to promote its recognition as a profession in the country both governmental and non-governmental organizations in social service sectors should take initiatives to increase the recruitment of professional social workers.

Current Problems and Future Directions

Unfortunately, social work has yet to achieve professional status in Bangladesh due to some problems which are as follows;

- Lack of ethical standards to be maintained as there is no accreditation body for social work in Bangladesh.
- Due to the lack of recognition and awareness among the people regarding social work has yet to be developed as a profession.
- Lack of functional social work professional organizations in Bangladesh that hinders the establishment of social work as a recognized profession.

According to the statements of Thomas, Dr. James. (2024). India is growing with its socio-economic development, the demand for social workers or professional social workers has never been advanced which is closely similar to the context of Bangladesh. He mentioned some significant challenges that India faces to grow with professional social work education such as; i. Lack of Awareness and Value for the Profession, ii. Curriculum Gaps and Outdated Methods, iii. Limited Fieldwork Opportunities, iv. Inadequate Faculty Development, v. Fragmentation, Lack of Certifying Bodies, and Inactive Associations, vi. Government Apathy Toward a Social Work Professional Council, and vii. Lack of Government Support and Funding, which are positively relevant with the barriers of social work towards its professionalization in Bangladesh.

In their study Mazid and Azam (2023) found that-

- Though there is a possibility of social work becoming a profession up to 1973 because the Department of Social Service (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare employed social work graduates for various welfare initiatives social work has yet to gain recognition as a formal profession in Bangladesh.

- Due to the lack of graduates from social work backgrounds, DSS recruited other graduates from other disciplines but up to 1973 DSS only recruited social work graduates. This stream exists still now.
- There is lacking a field practicum manual which is necessary for students' future guidance in the field, a lack of adequate suitable fieldwork placement agencies, unskilled supervision, improper evaluation, etc. makes students demotivated.
- Although in recent times the global social work curriculum is broader and more advanced and some changes in the curriculum have been made in Bangladesh, the curriculum of social work education is not up to date and did not achieve international standards.
- For professional development, training is compulsory. But in Bangladesh due to the lack of enough financial resources academic institutions cannot arrange training for social workers which hampers the advancement of social work education.
- Though the government of Bangladesh has taken to ensure social welfare services to remote areas of the country still it has not been possible to ensure all the services social workers could not take the necessary initiatives to capture the Government's interest to provide them with professional recognition.
- In Bangladesh, faulty practice, lack of innovative thinking, practicing former methods of social work practice, and not applying newly emerging techniques are responsible for the non-effectiveness of standard social work practices in the country.

Moreover, students have to depend on foreign textbooks because there is a lack of local resources. Fieldwork in social work education is an integral part. But, unawareness about fieldwork, lack of agencies, inadequate transportation system, weak planning, lack of financial solvency, etc. fieldwork is not properly held. Shahidullah (2024).

In his study, Rahman (2010) found that-

- Traditional beliefs and attitudes of people towards social work are one of the hindrances in the development of the social work profession in Bangladesh. They are not aware of professional social work and believe that there is no need for professional qualifications for social services. Consequently, the term social work profession did not spread out.
- There is a lack of development of a distinct theoretical framework of social work which is another obstacle to social work in achieving professional status in Bangladesh.

- Social work education in Bangladesh is largely influenced by foreign ideas. Till now, there has been no definitive framework developed regarding the professional values and standards of social work irrespective of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of Bangladesh.
- Dhaka University is offering its program under the title of Social Welfare, while Rajshahi University and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology are offering their programs in Social Work. Different names of social welfare and social work departments across various universities create confusion which creates challenges in the development of social work as a profession.

In Bangladesh due to the above-mentioned difficulties and constraints, professional social work has not yet established a distinct identity of its own. The following direction will be beneficial in achieving professional recognition for social work practice and increasing the quality of social work education in Bangladesh-

In their study Mazid and Azam (2023) mentioned that-

- Social work academicians should develop a strong academic curriculum in collaboration with international standards. With the cultural beliefs, needs, and heritage of the population, social workers should establish a distinct Bangladeshi definition of social work and a code of ethics.
- It is also essential to increase public awareness of social work education and the profession as a whole and should develop a plan that will emphasize on reaching professional acknowledgment and providing services to the community people.
- Social workers need to participate in different international conferences, seminars, symposiums, and training programs, and practice social work in the community through their organizational activities to capture the attention of the government.
- Social workers should maintain relationships with different national and international organizations and associations like IASSW, IFSW, BASW, NASW, BCSWE, CSWE, European Union, Regional Organizations, the governments of developed countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) which will bring positive result in gaining professional recognition of social work in Bangladesh.

In his study Shahidullah (2024) found that-

- At all levels i.e. colleges and universities for admission to social work, specific criteria should be fixed which will enable to development of professional social workers.

- As social work education involves practical learning with classroom learning, the quality of fieldwork should be increased.
- The field of employment of social workers should be expanded. The workplace of the Department of Social Services should prioritize the higher degree holders in social work.

Some other guidelines are-

- Social workers should publish available books in both Bengali and Indigenous languages to fulfill the demands of the students and faculties to ensure more understandable study.
- In various relevant social service sector jobs including the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare social workers students should be ensured to gain professional recognition in social work in Bangladesh.
- Research on social work should be increased.
- Initiatives should be taken to launch the social work department in almost all universities to make this department well known to the people.
- People's misconceptions regarding social work should be eradicated through awareness programs and publishing newspapers, articles, journals, etc. on social work.

Finally, it can be said that in Bangladesh as there are some problems in the development of social work education and establishing professional social work, there are also ways to minimize these gaps. Therefore, the government should take the necessary initiatives to improve the quality of social work education. Teachers, students of social work background, and all the concerned authorities should be aware of taking suitable steps to establish social work as a profession.

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Chapter 3: Hawai'i / USA

Social Work Education and Licensure Practices in the United States

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Abstract

In the realm of social work education, accreditation plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and standards of programs across the United States. At the forefront of this accreditation process stands the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), an organization dedicated to advancing social work education and promoting competence in the field. This article delves into the significance of CSWE accreditation, its process, and the impact it has on shaping the future of social work professionals. This article will also cover the role of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the process of professional licensure within the US social work profession.

Introduction

The United States has a multifaceted quality assurance system that ensures that Social Work education meets certain national standards, and that licensed professionals adhere to both national and state specific ethical standards. These standards are set by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and state specific licensing boards. In addition to these governing bodies all US universities are required to be evaluated and accredited by a regionally specific Senior College and University Commission (SCUC). The SCUC is an institutional accrediting agency for colleges and universities that award bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The SCUC is recognized by

the U.S. Department of Education as the organization responsible for certifying institutional eligibility for federal funding including student access to federal financial aid. Most US social work programs exist with in a SCUC accredited institution. Once the institution has achieved SCUC accreditation the social work program must undergo CSWE accreditation.

Established in 1952, CSWE emerged during a period of significant growth and professionalization within the field of social work. Recognizing the need for standardized education and training for social work practitioners, CSWE took on the role of a national accrediting agency, charged with setting standards and ensuring the quality of social work education programs across the country.

In its early years, CSWE accreditation focused on establishing basic guidelines for social work curriculum and program administration, laying the groundwork for a profession characterized by professionalism, ethical practice, and commitment to social justice. Currently the CSWE's primary mission is to promote and maintain the quality of professional social work education through accreditation, advocacy, and leadership. CSWE accreditation serves as a mark of assurance that a social work program meets the rigorous standards set forth by the organization, ensuring that graduates are adequately prepared for entry into the profession.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as the sole accrediting body for social work education in the United States. CSWE accreditation ensures that social work programs—both at the bachelor's and master's levels—meet or exceed the standards necessary to prepare students for competent practice. Accreditation helps programs assess and improve their quality, which in turn enhances their reputation and allows students from those programs to qualify for licensure in various states. Some organizations in the US, including the military education benefits for veterans, will not allow these benefits to be used to pay for education in a program that is not CSWE accredited.

The Impact of CSWE Accreditation

CSWE accreditation holds significant implications for social work education, students, and the profession as a whole. For educational institutions, accreditation signifies a commitment to maintaining high-quality standards and continuous improvement within their social work programs. It enhances the credibility and reputation of the institution, making it more attractive to prospective students and employers.

For students, graduating from a CSWE-accredited program ensures that they have received a quality education that aligns with the profession's standards and prepares them for competent practice. Accreditation also facilitates licensure eligibility in many states, as licensing boards often require graduation from an accredited program as a prerequisite for licensure.

From a broader perspective, CSWE accreditation contributes to the advancement of the social work profession by ensuring a consistent level of competence among practitioners. By upholding standards of education and practice, accreditation promotes public trust and confidence in social workers' abilities to effectively address complex social issues and promote social justice.

Process of CSWE Accreditation

The accreditation process undertaken by CSWE is thorough and comprehensive, designed to assess the quality of social work education programs against a set of established standards. These standards encompass various aspects of program administration, curriculum, faculty qualifications, student support services, and assessment of student learning outcomes. To assist in the assessment process CSWE has developed the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), which provide a framework for social work education programs to ensure they deliver quality education that reflects current professional expectations. CSWE periodically revises these EPAS to ensure that they are current and reflect best practices of the time. The 2022 EPAS is the latest iteration, encompassing the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the importance of human rights and social justice.

Accreditation by CSWE is a multi-step process that involves candidacy, a self-study report, and site visits by CSWE representatives. It can take several years to complete, and programs are expected to engage in continuous improvement throughout the process.

In the pre-candidacy stage, programs develop and submit an initial application for candidacy status, which includes an overview of their curriculum, faculty qualifications, and program mission. Programs that are granted pre-candidacy status are permitted to enroll students while they work toward full accreditation. During this time, programs must also hire qualified faculty and ensure they are developing a curriculum that aligns with CSWE standards.

Once a program achieves candidacy status, it embarks on a self-study process. The self-study report is a comprehensive evaluation that examines all aspects of the

program, from curriculum and field education to faculty and administrative resources. This self-assessment allows the institution to identify strengths and areas for improvement within its program. Through the self-study a program must assess both their explicit curriculum, which includes the content of courses, assignments, textbooks, and lectures, and their implicit curriculum, which includes the campus culture and the relationship between faculty and students. Programs must demonstrate compliance with each of the EPAS standards and provide evidence of continuous assessment and improvement.

The self-study typically takes 2-3 years to complete, and during this time, programs work closely with a CSWE accreditation specialist. The specialist provides feedback and helps programs address any areas of concern before the final review. Candidacy status allows programs to remain accredited provisionally while they work toward full accreditation. The self-study is reviewed by evaluators who thoroughly review the program's adherence to the accreditation standards, meet with faculty, students, and stakeholders, and assess the program's resources and facilities.

Following the submission of the self-study, CSWE conducts an on-site visit to evaluate the program in person. During the visit, CSWE representatives review program documents, interview faculty, staff, and students, and assess the field education components. The site visit team then submits a report to the CSWE Commission on Accreditation, which may request additional changes or clarifications from the program.

Once the site visit is complete, the peer evaluators submit a report to CSWE, detailing their findings and recommendations regarding the program's accreditation status. The Commission on Accreditation (COA) then reviews all the submitted materials and site visit reports. Based on this report, along with the institution's self-study and any additional documentation provided, the COA makes a decision regarding accreditation status. If the program meets all the required standards, it is granted full accreditation, typically for a period of eight years, after which the program must undergo a reaccreditation review. If the program does not meet the standards, CSWE may extend candidacy status and provide additional time for the program to make necessary improvements. Programs that fail to meet the requirements within the prescribed timeframe may lose accreditation.

Accreditation is not a one-time process; rather, programs must demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. Reaccreditation occurs every eight years and requires programs to submit updated self-studies and undergo site visits. Throughout the accreditation cycle, programs are expected to engage in regular

assessments of student outcomes and use the results to refine their curricula, field placements, and other aspects of the program.

Program Standards Assessed by CSWE

The first set of standards requires that social work programs define their mission and goals in a manner consistent with social work's values, such as service, social justice, and the dignity and worth of every person. Programs must demonstrate that their mission aligns with the mission of their institution and the broader profession. These goals should be designed to prepare students for competent and ethical practice in diverse settings (CSWE, 2022).

Programs are also required to assess students' mastery of nine core competencies, which form the basis for professional practice. The nine core competencies of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) are:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

These competencies guide the curriculum and outcomes for accredited social work programs, ensuring that graduates are prepared for professional practice. Additionally, programs must outline the specific practice behaviors associated with each competency and develop assessment measures to ensure students achieve these benchmarks (CSWE, 2022).

Social work programs must design a curriculum that integrates both academic learning and field education. CSWE mandates that field education, often considered the "signature pedagogy" of social work, accounts for at least 450 hours for bachelor's programs and 900 hours for master's programs. The field experience is critical for allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world practice settings (CSWE, 2022). The program must also offer a coherent curriculum that ensures students are adequately prepared to meet the nine core competencies

upon graduation.

Faculty qualifications are another key component of accreditation. Programs must demonstrate that they have a sufficient number of qualified faculty members to ensure educational quality. Faculty members are required to hold appropriate credentials, such as a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and relevant licensure, and they should engage in ongoing professional development and scholarship. Programs must also show that they have the necessary financial, technological, and administrative resources to support their students and faculty (CSWE, 2022).

Role of the NASW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) was founded in 1955 through the merger of seven different social work organizations. This consolidation created a unified body that was designed to represent the interests of social workers across the United States, providing leadership, political advocacy, and a platform for professional development (Reamer, 2006). Since its inception, NASW has played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of the US social work profession, establishing standards of practice, and promoting social justice. With over 120,000 members today, it remains the largest membership organization of professional social workers (NASW, 2021).

One of NASW's most significant contributions to the social work field has been the establishment of the *NASW Code of Ethics*. First introduced in 1960, the Code of Ethics provides a clear framework for ethical practice, outlining the core values and principles that guide social workers in their professional roles. The NASW Code of Ethics was the first comprehensive ethical guide in the profession, addressing issues such as client confidentiality, informed consent, and dual relationships. The Code serves as a foundational document for the profession, ensuring that social workers adhere to a shared set of ethical standards, ultimately helping to protect the clients they serve (Reamer, 2018).

The NASW Code of Ethics is regularly revised to reflect the evolving nature of the social work profession and emerging societal issues. Since its adoption in 1960, the Code has undergone several revisions, with major updates in 1996, 2008, 2017, and 2021 (NASW, 2021). These revisions typically involve input from a wide range of stakeholders, including social workers, ethics scholars, and legal experts. The revision process is designed to ensure that the Code remains relevant in addressing new ethical dilemmas that social workers may face, such as those brought on by advancements in technology and changing societal norms. For example, the 2017

revision introduced guidelines around social media use, reflecting the growing demand for tele-health services in the social work profession (NASW, 2017). After gathering relevant data, the committee drafts revisions that address new ethical challenges or refine existing guidelines. The proposed revisions are then shared with NASW members and other stakeholders for feedback before a final version is approved by the NASW board of directors (Reamer, 2018). This iterative process ensures that the ethical guidelines are both current and representative of the profession's collective experience.

Enforcement of the NASW Code of Ethics is primarily managed through NASW's ethical complaint procedures, which allow individuals to report violations committed by NASW members. Regional and state licensing boards are also responsible for enforcing the code or ethics and issuing consequences when the ethical code is violated. Social workers who are found to have violated the Code can face various consequences, ranging from formal reprimands from state licensing boards to revocation of NASW membership (NASW, 2021). Violations of the Code can also lead to disciplinary actions such as suspension or revocation of a social worker's license to practice (Reamer, 2006). This enforcement mechanism helps ensure that ethical breaches are taken seriously, and that the profession maintains high standards of integrity. The NASW Code of Ethics is integral to the profession because, in cases where the appropriate course of action is unclear, the Code offers principles that can inform decision-making, ultimately enhancing the quality of services that clients receive.

Beyond individual accountability, the NASW Code of Ethics contributes to the broader reputation and credibility of the social work profession. By holding social workers to a shared set of ethical standards, the Code reinforces public trust in the profession (NASW, 2021). Clients, policymakers, and other stakeholders can have confidence that social workers are not only trained professionals but also adhere to a rigorous ethical framework that prioritizes client welfare, social justice, and professional integrity.

Role of State and Regional Licensing Boards

State and regional social work licensing boards in the United States play a critical role in regulating the practice of social work and ensuring public protection. These boards establish and enforce standards for professional conduct, and licensure within their respective jurisdictions. By setting qualifications for licensure, they ensure that individuals entering the social work field are adequately prepared to provide competent and ethical services. Licensing boards are operated through The

Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA). The DCCA is a state-level regulatory agency responsible for overseeing and regulating various professional and business activities to protect consumers and ensure fair practices (Hawaii Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs [DCCA], n.d.). The DCCA works closely with professional licensing boards to ensure that professionals comply with state laws and regulations, administering licensure exams, issuing licenses, and enforcing disciplinary actions when necessary (DCCA, n.d.). Each state within the United States has its own DCCA and Social Work Licensing Board, and requirements for licensure may vary state to state.

Licensing boards also monitor continuing education requirements to ensure that social workers remain informed about developments in the field and maintain their professional competence (Association of Social Work Boards [ASWB], 2021). Additionally, these boards are responsible for investigating complaints and taking disciplinary actions when social workers violate ethical or professional standards.

In addition to state licensing boards there is also the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). The ASWB is a nonprofit organization founded in 1979. Its primary role is to regulate the social work profession across the United States and Canada by providing support to state and provincial licensing boards. The ASWB assists in developing and maintaining social work licensing examinations, ensuring that these assessments reflect current standards of professional practice and knowledge (ASWB, 2021). The ASWB is also responsible for maintaining a database of disciplinary actions taken against social workers, which helps to uphold professional accountability and protect public safety. This disciplinary information is publicly available ensuring that if a professional who has been sanctioned in one state moved to another state the sanctions may still be upheld by the new state's licensing board.

Becoming a Licensed Social Worker in the US

Licensure for social workers in the United States is typically divided into several levels, each with distinct requirements and practice scopes. The lowest level of licensure is often the Bachelor's-level license, available to individuals with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a CSWE-accredited program. This level of licensure generally allows social workers to engage in generalist practice under supervision. The next level is the Master's-level license, which requires an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program and qualifies social workers for more independent practice but still excludes clinical services. The LCSW, or its equivalent (depending on the state), represents the highest level of social work licensure,

permitting the independent practice of clinical social work, including the diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). Individuals with an LCSW may bill insurance companies for their clinical services and may also set up private practices.

The general process for becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) involves several steps, including obtaining an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program, completing supervised work experience outlined by the state licensing board, and passing the ASWB Clinical Exam. Most state licensing boards require two to three years of supervised clinical experience, totaling around 3,000 hours, depending on state regulations (ASWB, 2021). Once they have met the educational and experience requirements, candidates are eligible to sit for the ASWB Clinical Exam, a standardized test required for licensure. Before they are allowed to sit for the ASWB Exam a candidate must apply for licensure through the state licensing board, if the board is satisfied that all other requirements have been met, then the board will authorize the applicant to sit for the licensing exam.

The ASWB Clinical Exam covers a wide range of topics essential for competent practice in clinical social work, including human development, diversity, clinical assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention strategies (ASWB, 2021). The exam is composed of 170 multiple-choice questions, of which 150 are scored, while the remaining 20 are pre-test questions used to develop future versions of the exam. The ASWB Clinical Exam ensures that social workers meet a minimum standard of competency in providing direct services to clients, particularly in clinical settings.

The content of the ASWB Clinical Exam is closely linked to the nine core competencies outlined by the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). For instance, the exam's focus on ethical and professional behavior aligns with Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior. Similarly, many questions on the exam require social workers to consider the diverse backgrounds of their clients and how social factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status impact their lives, these questions align with Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice. Questions on the ASWB Clinical Exam test candidates' ability to apply each of the nine EPAS Competencies that were covered during the course of their MSW education (CSWE, 2015).

Current Problems Facing Social Work Education & Licensure in the US

There are three major challenges that face current social work practices in the US today. There is a growing demand for social workers but a shortage of professionals in this workforce, there is also a racial disparity in who becomes a social worker with approximately 62% of social workers in the US identifying as white, and social work graduate programs can have difficulties securing adequate field placements for students.

Social work is projected to grow nationally and on the state level within the next ten years. Nationally, employment of social workers is projected to grow 12 percent from 2020 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). For Hawaii, in 2022 there were approximately 2,950 open social work positions with a mean salary between \$61,000 and \$85,000 annually (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Social work is also the fastest growing profession internationally with a projected 16% growth by 2026 (Truell, 2018). This rise in demand for licensed social workers has created a need for social work programs to continue to grow and to expand their reach, particularly to rural areas where the need is greatest.

To solve this problem many US Social Work programs are expanding into online education. The transition to online and hybrid learning models in social work education has introduced several challenges of its own, particularly regarding student engagement. Maintaining motivation and active participation in virtual settings can be difficult, as the lack of face-to-face interactions may lead to feelings of isolation among students. Educators often struggle to create a dynamic learning environment that fosters discussion, collaboration, and relationship-building, which are essential components of effective social work practice (Davis, 2020). Furthermore, students may face distractions in their home environments, complicating their ability to focus on coursework and engage with peers and instructors.

Despite these challenges, online and hybrid programs play a crucial role in expanding access to social work education, particularly in rural areas facing significant workforce shortages. Many rural communities struggle to attract and retain qualified social workers, leading to gaps in service provision for vulnerable populations (Bowers & Magil, 2022). By offering online social work programs, educational institutions can reach students in these underserved areas, providing them with the opportunity to pursue degrees without relocating. However, ensuring that these online programs provide adequate hands-on practice experiences remains essential. Field placements in rural settings can be limited,

and educators must work to create robust partnerships with local agencies to facilitate meaningful practical experiences for online students (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). As social work education continues to adapt, integrating innovative online curricula with field experience opportunities will be vital for preparing students to meet the needs of their communities.

However, securing adequate field placements for online social work students poses significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. Field placements are a signature pedagogy outlined by the CSWE and they are essential for providing students with hands-on experience, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts while developing critical skills under the supervision of experienced professionals (López, 2021). However, in rural communities, there are often fewer agencies and organizations available to serve as field placement sites, which can limit students' opportunities for practical experience. Many students in these regions may face logistical challenges, such as transportation issues, that hinder their ability to secure placements at distant sites. The limited availability of licensed social workers in these areas also makes it difficult to find qualified supervisors for students during their field. Additionally, the high demand for social services in these areas can result in organizations being unable to accommodate student placements due to already overwhelming caseloads (Bowers & Magil, 2022). This lack of placement opportunities not only affects students' learning experiences but also hampers their readiness to enter the workforce, exacerbating existing shortages of qualified social workers in rural settings. The number of rural residents who are members of a racial or ethnic minority increased to 11 million between 2010 and 2020 (Johnson & Lichter, 2022). With 24% of the population in rural areas of the US not comprised of minority groups (Johnson & Lichter, 2022). These changing population demographics mean that social workers may need a specific set of skills to meet the demands of unique populations.

Currently, MSW students are required to complete 900 hours of field practicum experience. Field placement is a cornerstone of professional social work education, designed to bridge classroom theory with practical, real-world experience. Typically, field placements occur in a range of agencies, including government organizations, healthcare facilities, community-based nonprofits, and schools, providing students exposure to diverse populations and practice settings. Through this hands-on experience, students develop critical competencies in client assessment, intervention, advocacy, and case management, while also familiarizing themselves with the ethical standards and policies guiding social work practice. Practicum training is usually supervised by licensed social workers or seasoned practitioners who offer mentorship and guidance, reinforcing a student's knowledge and fostering a sense of professional identity. Placements are

structured to gradually increase in complexity, allowing students to advance from observational roles to more active, independent practice as they build confidence and skills.

The social work profession in the United States is predominantly white, with approximately 62% of social workers identifying as white (Data USA, n.d.). This demographic disparity highlights a significant underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities within the field, particularly given that these populations often face unique social issues and challenges that require culturally competent approaches to intervention. The lack of diversity can lead to a disconnect between social workers and the communities they serve, undermining the effectiveness of social work interventions and perpetuating systemic inequities.

Research indicates that a diverse workforce can enhance service delivery, improve client outcomes, and foster better understanding and rapport between social workers and the populations they serve (Gonzalez, 2020). For social work education to effectively prepare students for practice, it must reflect the diversity of the communities they will work in. This requires not only increasing the number of minority students enrolled in social work programs but also ensuring that faculty members represent diverse backgrounds. Diverse faculty can provide varied perspectives, enrich the learning environment, and serve as role models for students from underrepresented groups.

To address these critical issues, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has implemented several initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion within social work education. One significant effort is the CSWE's "Diversity and Social Justice" framework, which encourages social work programs to adopt practices that actively recruit and retain students and faculty from diverse backgrounds (CSWE, 2021). CSWE has introduced accreditation standards that emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion in curriculum development and program outcomes. These standards encourage social work programs to integrate multicultural perspectives into their coursework. Given that minority groups in the US often suffer from disproportional rates of poverty which may limit access to higher education, the CSWE has also attempted to make higher education in social work more affordable by allowing students to complete their practicum at their place of employment and requiring MSW programs to offer a one-year advanced standing track which will ideally eliminate some tuition and education expenses for students.

Social Work in the Specific context of Hawai'i

The Hawaiian Islands were initially settled by Polynesians between 124 and 1120 AD, developing into a self-sufficient society with a complex social system, language, religion, and governance structure akin to European feudalism. By 1810, King Kamehameha I unified the islands, establishing a monarchical government rooted in traditional laws. Following Captain Cook's arrival in 1778, American influence grew, spurred by Protestant missionaries and the establishment of sugar plantations, which brought waves of labor immigrants from Asia. In 1843, the Hawaiian Kingdom was internationally recognized as an independent state.

However, by 1887, American settlers forced King Kalākaua to sign the "Bayonet Constitution," significantly curtailing Native Hawaiian political power. Queen Lili'uokalani's attempt to restore authority led to her overthrow in 1893, and Hawai'i was annexed by the U.S. in 1898. The attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 further integrated Hawai'i into U.S. strategic interests, and in 1959, Hawai'i became the 50th U.S. state, though Native Hawaiians were a minority among voters. Despite these changes, a Native Hawaiian cultural renaissance since the 1970s has fueled a resurgence in language, cultural practices, and political activism, with efforts to preserve and promote Hawaiian identity and autonomy.

Thus, professional social work education in Hawai'i has developed within a unique historical, social, political, and cultural context shaped by the islands' Indigenous heritage, colonial history, and multicultural population. Rooted in traditional Native Hawaiian values of collective responsibility, community support, and respect for natural resources, social work in Hawai'i draws from practices that long predate Western systems of social welfare. However, the establishment of formalized social services evolved alongside colonial influences, which introduced Western education, healthcare, and legal structures that often conflicted with Indigenous practices. Social work education in Hawai'i thus operates at the intersection of these influences, prioritizing cultural humility and the inclusion of Indigenous frameworks in social work practice and theory.

Social work education in Hawai'i is also influenced by the state's unique political landscape and social needs, given its role as a Pacific hub for Indigenous populations, immigrants, and military personnel. Today, Hawai'i's social work programs integrate these influences by incorporating Indigenous Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander perspectives into their curricula. For example, programs may include Hawaiian cultural practices such as ho'oponopono (a method of conflict resolution and reconciliation) and emphasize the importance of addressing health, economic, and social disparities experienced by Native Hawaiian communities and

other marginalized groups. These programs also address local political issues, including ongoing efforts toward Hawaiian sovereignty and social justice, which directly affect the social determinants of health and wellbeing in the islands. By situating social work education within this rich cultural and political milieu, Hawai'i's social work programs aim to prepare graduates who are not only skilled professionals but also culturally sensitive advocates for social justice and community empowerment.

Hawaii may be used as a case example to illustrate the shortage of social workers in the current workforce. Hawaii has a shortage of social workers, especially in rural areas (e.g. outside Oahu). In the 2022 legislative session, the Hawaii state legislature created HB1543 to increase accessibility of social work education to certain populations within the state. HB1543 states "the legislature finds that the State is facing a shortage of social workers... This shortage is of concern as social workers already have full caseloads and may be unable to provide additional services, which may in turn intensify the need for help and increase burnout among social workers. The demand for social workers will likely continue to rise, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath." Furthermore, Hawaii has seen a 24% loss in its current state workforce (Honolulu Star Advertiser, 2021). Hawai'i is not unique in this situation, many states, particularly those with large geographically rural and remote areas experience a severe shortage of adequately trained professionals.

One barrier to the expansion of the social work workforce in Hawai'i is the process of professional licensure. To obtain a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) credential in Hawaii, applicants must fulfill several key requirements. First, they need to hold a Master's or Doctoral degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), including coursework in clinical practice. Following this, candidates must complete at least 3,000 hours of supervised clinical social work experience over a minimum of two years, with a focus on direct client contact and supervision by a licensed clinical social worker. Additionally, candidates must pass the Clinical Social Work Licensing Examination administered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). Finally, applicants must submit a detailed application to the Hawaii Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Board of Social Work, including verification of their education, supervised experience, proof of passing the exam, and the required application fees. Once these requirements are met, candidates can receive their LCSW licensure, enabling them to practice independently in the state. The biggest challenge graduates face in completing these credentials is accumulating the 3,000 of supervised clinical practice.

Practicum field placement is one way in which students can gain clinical experience prior to graduation. In Hawai'i, field placements reflect the unique cultural and geographic context of the islands, incorporating an understanding of local values and practices, especially those relevant to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. Students are often placed in agencies that serve Indigenous populations, military communities, and those impacted by socio-economic and health disparities across the state. Many Hawaiian practicum sites incorporate cultural practices, such as the importance of family (ohana) and respect for elders (kupuna), into their approach to service delivery, enriching students' training with culturally competent frameworks. Additionally, field placements may include exposure to Indigenous healing practices and concepts of holistic wellbeing, equipping students with a culturally inclusive skill set that addresses the specific needs of Hawai'i's communities.

However, in order for clinical hours to count toward LCSW licensure they must be accumulated after graduation. Recent legislation in Hawaii aims to facilitate the licensure process for Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), addressing the critical shortage of social workers in the state. This legislation introduces significant changes to the requirements for obtaining an LCSW license, including allowing for greater flexibility in the supervised clinical experience needed for licensure. Specifically, it reduces the required number of direct supervision hours, which has been a barrier for many aspiring social workers. Hawai'i Senate Bill 2243 passed in 2024 establishes an associate-level licensure requirements which authorizes insurance reimbursements in certain circumstances. Historically, the inability to bill insurance for services provided by an MSW who is working under the supervision of an LCSW has disincentivized employers from hiring MSW's and made it difficult for MSWs to accumulate the necessary clinical hours, often needing to pay out of pocket for supervision. This new law seeks to remove some of these barriers with the overall aim of increasing the number of locally trained LCSWs throughout the state.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) plays a foundational role in the field of social work by establishing accreditation standards for social work education programs across the United States. By ensuring that educational institutions meet rigorous criteria, the CSWE helps to prepare future social workers with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the complex needs of individuals, families, and communities. The CSWE's emphasis on core competencies ensures that social workers are trained in ethical practice, cultural

competence, and evidence-based interventions, thereby enhancing the quality of care provided to clients and fostering public trust in the profession.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) further strengthens the profession by providing a comprehensive Code of Ethics that guides social workers in their practice. This Code serves as a critical framework for ethical decision-making, reinforcing the profession's commitment to social justice, client welfare, and professional integrity. By outlining clear ethical standards, the NASW not only holds social workers accountable but also enhances the overall credibility of the profession. Together with state licensing boards, which regulate practice and enforce compliance with these ethical standards, the NASW ensures that social workers operate within a framework that prioritizes ethical considerations and safeguards the public.

The state and regional social work licensing boards across the US are essential for regulating the profession, protecting the public, and ensuring that social workers are adequately prepared for practice. The process of obtaining an LCSW license involves extensive education, supervised experience, and passing the ASWB Clinical Exam, which tests knowledge directly tied to the CSWE's core competencies. This comprehensive regulatory framework, encompassing the roles of the CSWE, NASW, state licensing boards, and the ASWB exam, is vital for maintaining high standards in social work education and practice. Collectively, these entities work to promote ethical practice, ensure public protection, and enhance the quality of services delivered by social workers across the nation.

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Chapter 4: India

International Comparative Study: Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in India

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Abstract

The evolution of professional social work education in India reflects a rich interplay of historical, social, political, and cultural influences, transitioning from informal charitable practices to a structured discipline rooted in religious traditions and colonial influence. The establishment of the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) in 1936 marked the formation of social work education, blending Western models with Indian contexts. Post-independence, institutions like the Delhi School of Social Work and others significantly contributed to its expansion, integrating Indigenous traditions and global standards in the social work curriculum. Field placement training, a cornerstone of social work education, fosters integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application, emphasizing critical reflection, self-awareness, and professional competence. Regulatory bodies such as the Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI) and initiatives like the Learning Outcomes-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) highlight efforts to standardize and professionalize the discipline. However, challenges such as inadequate supervision, resource limitations, and heavy workloads continue to impede the effectiveness of these programs. Post-graduation, social work professionals in India face significant barriers, including limited recognition, inconsistent standards, and a lack of valuation for their contributions. Despite these hurdles, the global demand for social workers is growing, driven by increased awareness of social issues and rising needs in healthcare, education, and corporate social responsibility. To address these challenges and elevate the profession, it is crucial to implement standardized regulatory frameworks, invest in professional development, and leverage technology strategically. These measures will enhance the credibility, relevance, and capacity of social work to address complex social issues effectively and sustainably.

Key words: professional social work, curriculum, challenges, placement

Background and rationale

In recent years, the demand for competent social work professionals in the Asia Pacific Region has grown significantly, driven by the need to address diverse social issues effectively within their respective fields. Historically, governments have relied on social policies and institutions to tackle these challenges, which profoundly impact people's lives and are shaped by their unique characteristics. In this context, fostering collaboration and cooperation across the region has become essential, particularly in developing professional responses and skills. This collaboration can be advanced through social work research and educational exchanges, grounded in a mutual understanding of the distinct social contexts within the region.

Research objectives

This study aims to clarify the conditions and challenges of professional social work education in the Asia Pacific Region, particularly in India through international comparative research, including developing registration systems for qualified professionals. The study aims to capture the characteristics of the Indian social work system, advantages and challenges that social work profession encounters.

1. Historical, social, political, and cultural context of professional social work education in India

Historical context

India's social welfare systems have a rich history deeply influenced by its religious and cultural traditions and colonial legacy (Desai, 2016). India has a historical record of medieval social welfare systems characterized by a synergy of spiritual values, communal cooperation, and state intervention, reflecting a deep commitment to social harmony and the well-being of all members of society. In Hindu culture, we observe the principle of '*dana*,' which motivates individuals to care for others in need through material goods such as food, clothing, or money (Lakshmi, 2013). Hindu temples frequently served as community welfare centers, providing shelter, sustenance, and educational opportunities (Balaganapathi, 2008; Nath, 2019). Religious endowments and land grants from kings were used to finance charity activities. Buddhist monasteries and Jain establishments supported welfare activities by operating educational institutions, offering healthcare services, and

organizing food distribution initiatives. There is also a recorded history of public works by Kings and local rulers to improve roads, wells, irrigation systems, etc. (Pande, et al., n.d.; Williams-Oerberg, 2020).

Professional social work during the pre-independence era

Social work in India is deeply rooted in its history, stemming from ancient religious and philosophical beliefs that prioritized social justice and compassion. These traditions laid the groundwork for the development of social work practices in the country. Over time, these informal charitable efforts evolved into a more structured and action-oriented profession focused on eradicating poverty and empowering marginalized communities (Palattiyil & Sidhva, 2012). Although social welfare and charity have long been integral to Indian society, the professionalization of social work emerged during British rule with the introduction of modern social work education. A key milestone in this development was the founding of the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (now known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, or TISS) in Mumbai in 1936 by the House of Tatas. This initiative was inspired by American models of social work education (Nadkarni & Joseph, 2014; Nagpaul, 1993; Sangeeta, 2017; Simon, 2021). Dr. Clifford Manshardt, a sociologist associated with the American Marathi Mission, played a pivotal role in founding this pioneering institution.

Drawing on social work methods from the United States, he sought to address poverty through initiatives such as the Nagpada Neighborhood House in Mumbai during the 1920s (Singh, 2021). The primary aim of TISS was to spearhead the professionalization of social work and promote social welfare through academic excellence. Efforts were made to tailor the social work curriculum to Indian contexts by incorporating indigenous practices and concepts (Nagpaul, 1993; Palattiyil & Sidhva, 2012). In the year of its establishment, TISS began offering Master's programs in Social Work, marking a transformative step in the formalization of social work as a recognized profession in India (Nadkarni & Joseph, 2014).

Early examples of organized social action can be seen in movements advocating for caste equality, women's rights, and education, all of which aligned with the broader goal of achieving swaraj (independence). These initiatives laid the foundation for social work to become an integral part of India's efforts toward social justice and empowerment.

Professional social work during the post-independence era

Social work emerged as a global profession in the late 19th century and is now practiced in over 144 countries (IASSW, 2002). In India, the post-independence era was crucial for the development of professional social work. After gaining independence in 1947, the government acknowledged the importance of social work in tackling the nation's socio-economic issues. This period saw significant growth in the profession, which was influenced by Western models and practices but adapted to fit the Indian context. In 1947, institutions such as Kashi Vidyapith (now Mahatma Gandhi Kashi University) in Varanasi and the College of Social Service at Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad began offering social work education programs. In 1948, the North Young Women's Christian Association of India established the Delhi School of Social Work with financial backing from the Foreign Division of the American Young Women's Christian Association. This institution later became affiliated with the University of Delhi in 1961, further solidifying its academic and professional standing (S. Singh, 2003). The Constitution of India enshrined social justice as a fundamental right, further highlighting the role of social work in creating just and equitable societies in India.

This supported the establishment of numerous social work institutions all over India and developing and expanding social work curricula. Adopting welfare state principles in the Indian Constitution by the visionary leaders of the Indian Constituent Assembly further helped recognize the need for professionalization of social work (Nair, 2015). During the 1950s and 1960s, Delhi University and Madras University introduced structured social work programs to address urbanization and developmental challenges (S. Singh, 2003). The Indian Social work education model relied heavily on the Western model of social work education owing to the contributions of Christian missionaries in setting up earlier schools of social work.

Social context

India is a diverse country with a rich cultural heritage and traditions. Similarly, India encountered a wide range of social issues, such as poverty, inequality, caste discrimination, gender-based violence, and mental health problems (Bhattacharya et al., 2019; Mezzina et al., 2022). These social and cultural challenges demanded skilled and professional social workers to systematically and professionally address the problems and the needs of different communities and individuals. In a multicultural society, social workers face challenges in addressing the various needs of communities and individuals. Consequently, social work education equips students with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively fulfill these roles

(Freund & Band-Winterstein, 2017). The voluntary sectors have played an essential role in establishing and developing social work practice in India, particularly in regions like Kerala. They have adopted various organizational and management practices that enhance their performance (Thampi, 2023). Several NGOs and charitable organizations in India provide social services and promote social welfare. Here, professional social work education played a significant role as instrumental in training professionals to work effectively within the organization for an enhanced society (Kourgiantakis et al., 2022).

Political context

The Indian government has implemented various social welfare policies and programs like the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS). NSAP is designed to provide social assistance to below-poverty-line households through various pension schemes and benefits (Kapur & Chowdhury, 2012).

ICDS is one of the world's most prominent programmes aimed at improving health, nutrition, and child education (Kapil, 2002; Pellissery, 2017). These Indian initiatives have created opportunities for social workers to work in government agencies and contribute to implementing social welfare programs. Similarly, the government has recognized the significance of professionalizing social work by establishing regulatory bodies like the Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI). This regulatory body has an essential role in maintaining standards of social work education and practice. ASSWI is instrumental in promoting the growth of the social work profession by supporting educational institutions and enhancing creative teaching methods (Parker, 1983). Despite its regulatory authority, the ASSWI's effectiveness in executing and developing the social work profession to its full potential was limited. This resulted in a lack of attention and growth opportunities for the profession across various sectors.

Cultural context

Various Indian cultures highlight the values such as compassion, empathy, and service to those in need. These cultural values align with the core principles of social work, making it a culturally relevant profession in India. India has a rich tradition of indigenous knowledge systems that have been used to address social problems in India. Indian social work integrates indigenous traditions of service, charity, and volunteerism, which are rooted in ancient philosophies and practices such as

meditation, yoga, and the teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism. (Dash et al., 2020; Jagannathan & Kurhade, 2024). The principles of Gandhi, such as service to others, nonviolent social action, and community-based learning, are significant in forming social work ethics and practices in India (George & Krishnakumar, 2014). There was a substantial movement towards incorporating indigenous theories and cultural practices into social work pedagogy (T. Singh & Saumya, 2022). Social work education in India incorporates elements of these traditional knowledge systems, providing a holistic approach to social work practice. The historical, social, political, and cultural context of professional social work education in India has significantly shaped the profession's development and role in addressing the country's diverse social challenges and issues individuals face.

2. Professional education curriculum, qualification/registration system, and related legislation

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) describes social work as both an academic field and a practice-oriented profession (Ng, 2014). In India, the curriculum for social work has evolved significantly over time, primarily due to the initiatives of the University Grants Commission (UGC), which operates under the Ministry of Education's Department of Higher Education. The UGC has assumed this role, possibly because there is no specific professional council for social work in India. The professional education curriculum is carefully designed to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and ethical principles required to excel in their respective fields (Pandey, 2011). This program typically entails a comprehensive academic curriculum, practical training, and clinical experience. It encompasses theoretical knowledge and technical proficiency, including internships or clinical rotations. These opportunities are typically provided through universities, colleges, professional associations, or online platforms. The social work curriculum is designed to meet the specific demands of the social work profession, ensuring that social work graduates are well-prepared to meet industry standards and ethical obligations when dealing with individuals in society (Segal & Peled-Avram, 2024).

Qualifications and registration systems are essential for maintaining professional standards and protecting the public interest (Hallahan & Wendt, 2020). The registration system aims to ensure competency, protect the public, and maintain professional standards. These process systems typically involve a combination of academic qualifications, practical experiences, and examinations. Once these demanded requirements are met, individuals will be awarded a license or certification to practice their profession by the authoritative bodies, often granted by government bodies. Licensing boards and regulatory bodies oversee these

systems, ensuring that professionals adhere to ethical codes of conduct and maintain competency through continuing education (Bevan, 2004).

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has been instrumental in updating and standardizing the social work curriculum in India. Notable efforts include the formation of the first and second UGC review committees in 1960 and 1975, respectively, and the launch of the UGC Model Curriculum for Social Work in 2001. Additionally, various frameworks and organizations have contributed to the development and regulation of the social work profession and its practitioners in India:

Learning Outcomes-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF): Introduced in 2019 for the Bachelor of Science in Social Work, the LOCF aims to improve the quality and relevance of social work education by clearly outlining the expected learning outcomes for students (Singh, 2021). This framework aligns the curriculum with national standards and global benchmarks to ensure that graduates have the necessary knowledge, skills, and values for professional practice. However, its implementation in Indian universities has encountered challenges (Tripathi, 2018).

Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI): One of the earliest efforts to formalize social work education in India, the ASSWI operated as a voluntary association of social workers. It gained momentum between 1977 and 1981 due to a dedicated leadership team. In 1993, the ASSWI drafted the National Council for Social Work Bill to further institutionalize the profession (Baikady et al., 2021).

Indian Society of Professional Social Work (ISPSW): Established in 1970 by Dr. R.K. Upadhyaya and his team at the Central Institute of Psychiatry in Ranchi, the ISPSW was initially known as the Indian Society of Psychiatric Social Work. The society focuses on advancing social work education, research, and practice in India, with a particular emphasis on addressing social and mental health challenges through interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building (Howard, 1971).

National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI): Founded in 2005, NAPSWI is a national-level, non-profit, and non-political organization dedicated to promoting the social work profession. Its goals include improving service standards in the social welfare and development sectors, advocating for social work professionals, and protecting their interests.

Professional Social Workers' Association (PSWA): Established in 1985 and based in Chennai, the PSWA serves as a forum for social work professionals, particularly in Tamil Nadu. The association later merged with the Indian Council of Social Welfare

(ICSW), originally founded in Paris in 1928 and now headquartered in Mumbai. In 2011, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) launched the National Network of Schools of Social Work, conducting consultations to establish minimum standards for social work education (Nadkarani & Desai, 2012). By 2021, around 526 institutions in India were offering social work programs, ranging from certificate courses to doctoral studies (Prasad et al., 2021).

3. Actual conditions of the field placement (practicum) training in professional social work education

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2014) describes social work as both a practice-oriented profession and an academic discipline. It includes traditional activities, social development, knowledge, values, and practices (Hare, 2004). As a discipline, social work promotes social change, development, cohesion, empowerment, human rights, collective responsibility, and the liberation of individuals and communities (Ku, 2015; McLaughlin & Scholar, 2015). Key principles of the profession include social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity (Ng, 2014). To create effective practices and educational frameworks, regular reviews and reflection are crucial. Field practicum, a fundamental aspect of social work education, provides experiential learning opportunities. It helps students handle uncertain situations, apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, resolve conflicts in action, and work collaboratively with others (Chen & Russell, 2019; Khanam, 2015). Social work, as a multi-faceted profession, requires students to cultivate critical reflection skills and the ability to work effectively with diverse populations to address concerns and challenges. Field placements, also referred to as practicum training, are integral to bridging classroom learning with real-world application. These programs equip social work students with the essential skills and knowledge needed for professional growth. They emphasize the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application, fostering self-awareness and self-assessment as key components of effective social work practice (Noronha & Monteiro, 2016).

The comprehensive training program encompassed direct field interventions, orientation training, individual conferences, group conferences, field seminars, study camps, and other professional development activities. This program offers students practical experience in social work practice, enabling the development of essential professional skills, ethical principles, and an understanding of the challenges encountered in diverse practice environments. Additionally, it provides opportunities for transformative student learning and fosters professional socialization (Lewis & King, 2019). The faculty advisor and field supervisor are key in

facilitating these learning activities. Field placement typically occurs in various settings, including governmental agencies, NGOs, hospitals, schools, and community-based organizations, aiming to provide students hands-on experiences working with individuals, families, groups, and communities (Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2018).

However, the conditions under which social work training takes place can vary significantly, depending on institutional resources, agency capacities, and societal contexts. Factors that contribute to limited capacity in social work include the levels and content of standard professional training, as well as the recruitment of staff to universities and colleges as social work educators (Grady et al., 2020; Orme & Powell, 2008). The diversity of placements can also result in inconsistencies in training quality. Some organizations may lack the necessary infrastructure or trained supervisors to effectively mentor students, thereby limiting their learning opportunities (Kalinowski et al., 2012). The quality of supervision provided is a critical factor in the effectiveness of social work field education. Knowledge and understanding of the placement context are paramount considerations in this regard. Supervision is core to social work fieldwork, enabling professional development and mastering core skills through integrating theory and practice (Paracka, 2012; Zuchowski, 2016). Ideally, social work students are mentored by experienced professionals who can offer guidance, constructive feedback, and a safe space for reflection. However, in many cases, supervisors may be overburdened with organizational responsibilities, leaving limited time for students' engagement. Social work practice educators face challenges such as workload, lack of knowledge, and isolation, which affect the quality of practice learning experience for students (Domakin, 2015). Supervisors often face the challenge of balancing organizational responsibilities with providing adequate support to social work students to enhance training for field work (Nordstrand, 2017). High workloads and limited resources significantly impact students' learning in the social work degree, posing challenges to supervision. (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016). This can result in students receiving inadequate support, potentially hampering their professional development.

Students in field placements often find themselves juggling academic commitments alongside the demands of their practicum training. They face challenges juggling multiple roles and responsibilities (Hemy et al., 2016). They may be expected to manage caseloads, attend meetings, conduct assessments, and even lead interventions. While these responsibilities are essential for learning, they can become overwhelming, particularly in organizations with high workloads and limited resources. Additionally, certain placements may assign students clerical or administrative tasks that do not align with social work objectives. Field placements

frequently expose students to the complexities of real-world social work, including ethical dilemmas and resource constraints. For example, they may encounter cases of domestic violence, substance abuse, or child protection issues, which require an in-depth understanding of ethical principles and cultural sensitivity. Social work students encountered ethical challenges during their field placements, which they eventually adapted to passively due to inadequate support (Wu et al., 2021). As outlined by Eriksen & Gradovski (2020), field placements provide students with a comprehensive understanding of four distinct themes of ethical dilemmas: 1) Structural conditions, 2) Lack of knowledge, 3) Direct work with service users, and 4) Interaction with others within the organizations. An ethics course integrated into the social work undergraduate curriculum equips students with a comprehensive understanding of confidentiality regulations and the necessary analytical skills to navigate ethical dilemmas encountered during fieldwork training (Segal & Peled-Avram, 2024b). However, in the Indian context, the lack of proper councils limits the social work candidate with such training. Navigating these challenges is critical for developing professional competence, but social work students may feel emotionally drained or unprepared without appropriate support and debriefing. Institutional policies and the broader social work education system also influence the success of field placements. Programs' coherence and classroom preparation for placement directly enhance students' learning outcomes. Conversely, placement quality indirectly influences students' learning outcomes through its impact on program coherence (Caspersen & Smeby, 2021).

To enhance the conditions of practicum training, several steps can be taken. Universities and agencies must collaborate to design structured and meaningful placements that balance learning opportunities with manageable workloads. Regular training for field supervisors can improve the quality of mentorship, while reflective practices such as peer discussions and debriefing sessions can support students emotionally and intellectually.

4. Post-graduation (post-qualification) workplaces and the state of employment

In India, individuals who have completed a Master of Social Work (MSW) have access to a various range of job opportunities across multiple sectors, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), health care, mental health service sectors, education sectors, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and government agencies. Furthermore, the opportunities are not confined to India but extend across diverse industries and specialized domains globally.

Non-government Organizations (NGOs): MSW graduates are often employed as social workers, project coordinators, program managers, and counselors within NGOs. The focus areas of these organizations are community development, child welfare, women's empowerment, and rural development. These organizations directly interact with the communities, program implementation, and advocacy (Ruth et al., 2015).

Health Sector Social Work: In hospitals and healthcare settings, MSW professionals play pivotal roles as medical social workers, patient counselors, and healthcare coordinators. These social workers help individuals and families access vital healthcare resources and provide psychosocial support to manage chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses. Their duties include mental health therapy, case management, health interventions, and more. They also facilitate referrals to other services and work to remove obstacles that might prevent their clients from receiving the necessary care (Baum et al., 2016).

Educational social work: MSW graduates often pursue careers in educational settings, taking on roles such as school counselors, student welfare officers, and academic advisors. The responsibilities of these professionals are to address students' social, emotional, and educational needs, contributing to a supportive academic environment (Vilbas & King-Sears, 2023).

Mental Health Social Work: Social workers who specialize in mental health offer crucial assistance to clients facing emotional and psychological difficulties. Their roles may include offering counseling services, collaborating with medical professionals, and connecting clients with appropriate mental health resources (Lyman, 2024). Notably, the demand for mental health social workers is growing rapidly, with an 11% increase in job opportunities projected in the U.S. by 2032, outpacing the overall growth in the social work profession (O*NET OnLine, n.d.).

Family, Child, and School Social Work: Social workers in this area focus on promoting the well-being of children and their families. Their responsibilities often include working with teachers, facilitating adoptions, placing children in foster care, and delivering other essential services to support family stability and child development (Abdurakhmanova et al., 2022).

Substance Abuse Social Work: Social workers specializing in substance abuse provide critical support to individuals struggling with substance use disorders. They work in various settings, such as private therapy clinics, rehabilitation centers, medical facilities, and other environments, to assist clients in overcoming addiction and improving their overall well-being (Wells et al., 2013).

Geriatric Social Work: Geriatric social workers focus on addressing the needs of aging individuals. Their services include case management, interventions in cases of elder abuse, and support with end-of-life planning. With a Master of Social Work degree, professionals can pursue diverse career opportunities across multiple sectors, benefiting from a positive employment outlook and growing demand in the field. However, the social work profession in India is not valued and demanded much due to the absence of a strong association and Council of Social Workers.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR): Corporates engage MSW professionals in designing and implementing CSR initiatives for community development and social welfare. The roles in these sectors are CSR project managers, community relations officers, and sustainability coordinators.

Government Agencies: MSW degree holders can find opportunities in various government departments, working as welfare officers, community development officers, and social welfare supervisors. These positions of the MSWs involve policy implementation, program management, and public welfare officers.

The demand for social work professionals in India is increasing, fueled by greater awareness of social issues and the expansion of social welfare programs. Interest in pursuing social work as a career has also risen significantly in recent years (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). Globally, the job market for social workers is steadily growing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment for social workers is projected to grow by 8% from 2022 to 2032, a rate that surpasses the average growth for most professions (Lyman, 2024).

Additionally, an estimated 63,800 job openings per year are anticipated over this period, representing a 7% increase in opportunities throughout the decade (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). These growths are driven by an aging population, increased awareness of mental health issues, and a greater emphasis on social services. The growth rate of job openings indicates the demand for professionals in the field of social work. However, comparatively, the growth rate of social work job opportunities in India is lower due to the diminished demand for social work professionals. Despite the positive employment outlook, new social work graduates may encounter challenges in the job market in India. The profession faces challenges, including limited recognition and varying salary scales. Salaries of MSW graduates can range from ₹2.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh per annum, depends on the sectors, organizations, and individuals' experiences (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). A survey of 2017 social work graduates revealed that while many found employment, 44.5% reported difficulty securing a job they were satisfied with, primarily due to

inadequate salary offers and lack of positions in desired social work settings (Salsberg et al., 2020). This challenge highlights the importance of aligning career expectations with market realities and the potential need for flexibility in job preferences. Despite these challenges, India's growing emphasis on social responsibility and community development suggests a positive trajectory for the social work profession.

5. Current problems and future directions

The 21st century brings a range of complex challenges that require innovative approaches to social work practice. The economic crisis at the turn of the century significantly contributed to the insufficient development of social work as a tool for achieving greater social progress and well-being (Sasic, 2019). In India, the social work profession faces a challenging yet promising landscape influenced by socio-political, economic, and educational factors. Social workers in industrial settings encounter difficulties applying six core social work methods in areas such as labor welfare, economic development, and the well-being of workers and their families (S. D. and S. Singh, 2023). One of the most pressing issues is the lack of formal recognition and regulation for the profession. Unlike many Western countries, India does not have a standardized registration system for social workers, leading to inconsistencies in education and professional practice. A study by Weiss-Gal & Welbourne (2008) across ten countries revealed significant differences in how social work is recognized as a profession.

The study also noted the lack of licensing procedures in Sweden, Hungary, and India, where the title "social worker" is not legally protected. Recently, professional associations and regulatory bodies worldwide have worked to create and enforce ethical guidelines, standards, and educational frameworks. However, the progress of social work in India has lagged behind other countries for various reasons. To address this gap, India needs to develop ethical standards and educational frameworks that are culturally relevant and in line with global practices (Reamer & Nimmagadda, 2017).

This absence of regulation hampers the establishment of a cohesive professional identity and affects the quality of services provided to communities. The lack of strict regulatory structures can lead to ambivalence in professional identity (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006). Regulation of health professionals is essential for ensuring safe, effective, and patient-centered care, and optimizing their implementation can optimize health service quality (Panteli et al., 2019). Social workers in India often encounter limited opportunities for professional

development and career advancement. There is no clear path to promotion or career advancement for social workers in India. The existing regulations do not provide guidelines for promoting the social work profession.

The profession of social work is often undervalued, leading to inadequate recognition and compensation. Historically, social work has been devalued due to biases related to gender, race, and class. The expectation of unpaid labor, such as unpaid student placements, further perpetuates this undervaluation (Carreon, 2024). Widespread misconceptions, ignorance, and a lack of appreciation for the field contribute to its diminished status, leaving the profession underrepresented and with less confidence and influence compared to other occupations (Raniga & Kasiram, 2010). This undervaluation discourages talented individuals from entering or remaining in the field, exacerbating workforce shortages and negatively impacting service delivery. In India, social workers in hospital settings face significant challenges, including a lack of defined roles, insufficient professional supervision, and the absence of national standards. These factors hinder their ability to establish strong professional identities and contribute effectively to patient care (Cleak et al., 2020). Globally, social work thrives as a critical component of healthcare systems, particularly in regions like North America and Australia, where it is a well-established practice area (Cleak et al., 2020).

In India, the social work profession still faces challenges related to recognition, value, and compensation. The demanding nature of the job, which often involves addressing trauma and systemic inequalities, can result in high levels of stress and burnout among practitioners. Without adequate support systems or self-care practices, social workers may find it difficult to maintain their well-being, impacting their ability to effectively serve clients (Piippo et al., 2022). Although social work education through open and distance learning has become more popular in India, it encounters issues such as insufficient fieldwork training, lack of proper supervision, and poor-quality learning materials (Dash, 2018).

However, several strategic directions can be pursued to address these challenges and strengthen the social work profession in India. Firstly, establishing a formal regulatory framework is essential (Worsley et al., 2020). Establishing a formal regulatory framework could enhance social work and help it attain recognition as an entire profession (Hardcastle, 1977). Standardized registration and licensing systems would ensure uniform educational and practice standards, enhancing the profession's credibility and service quality (Piippo et al., 2022). This regulatory framework could address professional mobility, qualification equivalence assessments, and research support. Secondly, investing in professional development opportunities is also crucial. Providing access to continuous training,

research opportunities, and avenues for career advancement can attract and retain skilled social workers. Emphasizing social entrepreneurship, project management, and counseling can diversify career paths and expand the profession's impact (Jose & S, n.d.). Lastly, integrating technology into social work practice presents significant opportunities. Using digital tools for data collection, service delivery, and advocacy can improve efficiency and expand reach. However, it is crucial to address ethical concerns regarding data privacy and access to ensure technology is used responsibly (ISDM, 2024).

Conclusion

Professional social work in India, shaped by its historical legacy, cultural values, and constitutional principles of social justice, addresses critical issues like poverty, inequality, caste discrimination, and gender disparities. Institutions such as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and bodies like ASSWI and NAPSWI have been instrumental in promoting education, social research, and ethical practices while integrating indigenous traditions with Western frameworks to create a culturally sensitive and globally relevant curriculum. Initiatives like LOCF and the development of professional associations aim to enhance standards and ensure competency. Field placement training offers a vital platform for developing essential skills and professional values, yet disparities in supervision, resource availability, and institutional support compromise its potential.

However, challenges such as limited regulatory effectiveness, inadequate supervision in field training, resource constraints, and undervaluation of the social work profession hinder its growth impact. Despite these barriers, the expanding global demand for social workers highlights the profession's significance. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts to standardize educational and practice frameworks, provide continuous professional development, and integrate technology into practice. Emphasizing ethical standards, robust regulation, and career advancement will attract and retain talent, ensuring the profession's sustainability. With strategic initiatives, social work can thrive as a transformative force, fostering empowerment, social justice, and well-being while adapting to the complexities of the 21st century.

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Chapter 5: Iran

Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in IRAN

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Introduction

Social work emerged as a professional field in Iran approximately six decades ago, in response to the societal demand for such services. Geographically, Iran is characterized by its mountainous landscapes, arid regions, and expansive territory within the Middle East. Presently, the population of Iran is estimated to be around 86 million individuals, predominantly adhering to Shi'i Islam. However, the country

is also home to a diverse array of subcultures, local languages, and belief systems. This demographic heterogeneity is reflected in the evolution of various helping mechanisms that have developed in different regions throughout the nation.

Since ancient times, guided by the religious principles of Zoroastrianism and later Islam, individuals have emphasized the importance of supporting those in need. This commitment to social solidarity is underscored in various admonitions known as *Andarz-nameh*, as well as in Islamic texts that advocate for attention to orphans, the impoverished, and families with individuals living with disabilities. This framework has, as observed in numerous other cultures, led to the establishment of several socioeconomic institutions.

Examples of these Islamic institutions include *Khums*, which entails the allocation of one-fifth of an individual's wealth to a designated group of impoverished individuals at the conclusion of the fiscal year, managed by local religious authorities in accordance with specific conditions. *Zakaat* also plays a significant role, encompassing various forms of charity with explicitly defined beneficiaries. Furthermore, the *Waqf* system, which involves the granting of land, property, or specific services for public welfare, operates under established regulations to assist the less fortunate.

Numerous historical instances can be observed in Iranian rituals and festivities that illustrate the provision of compassion towards the weak and disadvantaged, often manifested through a variety of circumstances and justifications. Prof. Morteza Farhadi, a distinguished Iranian anthropologist, dedicated over fifty years to categorizing and theorizing the folkloric models of both unilateral and bilateral assistance systems that have emerged within Iranian local cultures.

Historical, social, political and cultural context of professional social work education

In the early stages of the inaugural social work program at the Tehran School of Social Work, Iranian society was experiencing extensive transitional dynamics. The shift was predominantly from a rural and semi-feudal structure toward a more modernized social framework. This transition was marked by a significant decline in rural and nomadic communities, which increasingly gravitated toward larger urban centers. The ensuing rapid transformation in lifestyle resulted in the emergence of an urban-oriented behavior, particularly among the rising middle-

class families. As a result, this epoch observed the development of a new urban generation within the evolving demographic landscape.

The transformation of urban landscapes was accompanied by the emergence of a vulnerable working class, comprising individuals displaced from drought-affected rural areas and residents of impoverished small towns. This shift gave rise to new social challenges, including commercial prostitution, urban poverty, and child labor. From a sociopolitical standpoint, society continued to grapple with the enduring repercussions of World War II and domestic political turmoil. The educational system remained underdeveloped, with a significant portion of the population, particularly women, lacking literacy. The healthcare system was inadequate, leading many to prefer local healers over hospitals due to limited facilities and prohibitive costs. In response to these pressing issues, the King opted to invite a group of Western-educated technocrats to devise a midterm program aimed at addressing these challenges. This decision marked a pivotal moment for the approach to social services in contemporary Iran. As part of this reform initiative, in 1955, a group of senior officials, led by the head of the Planning and Budget Organization, engaged with Ms. Setareh Farmanfarmaian during an official visit to Iraq, where she was working for a United Nations social service initiative. They encouraged her to return to Iran to train professional social service providers. Ms. Farmanfarmaian, a member of the influential Qajar dynasty, had earned her master's degree from the University of Chicago and was serving as a UN social affairs officer in Iraq at that time.

In 1958, she established the Tehran School of Social Work, initiating her career with a small cohort of students from across the nation enrolled in a two-year program. Within five years, the program was elevated to a bachelor's degree in social work, and by 1970, a master's program titled Social Service Management was introduced at the institution. (Farmanfarmaian & Munker, 2006). Since that time, the field has undergone significant transformations, reflecting both global trends and national developments in education, practice, and social standing.

The first group of graduates from the school was promptly employed by the Labor Camping Organization, municipal child care centers, and the National Petroleum Company following their graduation. Subsequently, the scope of employment broadened to include areas such as Family and Children Welfare, family courts, children's correctional facilities, and rehabilitation centers (Farmanfarmaian, 1978). In the following years, social work education proliferated across various institutions. Notably, the Yakhchi-Abad High School of Social Work, associated with the former Women's Organization, and the Higher School of Education, linked to the Queen Farah Foundation, offered programs in social work education. The

Islamic Revolution of 1979 brought about significant transformations within social service organizations and educational institutions dedicated to social work.

Social work programs encountered significant obstacles from hardline factions due to their perceived association with Western cultural influences. In 1980, the entire higher education system was suspended as part of an Islamic purification initiative known as the Cultural Revolution Program. The subsequent eight-year conflict resulted in numerous injured veterans, referred to as *Janbaz* in Farsi, as well as families mourning members who were killed, termed martyrs or *Shahid* in Farsi, or who were imprisoned during the war. This situation highlighted the critical need for social work services, which was recognized by the governing authorities. Following this period, educational activities resumed, initially through short-term training programs, and later at the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences and the University of Allameh Tabatabaei. The involvement of social work students and their innovative proposals during natural disasters, such as the devastating Bam earthquake, along with their effective collaboration with supportive organizations to implement poverty alleviation initiatives, underscored the essential role of social work.

Professional education curriculum, qualification/registration system, and related legislation

Social work programs in Iran do not uniformly adhere to a single curriculum; rather, they may exhibit subtle variations from one university to another. To provide a clearer understanding, a brief overview of the types of universities in Iran that offer social work programs would be beneficial.

The data displayed in the table below reveals that the number of universities offering admission to social work students is restricted. Nevertheless, programs are available at various academic levels, ranging from two-year associate degrees to doctoral degrees. Furthermore, both public universities, which provide these programs at no cost, and private institutions offer social work programs.

Table: sorts of universities of Iran in which social work program is offered

Category	under the curriculum of	Type of admission	Number of universities throughout the country (BSW, MSW, DSW)	Way of admission
1- Governmental	(MSRT ¹)	Tuition-free or Paid	At least six universities (two have MSW and one has a PhD)	General admission exam for BSW, special admission for postgraduate
2- Medical Universities	MOH ²	Tuition-free	at least six universities three have MSW and one has a PhD	General admission exam for BSW, special admission for postgraduate
3- Islamic Azad University (private)	MSRT	Paid	Several units No postgraduate currently	General admission exam
4- University of Applied Science and Technology (private)	UAST ³	Paid	Many units across the country- No postgraduate currently	Minimum GPA in High school- No admission exam
5- Payame Noor university	MSRT	Paid	Several units across the country- No postgraduate currently	Minimum GPA in High school- No admission exam- in-person attendance is not mandatory

1 the ministry of Science, Research and Technology

2 the Ministry of Health and Medical Education

3 Social work programs are offered at associate and continuous tow-year bachelor's levels and follow an independent curriculum

6- Open Higher Education Institutes (virtual and in-person)	MSRT	Paid	Several institutions across the country- No postgraduate currently	Minimum GPA in High school- No admission exam- virtual centers with social work programs are few.
7- University of Imam Hossein (Army social work)	MSRT	Tuition-free- under IRCC ⁴	One center currently	General admission exam and a special interview- has MSW

The organization of classrooms in social work education has traditionally been conducted in person, with face-to-face education being the preferred and primary mode of instruction.

This approach is underscored in the updated Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training (Ioakimidis & Sookraj, 2021), which emphasizes the importance of in-person learning. However, some educational institutions have adopted a hybrid model, offering a combination of in-person and online courses. Additionally, there are a few programs that are entirely online, with students required to complete fieldwork in identified organizations. In these programs, students are supervised by both a direct field supervisor and a university professor who oversee their training process. Furthermore, students may engage in online meetings with their professors at least three times per term to support their learning and development.

Social work education is available at various academic levels, although specialized branches are relatively rare. The predominant focus of the discipline is on generalist social work, which is offered at the associate (two years), bachelor's (four years), master's (two years), and doctoral (four years) levels. However, certain programs do delineate specific specializations. For instance, at the associate level, the University of Applied Science and Technology, which has numerous branches nationwide, provides a program that encompasses four subfields: family social work, childcare social work, legislative social work, and social emergency work. Furthermore, social work focused on children and adolescents has recently been introduced at the

4 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

master's level in several universities. Additionally, students pursuing a master's degree in social service administration can choose this major, as its curriculum closely aligns with that of a Master of Social Work (MSW). Those holding an associate degree have the option to transition into a bachelor's program (discontinuous BSW), allowing them to obtain a bachelor's degree after an additional two years of study.

Undergraduate students in social work education must complete three fieldwork placements, typically across five or six terms. Master's students are required to take a practical course focused on Social Work Supervision.

Actual conditions of the field placement (practicum) training in professional social work education

An essential aspect of the social work discipline is the incorporation of practical experience through internships during academic studies. This allows students to implement their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings where social work services are delivered to clients. Such opportunities are invaluable for those pursuing a career in social work.

In Iran, the inception of the social work discipline in 1955 has led to internships being regarded as a crucial component of the educational curriculum for social work students.

Currently, students enrolled in both associate and bachelor's degree programs are mandated to complete internship courses. Bachelor-level students specializing in individual social work are required to participate in internships across two academic semesters, accumulating a total of 250 units and committing 250 hours per semester. In contrast, those focusing on group social work must complete 4 units of internship within a single semester. For students engaged in community work, the requirement is to fulfill 250 hours of internship in one semester to earn four units. Internships are also designed for master's and doctoral candidates, with the distinction that instead of participating in the internship themselves, students acquire skills on how to oversee interns. To embark on their internship journey, social work students must initially select an internship unit at the semester's outset. After appointing a supervisor, they convene a meeting to establish a placement for the student that aligns with the social work internship methodology: whether it be individual, group, or community-focused. They then obtain a letter of introduction from the university and pay a visit to the internship facility. During their discussions

with the internship supervisors, they finalize essential details concerning the intern's responsibilities at the organization, the nature and techniques of reporting, scheduling, and venues for supervision meetings, the dynamics between the intern and the supervisor, and criteria for evaluating both the student's internship and the internship organization itself, among other aspects.

There are several challenges in field placement in Iran. A study examining the challenges encountered during social work internships identified several critical issues that can impede the professional development of students. These include insufficient collaboration from institutions, the assignment of tasks that do not pertain to social work, a decrease in the number of available institutions compared to previous years, inadequate and inappropriate supervision from faculty, low salaries for professors, arbitrary decision-making by supervisors, and inconsistencies in student evaluations. Additionally, there is a lack of effective communication between supervising faculty and the university, a tendency to reduce internship issues to mere administrative concerns, an inability to attain specialization in various social work domains, a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application during internships, low motivation among students—particularly male students—transportation difficulties, and challenges in establishing professional communication (Parvin, 2015)

In the end, it is important to highlight several additional aspects regarding internships.

- Certain universities with a more extensive history and established faculty often possess a formalized internship guide that delineates the responsibilities of the supervisor as well as the criteria for assessing the internship experience. This practice is also referenced in the international standards for social work education. Within these institutions, a designated professor typically oversees the coordination of internships.
- No established internship centers are specifically designed to train social work interns in Iran. Consequently, internships are typically conducted in institutions that offer services to clients on a daily or 24-hour basis, often without a structured plan for student education. This absence of designated educational opportunities for internships represents a significant challenge within social work programs.
- While certain internship institutions offer opportunities for individual placements, there are typically fewer organizations that are well-suited for group and community internships.
- A considerable amount of internship support institutions, particularly within the private sector, are led by social workers. In many cases, specialized departments are managed by graduates in this field, which streamlines the

process of accepting students and enhances the training experience. This arrangement presents a valuable opportunity for interns, as these supervisors possess a deep understanding of social work, enabling them to offer more effective and enriching learning experiences. However, this is not universally applicable across all institutions.

- Supervisors who are well-versed in the theoretical foundations of social work and possess practical experience in social service organizations are better equipped to assist interns. Their familiarity with social resources, relevant legislation, and a genuine interest in mentorship are crucial for fostering a productive learning environment. In Iran, however, the training of supervisors to build organizational capacity or support university initiatives is often not prioritized, and there are no established requirements for completing specialized courses to qualify as internship supervisors.
- The motivation and engagement of students play a crucial role in the success of their field placement. Professors and internship supervisors can significantly influence this motivation. Additionally, the prevailing labor market conditions and the broader domestic and international social environment can impact students' willingness to participate in educational settings and foster their critical thinking skills—a challenge particularly pronounced in the Middle East.
- Positive experiences and lessons learned from internships can significantly influence the quality of subsequent periods of education and the motivation of future interns. Some internship programs incorporate a "lessons learned" section, which helps to quantify this impact.
- Establishing clear evaluation criteria and providing timely feedback from internship supervisors can enhance the attractiveness and utility of internships for students. By identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and offering constructive suggestions for improvement, supervisors can demonstrate the tangible effects of feedback on the quality of students' future work. However, practices regarding supervision can vary considerably among Iranian universities.
- Universities must support internship supervisors—including appropriate payment, transportation provisions for faculty traveling to internship sites, and other incentives—to foster supervisor motivation. In Iran, the current challenge lies in the low remuneration provided to internship supervisors, which has diminished their motivation to engage consistently and prepare adequately to mentor students.
- The university and the fields must constantly interact so that both fields can benefit from up-to-date methods and knowledge and the university has the opportunity to review the content of the programs if necessary. This is an important area that must be worked on seriously in Iran to strengthen.

Post-graduation (post-qualification) workplaces and the state of employment

Employment conditions for social workers in Iran exhibit variability between large and small cities, largely influenced by the availability of facilities and resources. Generally, social workers find opportunities within the government and public sectors, as well as in charities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private institutions, and international entities. This diversity in employment settings reflects both the demand for social services and the capacity of different locales to support such initiatives, highlighting the broader socio-economic landscape of urban and rural areas in Iran.

Government and public sectors:

In the government sector, social work graduates are required to navigate the employment process as determined by the job classification plan established by the country's Administrative and Employment Affairs Organization. This structured process ensures that candidates are assessed based on standardized criteria relevant to their qualifications and skills. Compliance with these regulations is essential, as it guarantees that social work professionals are appropriately placed within governmental roles, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of social services delivered to the community. This plan delineates the diverse government employment opportunities available to social work graduates, ranging from the associate to doctoral levels while outlining the respective job descriptions aligned with each educational attainment. By providing a comprehensive overview, the plan serves as a valuable resource for aspiring social workers to navigate their career paths effectively in public service roles. The proposed plan acknowledges that in instances where cities lack social work graduates or when existing social workers are disinclined to engage with government organizations, individuals with backgrounds in related fields, such as psychology, counseling, or social sciences, may transition into social work roles. This transition would be contingent upon their completion of designated social work training courses, thereby ensuring that a broader range of qualified professionals can adequately address the pressing social needs within their communities while maintaining the standards of practice in the field.

Licenses for the employment of social workers in governmental organizations are granted to different entities, typically every five years, based on government proposals and subsequent parliamentary approval. The shift in national policy towards the privatization of governmental programs has significantly transformed

the landscape of public employment. As initiatives are increasingly transferred to non-governmental sectors and government downsizing becomes more pronounced, opportunities for permanent employment within governmental organizations have diminished, presenting a greater challenge for job seekers. Consequently, entities granted formal authorization are permitted to conduct standardized written examinations and specialized interviews nationwide, thereby introducing a competitive selection process that further complicates access to governmental positions. Candidates' educational and research qualifications play a significant role in the selection process. The selection of candidates for government employment necessitates the completion of both a religious and administrative vetting process prior to finalization. Once candidates successfully navigate these requirements, they are eligible to join the government organization as official employees, thereby contributing to the institution's objectives and upholding its mission in public service.

Private sector:

Private institutions play a critical role in societal well-being. Social workers are trained to assess individual circumstances, facilitate access to resources, and develop interventions that promote recovery, well-being, and empowerment, thereby enhancing the overall efficacy of these vital services. In Iran, a significant proportion of university graduates in social work are employed across various sectors. For instance, social workers frequently lead operations in social work clinics. In addition to these roles, they also serve as social workers in other facilities. Furthermore, private institutions, including psychological counseling centers, addiction treatment facilities, and rehabilitation, care, and maintenance centers for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and children, are also required to employ social workers.

In line with that, social work has made significant strides within various industrial sectors, including automotive companies, railways, and banks, evidenced by an increase in the quantity of employed social workers. Nonetheless, practitioners face substantial challenges, such as structural barriers, ambiguous job roles, and a lack of practical experience among recent graduates (Kalate Sadati & Taheri Ardakani, 2024). Addressing these issues is crucial for social workers to enhance their professional standing and effectively compete within these industries, ultimately contributing to a more integrated approach to organizational well-being and employee support.

Charities:

According to domestic laws, non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit organizations are permitted to operate as charities in areas related to specific target

groups or social work issues. These organizations play a vital role in addressing societal needs, often facilitated by social workers who are responsible for establishing and managing these centers, or who function as technical managers and practitioners. Social workers are integral to the functioning of numerous charitable organizations, where they assume diverse roles ranging from leadership and operational management to technical expertise and direct practice. Their active involvement not only emphasizes their essential presence within these entities but also enriches the overall effectiveness of the services provided. By leveraging their skills in empathy, advocacy, and systemic understanding, social workers facilitate meaningful engagement with communities, thereby enhancing the impact and sustainability of charitable missions.

International organizations:

Social workers may be employed in projects managed by esteemed international humanitarian organizations within the country, exemplified by their contributions to the Red Crescent Society, Doctors Without Borders (M.S.F), RELIEF, and United Nations-affiliated organizations. Their involvement is vital for ensuring that humanitarian efforts are responsive to the needs of affected communities and promote overall social well-being.

Other sectors:

Individuals with Master's and PhD degrees are increasingly positioned to serve within the judiciary system as mediators or licensed experts in family conflict cases. This emerging trend highlights the necessity for robust professional frameworks to support these social workers, especially as legal mandates increasingly call for their expertise. Despite the growing acceptance of their contributions, scholarly literature on the effectiveness and implementation of MSW involvement in judicial processes remains limited, underscoring the need for further research and development in this critical area.

Social workers are employed across a range of organizations, each offering unique employment conditions that influence their roles and responsibilities. Settings, where social workers are commonly found in Iran, include: : State-owned oil and petrochemical companies, hospitals, state-owned companies affiliated with the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (Railways, Airlines, National Open Urban Company (for marginalized areas), large factories such as automobile factories, banks, university counseling centers, courts, prisons, the National Welfare Organization, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, the Martyr and Veterans Affairs Foundation, police and military units, Tehran Municipality, private sectors such as social work clinics, small and large charitable enterprises, and specialized associations supporting specific groups such as people with autism, prisoners,

disabilities, special diseases, and associations supporting vulnerable women and children.

It is pertinent to point out several additional aspects before concluding this section. Government centers are required to implement standardized recruitment tests as a means of ensuring fairness and transparency in the selection process. In contrast, private organizations possess the autonomy to choose between employing testing protocols or conducting specialized interviews, allowing for a more tailored approach based on their unique operational needs and managerial discretion. This flexibility enables organizations to assess candidates' competencies in a manner that aligns with their specific requirements, enhancing the overall efficacy of their hiring practices. The recruitment process in the private and non-governmental sectors is typically more expedited, often marked by short-term contracts that prioritize immediate organizational needs over long-term workforce stability. This rapid hiring approach presents challenges, particularly a notable absence of an authoritative body tasked with evaluating the professional qualifications of graduates. Some non-governmental organizations regard membership in the Iranian Social Workers Association or referrals through the association as valid criteria for hiring social workers. However, it is not mandatory of the employment process.

Employment prospects for newly graduated social workers in private, charitable, and non-governmental institutions are relatively favorable, reflecting an increasing demand for social services. Nevertheless, the salary, benefits, and insurance conditions are generally inadequate. There is a pressing need for an organization dedicated to safeguarding the union and employment rights of these workers. The number of social work graduates is disproportionately low compared to societal demands, and many graduates are hesitant to pursue their careers in the private and charitable sectors due to concerns over job security, stability, and insufficient remuneration. The influx of professionals ill-suited for social service roles undermines the sector's integrity and effectiveness. This situation not only exacerbates job competition among graduates trained in the specific nuances and challenges of social work, but it also diminishes the quality of care provided to vulnerable populations, ultimately impacting public trust in social service agencies.

According to existing regulations, graduates from public universities are required to serve as temporary employees for two years in government-designated centers, which offers them valuable exposure to the professional landscape and aids in their career decision-making. However, this opportunity is not extended to graduates from private institutions, creating a discriminatory environment that exacerbates existing inequalities.

Current problems and future directions

Social work education in my country reflects a mix of strengths and weaknesses, akin to trends observed globally. The challenges can be grouped into three primary domains: university education, internships, and ongoing professional development for practitioners.

University education:

In terms of theoretical education, although there has been a rise in institutions providing social work programs and a movement towards specialization, notable difficulties remain. These issues are particularly pronounced in light of the updated Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training. Critical concerns include the inadequate production of applied and context-specific knowledge, a lack of a coherent framework for interdisciplinary collaboration, and weak ties with reputable international research institutions in social work. As a result, educators often experience a disconnect from current global knowledge advancements. Furthermore, political constraints, the high cost of imported educational resources, and limited foreign language skills among students and faculty impede access to internationally recognized literature, resulting in a dependence on translated materials that may not meet rigorous academic standards.

Furthermore, there is a notable disconnect between course content and the evolving global standards of social work, with insufficient focus on the future needs of the nation. The reliance on faculty without relevant social work qualifications stems from a shortage of social work graduates in advanced studies. Additionally, there is a lack of effective communication between academic institutions and practical fields, hindering the adaptation of educational programs to real-world applications and the documentation of practical experiences in scholarly formats. The specialization within social work remains limited at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and the entry criteria for the profession, primarily based on minimum exam scores, fail to ensure the competency of social workers. Furthermore, the scarcity of training centers for postgraduate students, coupled with the unchecked enrollment in private universities lacking quality assurance, exacerbates the issue. There is also inadequate incorporation of innovative teaching methods, such as digital tools and distance learning, in university curricula. Lastly, the development of courses does not sufficiently address job market demands, leaving graduates ill-equipped with essential administrative skills necessary for success in their careers.

Field placement:

Firstly, some managers of private educational institutions tend to undervalue the

significance of internships, leading to a lack of diligence and motivation among students to pursue these opportunities. Secondly, there is a scarcity of suitable internship environments that cater to the diverse methodologies of social work, particularly in group and community settings. Additionally, there is insufficient collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations, which hinders students' ability to complete their internship requirements for various reasons. Lastly, the low compensation associated with supervision roles diminishes motivation for acceptance, compounded by a failure to recognize the educational benefits of supervision within internship contexts.

In-service training:

In terms of in-service training within the social work profession, several critical issues warrant attention that sometimes leads the practitioner to a sort of "passive/unprofessional action" (Samadina, Javdian, Babaian & Zare Shahabadi, 2023).

Primarily, the training provided to social workers in government sectors often proves ineffective. Training courses often fail to adequately align with the specific responsibilities of social workers in diverse settings, leading to gaps in essential skills and knowledge. Compounding this issue, unplanned transfers of employees between units frequently occur without sufficient preparation for the specialized training required for their new roles. This lack of coherent training strategies ultimately undermines the effectiveness of social workers and their ability to provide quality support in various contexts. Moreover, standardized training titles are often absent for social workers across various centers, which could facilitate uniform professional development. Finally, there is a tendency among organizations to underinvest in specialized training opportunities for social workers. This neglect often results in inadequate prioritization of engaging qualified experts to lead pertinent courses, ultimately affecting the quality and relevance of the training provided to these professionals striving to enhance their skills and competencies.

The future direction of social work education in Iran

Future directions for the helping profession must emphasize the alignment of course content and syllabi with the Global Standards for Social Work Education while also responding to the unique needs of local communities. This necessitates the development of educational materials that not only uphold these global standards but also cater to the specific requirements of both academic and professional sectors.

Furthermore, the proliferation of social work education centers lacking in quality standards—such as qualified faculty and adequate facilities—should be curtailed. It's important to build stronger partnerships with universities and research organizations worldwide to improve education in social work. Additionally, there should be a strong focus on specialization, especially for postgraduate programs. This approach will ensure that future social workers are well-prepared and equipped with the skills needed to effectively help their communities.

Students who achieve proficiency in four key areas of knowledge by graduation will have a significant advantage in the competitive job market and will be better equipped to serve clients effectively. These areas include a thorough understanding of both theoretical and technical aspects of the profession, familiarity with pertinent social resources, knowledge of administrative frameworks, and comprehension of applicable laws and regulations (Mousavi Chelak, 2018). Therefore, social work education must be structured to meet these essential requirements.

Additionally, organizing scientific and educational exchanges within the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with international training workshops, significantly enhances professional development for social work students. Effective coordination with universities and various organizations is essential to establish standardized internship opportunities that can provide practical experience. Furthermore, fostering private sector investment in social work education and research is crucial, as it not only facilitates resource allocation but also promotes innovation and collaboration, ultimately enriching the academic and professional landscape for future practitioners.

Emphasizing the effective use of new technologies must not be ignored as it will improve access to specialized social work services for target populations. Moreover, a more active role in policy-making related to the advancement of social work education in Iran is needed, alongside a greater focus on research that informs both theoretical and practical training. Interdisciplinary collaboration in social work education should be fostered, and attention must be given to teaching self-care and professional development for social workers.

By integrating these elements, educational institutions can better prepare practitioners to effectively address the diverse challenges faced by communities, ultimately enhancing the impact of social work practice.

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Chapter 6: Philippines

International Comparative Study on the Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in Asia: Development of Registration Systems for Qualification Holders

The Philippine Experience

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The Philippine Archipelago is known as the *Pearl of the Orient Sea* boast of vast cultural heritage, indigenous customs , traditions and values surrounded by the richness of resources from the land of our ancestors. AS of 2024, the population has reached 115,843,670 spread around an archipelago of over 7,100 islands. Located in the Southeastern Asia, separated with bodies of water with the total land of almost 300,000 square kilometers. There are three major island groups consisting of Luzon in the north, Visayas in the middle and Mindanao located in the South with more than hundreds of dialects. Historical evolution of the social welfare in the country stems from the pre-colonial circa of the Filipinos. Barangays of the Philippines were composed of many households, generally about 30 to 100, within shared kinship ties (Orzech, A.,2023). Cited in the publication in the 2012 Asian development KALAH-CIDSS project in the Philippines: Sharing knowledge on community-driven development, autonomous existence of these barangays or villages operating independently. General welfare also governed by laws and culture advocates the culture of provided mutual support and protection for all. The progression of the evolution of the social welfare and social work practice in the Philippines have truly progressed with the changes of times, transformative nature of social work practice and the continuing evolution of the needs of humankind. The passing of the social work law on June 19, 1965 , Republic Act 4373 known to

have provided the regulation for the practice of social work , of which it included the operation of Social Work Agencies in the Philippines later amended by Republic Act 5175. The competition of the Bachelor of science in Social Work after the completion of the academic classroom subjects both for social work and general education subjects is the mandatory completion of the minimum 1,000 social work supervised field work practice during the senior years. To better prepare the students for generalist social work practice, the Social work field instruction program have two division, first is working with individuals , groups and families, a minimum of five cases and one groupwork conducted. The second part is community organizing, where students are deployed whether in a rural or urban setting. Documentation of the SW field work program experiences but not limited to journals, narrative of case conferences, casework illustrating the beginning skills of utilizing the theories, intervention and the hours completed needs to be signed both by the school and agency SW supervisors, who must possess updated Social Work PRC license.

Upon completion of the BS Social work Degree is just the beginning of the preparation, as then SW graduates prepares to take the Professional Social work Licensure Examination by the Philippine Regulation Commission Social Work Board of Examiners on a yearly basis with the exception during the pandemic. The Professional Regulation Commission clearly provided the guidelines and the examination covers the standard curriculum content in all four areas consisting of Human Behaviour and Social Environment (HBSE), Social Welfare Policies, Programs and Services (SWPP), Social work Practice focus on the core social work methods of working with individuals, social groupwork and community organizing and Field instruction which focuses on the application of theories to practice reflecting the beginning skills as a generalist.

Status of Social Work Education in the Philippines

The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020 brought forth many challenging realities for the social work education most specific for the implementation of the Social work Field Instruction Program(Au,c,et. Al, 2023). Social work training pre pandemic were geared towards the face to face interaction between the client and the social work students. Simulation exercises on communication focused on both non verbal and verbal cues, which provided a strong sense of rapport building that made interviews and data gathering processes more accurate. Validation of data gathered aside form document assessments can be done through professional observations , interviews and collateral interviews. However, the pandemic proved to be very challenging as social work educators and institutions offering social work programs had to respond to the need to recalibrate the program

implementation to address the needs brought forth by the pandemic. In many universities and colleges, course packs were developed for each subject utilizing online library resources and other creative sources like online videos, journals and access to online materials of the library. This provided an alternative specifically for students who experienced connectivity issues. The weak internet connections and at times no connections posed concerns and problems.

In addition, the unavailability of multiple gadgets became a struggle for many families especially for those whose income was not sufficient to purchase additional computers for the online classes, aggravated by the reality that many families faced the increased cost of connectivity expenses. The absence of a suitable place in most homes to attend online classes specially if there are two or more students in the family, in addition, faced with the reality that each member had to struggle to find ways and means to adjust to the demand of the times.

On a more challenging note, the implementation of the social work fieldwork program considered as the core foundation of developing a practice-based experience for social work students was initially near impossible to implement. However, one distinct characteristics of social workers when confronted with this was the sense of creativity and resourcefulness, stakeholders specifically educational institutions and the educators, online platforms and other alternative options were developed and piloted. It was a limited experience but was considered as one of the best options given the limitation posed by the pandemic.

The National Association for Social Work Education Incorporated previously the Schools for Social Work Association of the Philippines (SSWAP) is the National umbrella of social work schools and educators in the Philippines, has a crucial and significant role in the formation of the national social work education. It was in 1977 when the Professional Regulation Commission approved SSWAP's recommendation on the Social Work Licensure examination coverage and the percentage of ratings for each sub-topic.

Registration and incorporation in December 1990 with Securities and Exchange Commission of which the former SSWAOP adopted the name NASWEI. According to the by laws of NASWEI, one of the main objective is the promotion and maintenance of the high standard and delivery of social work education in the country. The standardization of the social work curricula is considered to be one of the most significant function and at the same time serves as a forum when concerns and other merging issues that could potentially impact social work education can be done. Much more, the promotion of research in the conduct of the development of indigenous teaching materials and other innovations that are culturally and

gender inclusive. Overall, NASWEI plays a pivotal role to ensure and improve quality of Social work Education and practice in the Philippines.

Membership and active participation in international organizations like the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE) and many others contributes to the enhancement and intercountry learnings on a global scale.

The pandemic was both challenging and frustrating, however, out of it came out some of the best practices of schools of social work in the country that was both innovative and creative that continue to benefit and compliment current practice in Social work education.

- Social Work professional subjects were enriched with the development of course packs that utilized online materials for references and original learning materials produced by Social work educators.
- Innovative Social Work field practice program for SW students within the universities under the community extension or volunteer work program. University of the Philippines Diliman, Ugnayan ng Pahinungod utilized its online platform in providing Psychological First Aid to the UP Diliman Community as an online Social work Field placement in partnership with the UPD Health Services. Other innovations from various fields were also creatively designed to provide the opportunity for the practicum.
- Prioritization of the provision of mental health support as part of the preparation of Social work students in the conduct of their field placement.
- Enrolment became more flexible as current Educational program advising, guidance has the option to shift to online platforms.
- International and local webinars serve as supplement and alternative classes taking into purview the global context of analysis of the person in the environment scheme.
- Shift to online classes as an immediate alternative response in cases wherein typhoons, flooding and other natural or man-made disasters affects any school days.

Post-pandemic practices considered as promising innovations geared to creatively teach social work to match the changing times addressing the need to the vulnerable sectors being served. Enhanced by the advocacy to not only prepare students academically, but an equal importance to teaching the balance of mental health which is one of the priority in the holistic academic preparation of students.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) funded a project proposed by the National Association for Social Work (**NASWEI**) and co managed by the University of the Philippines entitled “**Popularize Social Work as a Developmental Profession and Pursuing Excellence in Social Work Education**” commenced and completed last 2022. The following descriptions were based on the content of the various section of the project,.

The project aimed to promote transformative social work and pursue excellence in social work education including the four independent project.

- a) video production on fields of practice and career paths in social work;
- b) social work research for curricular improvement and capability building;
- c) teaching materials development
- d) conduct of capability building activities for social work faculty and students.

Component 1: Video production on the fields of practice and career paths in social work

The goals of the project were for the advocacy to increase employability of social workers and popularized and increase enrolment in BS Social Work degree. The first video production aimed to present to senior high school students and teachers what social work profession. Divided into two parts, Interview people on their knowledge of the social work profession. The second part is an interview with Retired Prof. Thelma Lee Mendoza and her response to the information shared by the interviewed individual in the first video. The second video is a presentation of the different sectors of social work practice and possible career paths. The primary objectives were to educate senior high school students and other viewers on the different fields of practice in social work and the potential career paths and potentially select social work to study.

Component 2: Social Work Researches

Participated by selected NASWEI member schools, three research studies were conducted to serve as bases for policy and program development in social work education. Hereunder are the research topics:

a. Mental Health of Faculty and Students in the Midst of the Pandemic

The study resulted to the following recommendations:

1. Promote awareness building on mental health and well-being should be conducted for Social Work faculty and students to prepare them in times of events beyond their control.
2. Inclusion on topics on mental health and well-being in the social work curriculum.
3. Promotion of mental health and well-being in schools, especially among young students who are prone to suicidal attempts brought about by negative emotions, thoughts, reactions, and behaviours.

b. NASWEI Tracer Study on the Graduates of BS Social Work from 2010-2020: Understanding the Link between SW Competencies and Employability of Graduates

The study reviewed and assessed the profile of BS Social work graduates (sociodemographic; educational background, employment status); the extent to which the curriculum prepared social work graduates in their current profession; the skills and competencies, and attitudes they demonstrate to exemplify professionalism in social work education formation; extent of employability of BSSW graduates; and, the level of satisfaction in their current job (in terms of: compensation and benefits; job functions; work environment and resources; career development; and, relationships with colleagues. It assessed the significant correlation between: selected profile characteristics and employability; competencies demonstrated and employability; and, level of job satisfaction and employability (Caingcoy et al., 2021).

Based on the findings, the study recommended the following:

- social work schools to sustain and continuously revisit the curriculum to be more responsive to changing times and to the multicultural practice of the profession.
- Schools of Social Work need to strengthen the development of soft skills including self and social awareness, values and ethics and the development of positive attitude among its graduates.
- Schools of Social Work through NASWEI are encouraged to actively participate in the trainings, seminars, workshops duly organized by the association that will help them assist in the continuous retooling of social work practitioners and educators, curriculum development, and avail opportunities in research endeavors.
- The need to strengthen partnership with Social Work organizations through ASEAN Social Work Consortium Philippines (ASWC -PH) particularly with the Philippine Association of Social Workers, Inc. (PASWI) to initiate activities that will uplift the profession through lobbying of

compensation, benefits, and other career development of social workers in the country.

c. Determination of Board examination performance of Graduates of Social Work

The descriptive-correlational study examined the board examination performance of Social Work graduates among Mindanao member schools of the National Association for Social Work Education, Inc (NASWEI). Quantitative approach, particularly the survey method was utilized. The study covered takers of the Licensure Examination for Social Workers (LESW) for the years 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022. Findings revealed that there is a strong relationship between academic performance in college and the number of attempts and LESW performance. Therefore, passing the Social Work licensure examination begins in the coursework program, social work schools need to look into the following: curriculum development, school admission/retention policy, instructional methodologies, assessment tools, learning spaces, and integration of pre-board/mock board tests. Further studies are to be done on study habits, review preparation, and mental/study behaviour, validation of the assessment tools, and review of NASWEI member schools' curriculum vis-a-vis CMO 39 s2017 of CHE

Component 3: Teaching Materials Development

Aimed at the development and enhancement of teaching materials particularly the twenty (20) course packs for social work professional that include the syllabus, course content, session guides and compilation of relevant materials needed for the courses. This component intends to assist and guide social work schools regarding the standard minimum content as required in the CHED Memorandum Order.

The project team is led by a project coordinator and two project assistant coordinators who plan and manage the project's activities, procedures, and progress and communicate to the course pack writers. The identified course writers were Social Work educators from the various islands and regions in the Philippines, coming from both government and private higher education institutions. This is to ensure representation of the varied contexts and realities of teaching and learning in the Philippines. This will then inform the content and methodology of teaching and learning Social Work courses in the Philippines towards achieving the learning outcomes of the academic program towards a more responsive and effective Social Work education in the Philippines.

Component 4: Conduct of capability building activities

Capability building activities which include trainings and webinars for social work educators and students were conducted in December 2022:

Venue	Topics
NCR (UP Diliman)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Assessment of Student Performance● Social Work Research and Statistics
Visayas (Cebu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Social Work Counselling● Community Resilience Training
Webinars (via Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Maintaining & Promoting Mental Health in a Post-Covid Pandemic World: Dealing with Frustrations and Anxiety, creatively● Webinar on Social Work Practice with Groups

Currently, lessons learned brought forth the identification of various networks and modalities that can eventually be included in the improvement of the social work curricula. Expansion of partner agencies and communities can go beyond barriers as evidenced by the numerous international webinars that served as either additional or alternative classes that brought forth realities in the global context for future social work practitioners can further expand and thus slowly move towards a borderless social work global education geared towards a transformative social work practice.

Republic Act 12080 of December 9, 2024, was the law that institutionalize the “Basic Education Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Act”. advocate for the balance of academic training and balance of mental health wellness specifically in the Education Sector.

This was a timely opportune to look into the advocacy for the creation of post and employment of school social workers in the Philippines specifically in the education setting.

Potentially can ensure appropriate intervention focusing not only on child protection but towards increasing and developing psychosocial support. Deemed important to apply the functions of social work in curative, developmental and especially preventive stances.

Part 1: Historical, social, political and cultural context of professional social work education

The evolution of Social Work Practice in the Philippines reflected the changing landscape of the socio-political-economic-spiritual context of the times. From the precolonial basic services provided by the Barangay system composed of kinship households operating individually and independently to a more systematic, evidence based Social work Practice Profession as it exist today.

Republic Act 4373 enacted as a law on June 19, 1965, provided the guidelines on the regulation of the practice of social work and the operation of Social Work agencies in the Philippines. Two years after, on August 4, 1967, RA 4373 was amended by RA5175. Among other things, two critical requirements rendering of 1,000 SW field practice experience upon graduation from BS Social Work degree and the Passing and registration of the Social Work Licensure examination under the Philippine Regulatory Commission. Registration and Practice of Social Work mandated that no social worker shall be able to practice social work without valid registration.

The recognition and registration of the professional practice of Social Work is granted after passing the Board Examination prepared by the PRC Social Work Board of Examiners, all of whom are registered and prominent social workers in their respective fields. This is being conducted on an annual schedule often administered during the third quarter of the year. It is a practice to provide Satellite-accredited examination venues in order to accommodate social work examinees from various regions of the country. Currently, post pandemic, the annual LSWE has resumed normal operation.

Significant development in the administration of the SWLE was the amendment made dated July 27, 2015, Republic Act No. 10847 known as ***“AN ACT LOWERING THE AGE REQUIREMENT FOR APPLICANTS TAKING THE BOARD EXAMINATION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS, PROVIDING FOR CONTINUING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION, AND UPGRADING THE SUNDRY PROVISIONS RELATIVE TO THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK”*** this was promulgated to address the concerns of social work board exam applicants lowering the age of eligibility from the age of 21 years to 18 years old. This addressed the concern of most applicants who started their academic training much younger and eventually graduating below the age of 21.

In addition, SECTION 3 of the same law amended sections 26, 27, and 28 which included the Continuing Professional Development (CPD), *requiring “All registered social workers to earn forty-five (45) units of continuing CPD courses given by any CPD*

provider duly accredited by the CPD Council for Social Workers as a requirement for the renewal of the professional identification card of social workers.” This meant that PASWI, NASWEI and all Professional SW Organizations represented by the different work settings for social work practice increased their advocacies of providing seminars and workshops targeting the needs of the social workers in their respective sectors.

On April 23, 2023, the Issuance of the Special Temporary Permit (STP) under SECTION 26, authorized a special Professional Licensure Examination for Social Workers given by the Board for Social Workers in the following countries namely, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Al Ahmadi, Kuwait. It provided inclusivity for Overseas social workers who graduated or finished their degrees online who have not taken the board examination before they left the country and provided the equal opportunity to take the SW licensure examination even while overseas. Passing the SW licensure examination may not have any direct benefit while overseas, but once SW OFWs return to the Philippines in the future, they have an option to work as a registered social worker.

Part 2: Professional education curriculum, qualification/registration system and related legislation

The Higher Education regulation whether private or public in the Philippines is regulated and monitored by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED). CHED is an attached agency under the Office of the President, it is a government agency in charge of the higher education institutions for State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Local Universities and colleges (LUCs) and other higher private institutions.

Covering both public and private higher education institutions, degree-granting programs in all post-secondary educational institutions in the country. A mandatory guide, under the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 39 series of 2017 covers Policies, Standards, and guidelines. The Bachelor of Science in Social Work Program is a generalist social work practice utilizing micro-to-macro practice, focusing on human development and social transformation. *The Core values of the social work education fundamentally is rooted in the profession's values, philosophy, principles reflected in the code of ethics.*

CHED CMO NO.11, Series of 2010, known as the Policies and standards for Bachelor of Science in Social work Program. *“RA 7722, the Higher education Act of 1994 by the virtue of 345, regular commission with resolution No 499-2009 dated Dec 23, 2009 provided the general principles and guidelines for the operation of undergraduate social work program in all higher education institution (HEIs).”*

“The 24 sections covered the Authority to Operate, Program specifications, Program Descriptions, Specific occupations or trades that the graduates of the program may engage in; Competency Standards, Framework for a competency Based Social Work Curriculum; a minimum of 149 units, with 72 units of professional social work subjects. 63 units of Ge, 8 units of physical education and 8 units of National Service Training Program (NSTP).”

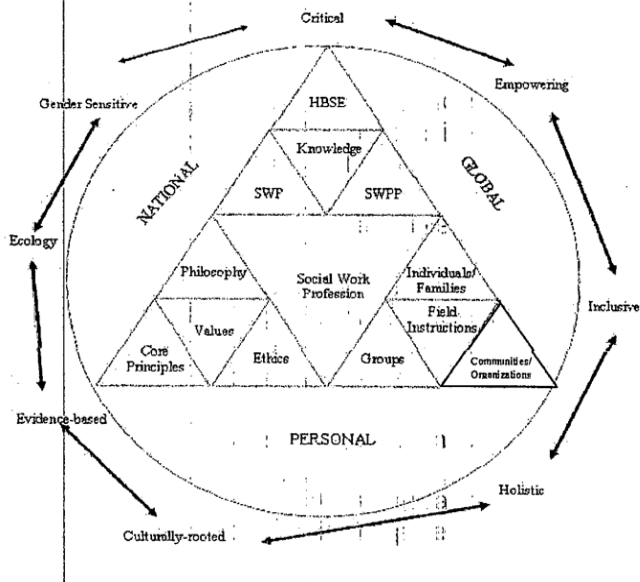
Section 11 highlights the Supervised Field Instruction Requirements, of which requiring students to spend a minimum of 1,000 hours as required by the Social Work Law 4373.

Article VI and VII identified the requirements in hiring the head of social work units. Dean or head of the SW department should possess a PRC Social Work license. and earned a Masters' Degree in social work to name a few. Even the infrastructure like facilities and equipment, classroom and other technology aid has been recommended and to ensure quality delivery of academic training, recommended class of 35 students with special consideration for classes with 40 students on special lectures provided the required facilities are provided.

Guidelines for the Admission, Retention and Residency required admission requirements give premium emphasis that non discrimination is ensured for all applicants. For the best interest of the students, as stipulated in Section 20, maximum academic load is 21 to 30 units per semester. To further provide standard, section 22 identified the four professional social work area with equivalent academic units that is also the coverage for the SW Licensure examination. Human Behavior and Social environment; 15 units, Social welfare Policies, Programs and Services (SWPP) and Research (21 units), Social Work Practice 24 units, field instructions 12 units.

One important development was the implementation of CMO 39 series of 2017, it was to change to the learning competency-based standards or outcome base education. NASWEI played a crucial role as it gathered all member schools and revised the syllabi of all SW professional subjects with recommended references.

Section 7. Framework for a Competency-Based Social Work Curriculum



**Reference: CHED CMO 11, Series of 2010
CMO Series of 39, 2017**

The Philippine Association of Social Workers (PASW) was founded on 12 November 1947, served as the First National Professional Organization representing Social Work in the Philippines. This was incorporated on 18 April 1948, on October 18, 1988 registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission was established and thus a new name was adapted, Philippine Association of Social Workers, Incorporated (PASWI).

All social workers who passed the SW Licensure exam given by the PRC are inducted during an oath taking ceremony as full pledge social workers. PASWI “envisioned a humane and just Filipino society that respects the dignity of the human person through the free and full exercise of her/his economic, social, political, and spiritual rights and responsibilities.”

To operationalize its mission is through addressing the needs of social workers in strengthening professional competence; contribute to solutions and become catalyst for change in analysing and addressing emerging social issues and the likes;

advocacy and promotion on accountability and responsibility among leaders and members that are represented by the various PASWI regional chapters nationwide; build and strengthen solidarity amongst its membership, other stakeholders locally and internationally.

Part 3: Field placement (practicum) training in professional social work education

The core of the Social work curriculum highlights the Social work Field instruction program (FIP) requiring social work students to have rendered a minimum of 1,000 Social work fieldwork practice in social welfare institutions and in communities. Evidence practice would require a comprehensive integrative report which serves as part of the required documentation of the social work field work placement experience. CHED Memo Order No.39,s.2017 clearly states that FI documentation must clearly illustrate the clear integration of classroom knowledge as applied in practice. To ensure this, SW field sharing for midterms and final presentations are presented in a forum type format wherein SW FI students discuss the cases that they handled, working with individuals, families and groups and working with the communities. The helping process illustrated with theoretical applications, interventions and outcomes presented. Social welfare agency supervisors and faculty members enjoined to provide constructive feedback to enhance the learnings of the students.

Numerous researches explicitly shared that actual hands on or practicum experiences of students are essential in developing their competencies. (Bogo,2018) Highlighted that critical to the learning process beyond the classroom is the field experiences of SW students that would hone their beginning competencies to balance of enhancement and development of the students' knowledge and affective processes. This is the reason why identification of partner social welfare agencies and communities has been a major and important task of the SW Fieldwork coordinator of schools offering Social Work Course. To ensure that required the expected learning experiences of the students are provided in a safe, non discriminating and productive environment. It is customary to have the Memorandum of Agreement highlighting the roles and responsibilities of the school, agency and SW FI students. CHED Memo Order No.39,s.2017 further provides guidance that all higher education institutions should adhere to the standard requirements provided by the social agency.

(1) adequate and competent social work faculty to provide supervision to the students;

- (2) partner agencies and communities;
- (3) engagement with partner communities for at least three years to provide enough time for all stakeholders to achieve desired outcomes;
- (4) assigned social work supervisor who is registered and completed fifty percent of their post graduate program in social work, masters in Social work or ay related field.
- (5) provision of social work facilities for field instruction to ensure that social welfare agencies and partner communities are accredited agencies with a licensed social worker willing to supervise students and that it can provide appropriate learning opportunities and workspace for students.” (CHED Memorandum Order No.39 s. 2017).

The ASEAN Social Work Consortium Philippines is a network of Professional Social Work organizations, headed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), The Philippine Association of Social Work Inc (PASWI), National Association for Social Work Education, Inc. (NASWEI); Association of Local Social Welfare and Development Officers of the Philippines, Inc. (ALSWDOPI); Philippine Association of Court Social Workers, Inc. (PACSWI); Association of Medical Social Workers, Inc. (AMSWPI); Department of Health League of Medical Social Workers; National Council of Social Development (NCSD) and Association of Child Caring Institutions of the Philippines (ACCAP). This was the result of the ASEAN Social Work Consortium founded in 2002 of which practitioners and educators from ASEAN countries gathered and created the collaboration and network towards advancing social work education and practice.

Social Work Licensure Examination Results from 2021-2024:

YEAR	NUMBER OF EXAMINEES	NO. OF PASSERS	Percentage of National Passing	Date of SWLE
2024	7113	4587	64.49%	September 2024
2023	6833	3878	56.75%	September 2023
2022	4723	2,955	62.57%	September 2022
2021	1621	612	37.75%	August 2021
2021	1473	495	33.60%	February 2021
Total	21,763	12,527	57.56%	

Social Worker Licensure Exam (SWLE) covered the following topics: Human Behavior and Social Environment. Social Welfare Policies, Programs and Services. Social Work Practices and Field Instructions. The Professional Regulation Commission clearly defined that *“The general passing average rating of at least 70% with no less than 50% score in any subject. An applicant failed thrice for the same grade*

shall not be allowed to take another until at least one year shall have lapsed after the last examination."

As of 2021, the Philippines have an estimated 52,000 registered and licensed social workers based from the Philippine Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) statistics. This included social work professionals working in various fields such as social services, community development, medical social services, court setting, local government, mental health, counselling, adoption, child protection, disaster response and other fields of social work practice. The demand for social workers in the Philippines continues to grow, and the profession plays a crucial role in addressing social issues specifically human rights and social justice.

Part 4: Post-graduation (post-qualification) workplaces and the state of employment; Current problems and future directions

Technology Utilization and Advancement, including AI has been the current trend impacting global social work practice. There are two ways to critically view this, first is the refusal to acknowledge the benefits of the utilization of technology advancement thinking that it can be unethical due to the lessened and absence of human interaction which may compromise the quality of social service provided. On the other hand, AI in particular when used in ethical sphere could actually create a seamless work process and output. For example, minutes of the meetings and other notes that used to be done manually have taken a different turn, or validation of data cross references can be done in a short time. AI now can generate the summary of discussion and provide the narratives in a few seconds, leaving more room to do other things. During the pandemic, the need for hospitalized patient who felt the need to be connected with their loved ones but was separated because of the no visitor policy of all hospitals globally to avoid further spread of the virus, innovation and creativity of the Medical Social Workers at UP PGH created the E-DALAW visit or electronic visitation. This innovation by connecting their patient and their families through using technological tools such as iPad, laptop, cell phones and the likes. Patients who were hospitalized who were previously left with no recourse on their needs to be surrounded by family members, now have the opportunity to virtually be with their families and by doing so has a tremendous impact on their psycho-emotional well-being.

In the area of mental health, there is the growing Recognition of the Need to promote and maintain Mental health and wellbeing for Social Workers which was

triggered and aggravated by the pandemic (Apostol, A. C., 2024). The work social workers do regardless of what sector they serve is extremely demanding and emotionally challenging. Social Workers need to balance and prioritize their workload and well-being. Thus, social work education is has increased the emphasis of mental health wellbeing, supporting the main concept that for one to be able to serve well, preventive practices must be in place (Proctor, E., 2017).

Mental Health has become an area where social workers focused on. The Trauma-informed Social Work practice, recognizing and responding to the effects of trauma on individuals and communities, and the impact on the client system providing a clear identification and understanding of social work intervention to be utilized. Driven by the recognition of the prevalence of trauma in society and the need for trauma-informed approaches in Social Work practice. (Levenson, Jill, 2017)

Leading to discussion on Cultural inclusivity more than ever has been highlighted in series of many international webinar in Social Work with the theme focused on “UBUNTU”. Calling for a genuine advocacy for social solidarity, being interrelated and interconnected amongst the thread of collective wellbeing on a global scale. (Lefa, 2015) Giving us back to our basic premise on believing that all persons by their mere existence have their basic right and dignity (Mayaka, B., & Truell, R., 2021). This highlight the ability of social workers to understand and work effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds. This is an opportunity to indigenizing social work practice in Asia known for the strong sense of faith and spirituality and utilizing this as a framework in the social work practice. Overall, social work not only address and work with problems on the individual, group and family level, but it also looks into systemic histories and create new pathways for the client to empower themselves and address their concerns.

Now more than ever, research as a tool in Social Work practice provides the evidence based results that are needed to influence policy change, programs and offerings and the other similar activities. The utilization of research data is an effective and efficient way to inform decision-making and serves as important guide in the evaluation and effectiveness of interventions utilized, paving the way for an enhanced intervention planning.

Thus, Practice Research has started to gain its popularity again. Social work is a practice based profession of which research outcomes are presented and discussed with various stakeholders, whom are not just passive participants but active and collaboratively working together as co creators. The dynamism brought forth by interactive process highlights the important of validation, reformulation and recalibration of any programs and services can

be done to better respond and address needs, concerns and problems faced by the client system resulting to a transformative response and calibrated version. Holistic approach resulted from the collaboration of all stakeholders in practice research, social workers, administrator, service users, management, peoples' organizations, local and national government, national leaders, researchers depending on the scope and reach of the research. (Candy, 2006)

This resonates well with the social work profession as consultative and collaborative in the form but not limited to inquiring of what people know about that a certain social issues, realities and concerns through interviews, surveys or other traditional models of research such as case studies, ethnographies and similar methodologies.

Another promising area for social work focus is the Green Social work, considered as very timely and long overdue, climate change have impacted our planet severely and integration of green social work in promoting and advocating for environmental sustainability is one of the priority field of social work education and practice. There is an urgency to address environmental and social impact brought forth by many years of environmental neglect and in social work the person in environmental context the need to include the physical environment as this has major impact on the lives of the people we serve (Wu, Greig, and Bryan ,2022).

The shift towards transformative social work practice covering but not limited to child protection, gender and cultural inclusivity, street dwellers, peace and development , and all vulnerable sectors remain to be the advocacy of social workers both in the academe and practice.

Future Directions

In response to the current recognition of the need for the advancement of social work practice, PRC-PRB Mandates the Career Progression and Specialization Program-Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CPSP-CATS). A process that provides potential opportunities for the recognition of social work practitioners and their specialization through their life works. The unique feature would be the possibility of social workers who may not have graduate degrees but the evidence of highly specialize social work practice can warrant equivalency.

Sections 2, 4 and 8 in Republic Act (R.A.) No. 10968 known as the "Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF)Act", have the following objectives: *institutionalization of the PQF to promote " individual lifelong learning and the provision of employee training qualifications that are aligned with the industry standards"; establishment of the*

PQF as a quality assured national system for development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of competencies acquired by the Filipino learners and practitioners; and as aimed by PQF, alignment of local qualification standards with the international qualifications framework “

Sections 4 and 12 of R.A. No. 10912 or the "Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Act of 2016", stipulate the formulation and implementation of CPD programs and a CPSP for every profession. While Section 3 of R. A. No. 10847 amending R.A. Nos. 4373 and 5175 is consistent with the CPD Act of 2016

Intents/ Roles of CPSP-CATS is focused on enhancement of professional competence and specialization; standardizes domestic professional practice competencies; creates structured career pathways; gains international recognition on the comparability and value of learners and workers and supports mobility of professionals globally. (PRC CPSP-CATS)

As of date the committee have accomplishments the Formulation of the Guidelines on the Creation and Implementation of the CPSP for Social Workers (identified career pathways, identified CPSP qualification titles and procedure in the creation of CPSP); Identified 4 Advanced Social Work Practice with Specialization in Clinical Social Work, Community Organization, Social Work Administration and Social Welfare Policy; Organized the CPSP-CATS Committee for Social Workers and Identified and drafted the Professional Practice Outcomes and Learning Outcomes in the Level Alignment Matrix (LAM).

Looking forward and a work in progress are the Finalization of the Level Alignment Matrix; Submission of the formulated Guidelines on the Creation and Implementation of the CPSP for approval by the Professional Regulation Commission; Consultation with the Civil Service Commission and the Creation of the Specialty Groups/ Society.

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Chapter 7: Sri Lanka

The Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in Sri Lanka: Development of Registration Systems for Qualification Holders

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the current state and challenges of professional social work education in Sri Lanka, focusing on the development of registration systems for qualification holders. It provides an overview of the country's context, including its history, cultural identity, and the role of indigenous communities. The chapter also discusses the higher education system and the need for diversifying tertiary education options, particularly in the field of social work. The National Institute of Social Development (NISD) and the Sri Lanka Association for Professional Social Workers (SLAPSW) have been instrumental in promoting social work education and professionalization. The chapter analyzes the BSW and MSW curricula, which align with the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) and global standards for social work education and training. Field practicum plays a crucial role in preparing students for social work practice, with placements in both institutional and community settings. The chapter also highlights the importance of localizing social work principles to address the specific needs of Sri Lankan society. Despite the efforts to professionalize social work, challenges remain in diversifying educational systems, producing professionals, and nurturing community support. The establishment of registration systems for social work qualification holders is

essential for upholding professional standards and addressing workforce requirements. The chapter concludes by presenting a roadmap for the professionalization of social work in Sri Lanka.

Introduction

This chapter attempts to outline professional social work education and describe the current state and issues of registration system of qualification holders in social work profession in Sri Lanka. It also presents the initiatives taken by National Institute of Social Development (NISD) and Sri Lanka Association for Professional social workers (SLAPSW) and the way forward for the professionalization of Social Work. In addition, this chapter analyses current social work activities and stakeholders who can benefit from the professionalization of social work and social work education and training for enriching existing service delivery.

Introduction to Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, historically known as Ceylon, is an island country in South Asia. It encompasses an aerial extent of 65,610 square miles, situated off the southern tip of peninsular India between the latitudes of 5-55' and longitudes 9-51' north and 79-41'-81.53' east. The country is separated from India by a narrow strip of sea, measuring no more than 40 km wide at its narrowest point.

The 2012 census revealed a total population of 20,277,597, with an annual growth rate of 0.7%. By 2024, Sri Lanka's population is estimated to reach 23.10 million, growing at 0.57% yearly. The country's diverse ethnic composition comprises Sinhalese (74.9%), Tamils (11.2%), Indian Tamils (4.2%), Moor (9.2%), Burghers (0.2%), Malays (0.2%), and others (0.1%). In the first quarter of 2024, the labour force participation rate stood at 47%, with males accounting for 66.3% and females 33.7%. Entering the 21st century, Sri Lanka remains an agricultural nation, though its industrial sector, particularly manufacturing, has begun to advance, driven by foreign investments. The economic structure, based on employment distribution, shows that agriculture employs 25.8% of the economically active population, while industry accounts for 24.7%, and services 49.5% in the first quarter of 2024.

Sri Lanka boasts an impressive literacy rate of 91.9%, with male literacy at 93.2% and female literacy at 90.8%. These exceptionally high figures are attributed to the provision of free education and early implementation of welfare services such as universal free education and Health services. Furthermore, according to the

Department of Census and Statistics, the digital literacy rate is 60%, and 21.9% of households possess a desktop or laptop computer in 2024.

The history of Sri Lanka is multifaceted and intricate, influenced by a variety of cultural, colonial, and societal factors. The nation's indigenous customs, including its diverse culinary traditions, demonstrate a profound comprehension of local plant and animal life and their connection to human health (Mihiranie et al., 2020). Notably, Sri Lankan society is marked by prominent social hierarchies and patterns of dominance that are deeply rooted in its social, political, and symbolic frameworks (Munasinghe & Celermajer, 2017). This societal structure has ramifications for numerous aspects of daily life, encompassing law enforcement methods and civic participation (Munasinghe & Celermajer, 2017; Orjuela, 2003).

The cultural identity of Sri Lanka is shaped by its native traditions, colonial past, and ongoing societal changes in the context of globalization and well-being. The nation struggles to maintain its traditional wisdom and customs whilst tackling modern challenges, including non-communicable diseases, sustainable growth, and social unity (Athapaththu & Karunasena, 2017; Mihiranie et al., 2020; Weerasekara et al., 2018). As Sri Lanka progresses, it faces the complex task of reconciling its deep-rooted cultural heritage with the pressures of modernisation and global integration.

Sri Lanka's indigenous groups, including the Vedda, are undergoing significant transformations in their traditional lifestyles due to multiple factors. These include the effects of the Sri Lankan civil conflict, environmental shifts, escalating human-elephant interactions, and societal modernisation (Galappaththi et al., 2020). In response to these challenges, these communities have devised adaptive methods, such as culture-based fishing practices, diversifying their income sources, and preserving adaptive institutions that promote collective action and cooperation (Galappaththi et al., 2020). Notably, whilst indigenous housing practices may be perceived as primitive from a contemporary urban standpoint, they are actually rooted in Buddhist philosophical principles and have sustained these communities for hundreds of years (Dayaratne, 2018). Nevertheless, contemporary housing and planning practices often neglect these conventional sustainability approaches, with scholars seeking alternative methods to develop sustainable mechanisms (Dayaratne, 2018).

In summary, the position of indigenous communities in Sri Lankan society is multifaceted, with these groups facing considerable obstacles whilst also exhibiting resilience and adaptability. It is crucial to acknowledge and value indigenous wisdom and practices, especially in domains such as sustainable housing and planning (Dayaratne, 2018). By combining these traditional methods

with modern techniques, Sri Lanka may be better positioned to tackle socio-economic challenges whilst preserving its distinctive character and diversity.

Contextual background of Higher education

The educational framework has played a crucial role in moulding individuals' lives and, by extension, the nation's development. Established during the 19th-century British colonial period, the current education system is overseen by both central and provincial governments. Sri Lanka's educational structure is divided into five phases: primary, junior, secondary, senior secondary, and collegiate, with tertiary education following. The law in Sri Lanka requires all children to attend school until they reach 14 years of age.

The Education Ministry strongly encourages students to continue their education at least through the G.C.E. Ordinary Level. Subsequent schooling at the college level extends for two more years, leading to the G.C.E Advanced level. Students who successfully pass this examination can then pursue tertiary education. However, gaining entry into higher education has become increasingly challenging. Due to the limited availability of places in Sri Lankan Universities and other Higher Education Institutions, only 9.2% of G.C.E (A/L) examination takers in the 18-22 age bracket gain university admission (UGC, 2022). This stands in stark contrast to countries like the United States, where despite a small proportion of the workforce being employed in agriculture, over 50 per cent of people engage in higher education (Akimoto, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to broaden and diversify tertiary education options to cater to the increasing student population and introduce new academic disciplines, including social work. In recent times, two universities have launched BSW programmes, while one institution offers both BSW and MSW degrees. Therefore, At present, NISD and two universities offer social work degrees in Sri Lanka

The initiative seeks to provide professional services that support individuals in tackling life's obstacles and obtaining high-quality assistance for holistic personal development. In Sri Lanka, the National Education Policy Framework (2023-2033) identified various concerns related to Tertiary Education, which encompasses both Technical and Vocational Education as well as Higher Education:

1. The TVET sector's lack of appeal to school leavers and the growing desire for degree status among TVET students.
2. Constraints in focusing on generating forward-looking employment and addressing global challenges.

3. Disparities in quality standards and their enforcement. A misalignment exists between education and skills development and the demands of the economy and industry.
4. Government funding is entirely supply-driven and input-based, without consideration for areas of highest impact or outcomes. The return on investments is neither tracked nor evaluated.
5. Inadequate consideration of key factors affecting employability and future needs, particularly in light of global risks. These include civic awareness, climate crisis response, financial competence, and entrepreneurial capabilities.

In the last 30 to 40 years, the population of Sri Lanka has witnessed a rise in stress levels among the youth, economic crisis, leading to various forms of mental health challenges. The decline in psychological well-being can be attributed to a range of factors, including challenges in coping with daily stressors, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, financial uncertainty, issues related to child safeguarding due to mistreatment, urban development, population movement, financial hardship, and social strains associated with rapid societal transformations. The circumstances have been further aggravated by the distressing events experienced during displacements, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic turmoil, and various natural calamities. Considering the intricate nature of the underlying factors affecting mental health in Sri Lanka, a comprehensive strategy is required. This can only be effectively tackled by an appropriately trained expert, namely a professional social worker (Vasudevan, 2012). Further, social work role carried out by various officers in the name of development officers in specific departments and ministries. Social workers possess the skills to assess, support, and intercede in matters pertaining to service users and their surroundings for advocating policies with legislative authority. To aid affected individuals and their families in managing life's difficulties, it is vital to take into account the broader causes and conditions when offering assistance. In such scenarios, the expertise of a highly qualified professional social worker is indispensable. Their interventions, based on a thorough methodology, involve examining and investigating the impact of sociocultural factors, family dynamics, and resource availability. This all-encompassing holistic approach aims to address reported issues and enhance the quality of life for those concerned.

Social work education in Sri Lanka

The NISD traces its origin to the establishment of the Institute of Social Work on 29.04.1952 at Colombo. It was established by the Y.W.C.A and Y.M.C.A of Ceylon. It

cross-evidenced with the establishment of the School of Social work in Delhi. Sri Lanka has also been receiving technical assistance from the United Nations and the Commonwealth for the development of the welfare programs in the country. Training of Rural Development officers was initiated in the 1950s, and the program was supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Dr. Dorothy Moses, the first principal of the Delhi School of Social Work at the Delhi University came to Sri Lanka as a consultant under the UNESCO program to provide technical assistance to develop the training programs. She had been an active member of the Young Christian Association of India. This marked the birth of social work education in Sri Lanka and the establishment of the first formal organization to provide professional education for social work. Mr.N Vishvanathan former student of Dr. Dorothy Moses and a faculty member of the Madras School of Social Work developed the first program and became the first Director of studies at the Institute of Social Work in 1954. Professor E.L.Hooker from the USA contributed for the development of social work education by developing the Diploma program in social work, negotiated with the universities to commence a degree and provided consultation to the inter-ministerial committee to establish the Ceylon School of Social Work in 1964. Dr. Gregory De Silva educated at the Pittsburgh University contributed in the establishment of the Ceylon School of Social Work and the deployment of the two year diploma in social work.

Following the country's transition to the Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972, the Ceylon School of Social Work was rebranded as the Sri Lanka School of Social Work. Dr Dudley Dissanayaka, who held an MSW from Minnesota and a PhD from Monash University, Australia, made significant contributions to the field. His efforts were instrumental in establishing the two-year Diploma in Social Work programme in 1978. Dr Dissanayaka's responsibilities included recruiting and training staff, delivering lectures, and organising both domestic and international social work conferences to enhance education in the discipline.

This SLSSW was upgraded in 1992 and re-named as the National Institute of Social Development (NISD) by an Act of Parliament namely: the National Institute of Social Development Act No. 41 of 1992.

It is recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) as a degree awarding Institute in 2005 for Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work in 2008 under section 25 of the Universities Act No.16 of 1978. This institute functions under the purview of the Ministry of Rural Development, Social Security and Community Empowerment as a degree awarding institution producing professional social workers to deliver quality services in the field of social services, social work, social welfare to promote social development.

The institute is engaged in conducting para- professional and professional training for Continuous professional development (CPD) along with collaborative research activities pertaining to aspects of social work education and practice, social welfare and social development in social work. As the premier institution in social work in the country, its **mission** is aimed towards “enhancing human resources for social development through the preparation of competent manpower in social work at all levels such as an entry level para-professional social workers, middle managerial professional social workers and policy level professional to generate and disseminate new knowledge and technologies for social work practice, provide specialized services for social welfare and social development.

Purpose and objectives of this chapter

The purpose of the chapter is to review the progress of social work education and its professionalization to achieve professional status of the BSW and MSW qualifications holders in Sri Lanka. The following objectives

1. To identify historical, social political and cultural context of professional social work education
2. To determine Professional education curriculum, qualification / registration system
3. To determine the actual conditions of the field placement training for professional social work practicum
4. To determine the post-graduation workplaces and the state of employment

Methodology

The methodology for the chapter reviews the existing records of social work education at the National Institute of Social Development. Data were collected from field placement records and employment records available at the school of social work, NISD. The collected data were analyzed to review the attributes of a profession based on the professional social work education and its curriculum and training for social work professional practice, Legal status /professional authority of the profession, and related social sanction / community sanction, code of ethics and sub-culture of professional association and its activities for achieving the objectives of this chapter.

Classification of occupation : Social work as a profession

Sri Lanka has implemented global standards (ISCO-88) for occupational classification, which highly value professional social work. The SLSCO-11, employed for categorising Sri Lankan jobs, positions Professionals at the second level with a single digit of 2. This framework designates Social Work Professionals as 2635002 and social work associate professionals as 345 in the Major and minor groups, respectively. This categorization clearly demonstrates that professional social work is a highly intricate and specialized field. Nevertheless, despite this acknowledgement in international and national occupational classifications, there remains a need for social work education to generate specialists for various contexts. The insufficient importance attributed to this discipline/profession by Sri Lankans seems to originate from the terminology used in local languages. The term 'worker' diminishes the profession and fails to recognise its specialised nature. This lack of recognition is also apparent in numerous State Ministries and Departments, which do not classify social work as a specialized job category. As a result, it is essential to prioritise subject areas that provide proper recognition to social work when recruiting staff (Vasudevan, 2012). Consequently, NISD has begun the process of professionalizing social work activities.

Professional social work education and its outcome

In Sri Lanka, the micro-level practice methods taught in social work were inadequate to address these societal issues. Instead, they needed to be viewed as systemic problems requiring intervention through social policies and programmes. During this time, the government initiated extensive irrigation settlements and comprehensive rural development schemes across the country. "The government's accelerated development projects have had a range of implications for social policies and social workers in Sri Lanka. Projects such as the "Mahaveli" Development, Integrated Rural Development, the Child and Youth Development programs and new human development settlements invariably demand qualified social workers (Ranaweera 2013). Prior to its identification with the development trust, the profession of social work was unknown or generally accepted as one involved only in the implementation of remedial welfare services." (Abraham and Shera 1985) The government's rapid development initiatives had significant consequences for social policies and social work professionals in Sri Lanka. Various projects, including the "Mahaveli" Development, Integrated Rural Development, Child and Youth Development programmes, and new human settlement schemes, created a demand for skilled social workers. Before its association with development efforts, social work as a profession was either unrecognized or

perceived as solely focused on implementing remedial welfare services. This state has been changed with instruction of BSW and MSW degrees. NISD in collaboration with Sri Lanka Association of Professional social workers (SLAPSW), have been involving to legitimize the professional social work.

BSW curriculum has been designed according to Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF, 2015), Global standards for social work education and Training (IASSW, 2020) and adhering Global social work statement and Ethical principles (IFSW & IASSW, 2018). NISD has also had curriculum consultation with IASSW and APASWE in 2013 and improved the existing curriculum in 2013 and again in with establishment of Centre for quality assurance 2023. The existing curriculum has been updated based on stakeholder consultation and required quality assurance standards and NISD has also planned to submit for programme review at the Ministry of higher education, Ministry of education in 2025.

Professional social work education and Training

Sri Lanka remains largely an agrarian and rural nation, deeply rooted in tradition. It is a diverse society where three primary ethnic groups have coexisted for centuries, each boasting about its own historical background and rich cultural legacy. The ideologies of these groups are more influenced by religious teachings than contemporary thought. Buddhism and Hinduism, two major South Asian belief systems, form the philosophical foundation that has fostered not only charitable acts but also addressed the psychosocial requirements of the populace. The conventional family unit plays a crucial role in caring for children, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, the ill, and those in distress. These communities tend to view challenges from a structural perspective rather than as individual issues. Consequently, the social work curriculum, particularly field practice, has been created to align with the localization of social work principles.

According to SLQF (2015), The level descriptor, is a set of *specific* outcome statements, achievement of which is assessed and which a student should be able to demonstrate for the fulfilment of requirements of the qualification i.e. the specific broad abilities that the graduate should be capable of, for award of the qualification. Qualification descriptors for levels 3,4,5 and 6 as follows

Table 01: Mapping of SLQF Levels Descriptors with Programme Learning outcomes (PLOs) of Bachelor of Social Work(Honours)

Categories of Learning outcomes	SLQF Level Descriptors		Programme Learning outcomes (PLOs)	Graduate Profile (Attributes of Qualification holders)
	Core areas covered in the course unit	Descriptors SLQF Levels 3 to 6 qualification holders of BSW		
1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge	Declarative and procedural knowledge Social sciences subjects such as sociology, Psychology, Human growth and development, political science, Anthropology and economics	Should be able to construct and sustain arguments Should be able to solve problems using appropriate ideas and techniques in a professional context	Ability to solve problems, plan and implement responses in complex social situations using applicable knowledge	produce professional Social Workers with a good grasp of social work values, capable of managing social welfare services,
2. Practical Knowledge and Application	Social work methods course social case work, case management, group work, community work, social policy, social work research, social work, social work management Rural Camp (Human settlements and service delivery) and study visits. Total 1000 hours	I should be able to demonstrate thorough and systematic understanding of core aspects of the subject of study. Should be able to accurately use the established techniques of analysis within that discipline I should be	Ability to advocate for vulnerable groups within society at the individual, group and community level.	How to provide social work services to families, individuals and communities with a focus on serving oppressed or underserved populations Earning a BSW degree may open up career opportunities, including entry level positions in areas such as mental

	of supervised two field practice placements in BSW programme Honours optional courses	able to clearly communicate information, ideas, issues, problems and solutions to specialists as well as nonspecialist audiences		health, social welfare, child protection, child welfare, public health and substance abuse etc.
3. Communication	Skills in social work Practice lab Field placement orientation			competent in engaging good quality practice and research
4. Teamwork and Leadership	Event management IT and English	Should be able to ready to exercise initiative, identify situations they need support from others	ability to choose and implement appropriate social work interventions.	competent in engaging good quality practice and research for leadership development
5. Creativity and Problem Solving	Social Entrepreneurship Agricultural and food security		ability to articulate principles of a practice framework for working with multi-cultural groups.	skilled social workers to nurture people's self-reliance and problem-solving abilities.
6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship	Research methods Dissertation			competent in engaging good quality practice and research and promote peace and harmony in multicultural Sri Lanka
7. Information Usage and Management	Environmental management		the ability to evaluate research evidence for best practice	
8. Networking and Social Skills				
9. Adaptability and Flexibility	Attitudes, values, Professionalism and vision for life Social Work Philosophy	Should be able to carry out further training and manage own learning	ability to apply IFSW Code of Ethics & Practice Standards to practice situations.	skilled social workers to nurture people's self-reliance and problem-solving abilities.

10. Attitudes, Values and Professionalism	Values, Ethics and Critical thinking Optional course for lifelong learning		ability to develop personal and professional frameworks for ethical and accountable SW practice.	Passion of changing people's lives to achieve a better living standard
11. Vision for Life			ability to promote awareness of equity, social participation, and inclusion in society and organizations	
12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning	Mind- set and paradigm Diversities and Reflective Practice		the ability to engage in critical self-appraisal as a practice tool ensure ongoing skill development in practice.	Passion of changing people's lives to achieve a better living standard

Source: Mapped by Authers based on SLQF 2015 and Revised BSW programme.

According to NISD prospectus (2023) the graduate profile of the Bachelor of Social Work Degree Programme conducted by the NISD, aims to produce professional Social Workers with a good grasp of social work values, capable of managing social welfare services, competent in engaging good quality practice and research and promote peace and harmony in multicultural Sri Lanka. Through the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Programme, students learn how to provide social services to families, individuals and communities with a focus on serving oppressed or underserved populations. Earning a BSW degree may open up career opportunities, including entry level positions in areas such as mental health, social welfare, child protection, child welfare, public health and substance abuse etc. Upon completion of the Bachelor of Social Work the students can become skilled social workers to nurture people's self-reliance and problem-solving abilities. If you have a passion towards changing people's lives to achieve a better standard of living, this degree will be an ideal opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of individuals, families, groups and communities

They will display proficiency in a broad range of skills, including written communication, analytical and critical thinking, independent thinking, data gathering, assessment, and interpretation, presentation problem-solving, statistical and computing skills, problem-solving skills, and team skills. Graduates will be capable of crafting arguments and adapting their self-awareness to a diverse population, recognizing diversity and inclusiveness in their interactions.

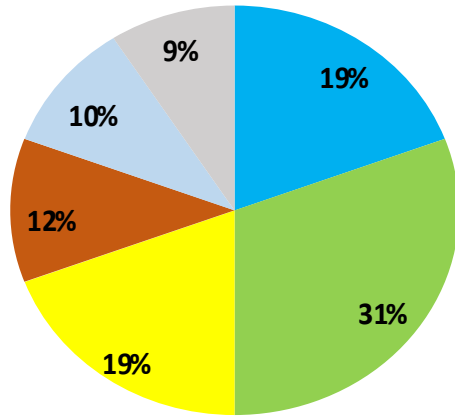
Field Practicum in Social work

NISD field practicum in social work recognized by government agencies specially divisional secretaries to implement field placement in regular manner with permission of governmental departments and ministries. In Sri Lanka, NISD field practicum clearly demonstrated the social development perspective in social work practice. As Kothalawala (1985) notes, "Previously the provision of field work instruction (field practicum) is done through agency-based programs which are somewhat traditional. As a developing country we have experienced some of the disadvantages of agency-based fieldwork instruction. Working mainly in an agency, students are constrained by agency policies and practices and are expected to function as "agency officer". In addition, most of our agencies with field work instruction facilities are still functioning within the policies of custodial care developed nearly three- or four-decade's age (Ranaweera 2013). Can we expect them to facilitate our students' developing skills in developmental social work practice while they offer only remedial services at micro to macro levels? If our aim is to provide students with opportunities to develop competencies in case work practice, we can get benefits to certain extent from these agencies. However, to prepare for social development practice students need from the beginning a community-based perspective within which to understand individual and family problems." Given these limitations, it is crucial to explore alternative approaches to field instruction that promote developmental aspects of social work. Further, supervised practice is to be facilitated with the guidance of a field supervisor who has been accredited to become field supervisor. Non-availability of accreditation is realized during the implementation of BSW and MSW programmes in Sri Lanka. Individuals are viewed as members of a Family unit which forms the core of the community, marked by intimate relationships amongst its members and robust ties with neighboring groups and other societal segments. Families offer an ideal foundation for organizing communities to attain qualitative growth. Thus, instead of placing students in agencies, it was suggested that they be assigned to chosen geographical areas where they can practice social work with families and communities, providing a developmental alternative to conventional field instruction methods in deficit approach. This concept has been integrated into

BSW and MSW programmes, allocating students to both institutional settings like hospitals, welfare centres, private organisations, NGOs, and INGOs, as well as community placements. When BSW students were placed in hospital settings under the supervision of medical consultants, significant professional growth was observed among the students who were enlisted by lecturers in social work at faculty of medicine, University of Colombo.

In this setting, individuals may struggle to grasp the Western notion of social work. The concepts, values, ethics, principles, methods, approaches, skills and practice models associated with Western social work evolved within a specific socio-economic framework. This framework emerged as a response to the challenges faced by people in free-market-oriented, liberal, industrialized and urbanized societies. It is evident that the current curriculum places emphasis on event management and entrepreneurship for mixing demand of upskilling social workers in the need of local and international employability. A professional social worker is well equipped with the required knowledge base acquired through formal advanced studies like the diploma, Bachelor, Master, Mphil and PhD degrees in social work. Such professionals are also called social work educators, practitioners' researchers and trainers. According to NISD record in 2024, 1250 Diploma holders, 750 BSW holders and 105 MSW holders as trained social workers are estimated to be available for the 23 million people in Sri Lanka.

The Employability survey conducted by the Centre for Quality Assurance of NISD reveals a varied employment topography for Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates. Out of 88 respondents, 19% (17 students) have secured permanent positions, indicating stable employment in the field. A larger proportion, 31% (27 students), are engaged in contract-based work, whilst 19% (17 students) occupy temporary roles, suggesting flexibility but reduced job security. Self-employment accounts for 11% (10 students), demonstrating entrepreneurial endeavours within social work or related areas. Further education is being pursued by 10% (9 students), implying a focus on additional qualifications and skill development. Notably, 9% (8 students) expressed disinterest in employment, which may reflect personal choices or gaps in job readiness. This distribution illustrates a wide array of employment experiences, with BSW graduates finding opportunities across various employment types and career trajectories.



- Permanent
- Contract
- Temporary
- Self-employed
- In higher education
- Not interested in a job

Source: NISD Centre for Quality Assurance, Graduate report on employability, 2024
 The career landscape for Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates spans various sectors.

Out of 88 surveyed individuals, a majority of 50 students (57%) have found employment in the private sector, demonstrating a strong inclination towards non-governmental and corporate entities. The public sector has attracted 8 students (9%), whilst 6 students (7%) are working in semi-government organisations, indicating a modest yet consistent presence in government-related positions. The foreign sector employs 1 student (1%), pointing to prospects in international bodies or overseas. Notably, 23 students (12%) have opted for self-employment, illustrating a trend towards entrepreneurial ventures and independent social work practices.

According to NISD employability survey(2024), the career paths of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates are diverse, showcasing the broad applicability of their social work education. Some find employment in academia as Assistant Lecturers or Assistant Program Coordinators, whilst others take on roles directly serving individuals and communities, such as Case Work Officer/Social Worker, Counsellor, and Social Worker. These professionals address various social challenges in their day-to-day work. Many BSW graduates occupy positions in project and programme management, including Project Officer, Programme Coordinator, and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. These roles involve overseeing the implementation of social initiatives and assessing their effectiveness. Additionally, some graduates pursue careers in community development and

advocacy, holding titles such as Executive Network Development Officer, Community Outreach Officer, and Communication Officer. The versatility of BSW training is further evidenced by graduates working in specialised fields like Disaster Management or as Research Assistants. Moreover, some choose to become Self-Employed, demonstrating entrepreneurial spirit. This wide array of job titles underscores the multitude of career opportunities available to BSW graduates across different sectors.

BSW degree holders expressed their views on the value of field placements in enhancing graduate outcomes. One student remarked, "NISD is not merely a term; it embodies genuine emotion for those pursuing affordable higher education. I am delighted to be part of it and feel immense gratitude towards the institution where I received my education, complete with multiple field placements and practical experience as a student social worker. Throughout my Bachelor's degree, I experienced significant personal growth, focusing on both my individual development and career progression" Bachelor of Social Work 18/19, NISD. "From the outset, NISD has been a transformative experience for me. It not only provided the opportunity to further explore my passion but also encouraged me to embrace new possibilities and gain a fresh outlook on life. Opting to pursue a career in social work under their tutelage remains one of my most rewarding choices."

"The programme at the Sri Lanka School of Social Work was profoundly impactful, particularly due to its varied field placements. These experiences necessitated flexibility, as I frequently engaged with vulnerable groups, gaining profound insights into their struggles and resilience. My study on the lives of three-wheel drivers further enhanced my understanding, highlighting the significance of grassroots-level engagement. This journey equipped me with both the practical abilities and compassion required to make a substantial difference in social work. I am grateful to the school of social work for providing me with this comprehensive programme."

"My experience at NISD, studying for the BSW degree, was truly transformative. The course went beyond theoretical learning, focusing on practical application and genuine comprehension of social work's impact. Every aspect, from fieldwork to inspiring mentors, contributed to shaping my identity. It was here that I discovered my passion for eco-social work and youth leadership, which continue to guide my endeavours. I am eternally thankful for the opportunities and personal growth this degree has brought into my life."

"In truth, the BSW degree is one of the finest qualifications available in Sri Lanka. The entire course is provided at no cost, and the four-year field experience is invaluable. This internationally recognised degree, both within Sri Lanka and

abroad, offers numerous career prospects. Students now have the option to study this degree in their preferred language: Sinhala, Tamil or English. As a BSW degree holder, I am extremely satisfied, having gained extensive life experience and secured excellent employment."

"My Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) laid the foundation for my journey into international opportunities, including my selection for the prestigious 2024 Community Solutions Program by IREX in the USA. It broadened my perspective, allowed me to conduct research, and gave me the chance to explore the world while addressing global challenges and creating meaningful impact".

Studying at the National Institute of Social Development (NISD) has been a transformative journey for me. The institute not only equipped me with academic knowledge but also instilled in me a deep sense of purpose and commitment to social change. Through its comprehensive curriculum and hands-on field experience, I gained invaluable skills in leadership, critical thinking, and human resource management that have shaped my career path. NISD empowered me to see the world differently to understand the nuances of societal challenges and approach them with empathy and innovation. The exposure I received here bridged the gap between theory and practice, enabling me to contribute meaningfully to my community and beyond. Today, as a professional dedicated to creating a positive impact, I attribute much of my growth to the foundation NISD provided. It wasn't just an education; it was a life-changing experience that continued to inspire me to strive for a better society every day.

NISD MSW programme has been designed for working professional those who are already in the social sector or related to social sector. At most all the students are work and study for the enrolling themselves for upskill their day-to-day work efficiency. MSW students' profile reveals that many students working as academics in social sciences, programmer officers, coordinators, development officers, probation officers, child welfare officers, child protection officer, social administrators, counsellors and etc in the government, INGO, NGO and Private organizations. However, a few are working as title as social workers in the NGO sector. For example, SERVE organization founded by MSW holder from NISD and recruits social workers for school social work and community work

The student's account of BSW and MSW programmes underscores the necessity for professional social workers to respond tactically within the societal framework of their field. Although NISD has been endeavouring to professionalise social work, Sri Lanka's welfare state has been striving to implement welfare policies and establish institutions and ministries to tackle issues such as poverty reduction, rural

development, social security, disaster management, and social services. However, there has been insufficient focus on diversifying educational systems, generating social work professionals, and nurturing community support in Sri Lanka. A crucial aspect of professional growth and workforce administration has been the establishment of registration systems for individuals with social qualifications. NISD's MSW programme has a generic social work emphasis. Nevertheless, the MSW programme ought to focus on expanding specializations and their demand in various specializations, including family social work, child welfare and protection, community-based corrections, medical and psychiatric social work, school social work, industrial social work, social work for gender development, community development, rehabilitation and correctional social work, social care, social work counselling, green social work, climate change and the application of AI in social work, and sustainable development analysis, amongst others.

In the United Kingdom, the introduction of the Professional Capabilities Framework was part of a broader social work reform initiative. This framework aimed to establish a cohesive set of standards for social work practitioners across all career stages, from novice to expert (Higgins, 2015). It underpins registration procedures, ensuring that registered social workers meet specific competency standards. Nevertheless, the reform process remains controversial, with ongoing debates about the fundamental nature and objectives of social work education (Higgins, 2015). It is significant to mention that the UK has experienced a shortage of social workers and has resorted to recruiting people from abroad to address this deficit. This underscores the necessity for comprehensive registration systems capable of recognizing and authenticating qualifications from various international origins.

Professionalization of Social work

The Functional Assessment of Social Service Workforce (UNICEF, 2018) proposed a vital recommendation to strengthen the social service workforce by enhancing existing systems and offering support through meticulously planned workforce strategies. The report suggested establishing an inter-ministerial coordination committee and a technical working group to develop pertinent policies, ethical guidelines, and practice standards for the social service workforce. It also advised seeking expertise from professional bodies, practitioners, and academics, such as the Global Alliance for Social Service Workforce, to utilize international best practices.

The report stressed the importance of heightened political and programmatic attention on strengthening the social service workforce. It advocated for a joint

effort between universities—which possess theoretical, practical, and research knowledge—and the National Institute of Social Development. The report recommended creating specific modules for various job roles, organising training around a life long learning that outlines the skills to be gained. The curricula ought to integrate local knowledge and requirements, as well as international standards for child protection and social work.

Furthermore, the report suggested aligning training and social work education with the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework, linking it to career advancement opportunities. It stressed the importance of integrating regular training into the workforce's annual work plans to introduce new concepts and solutions, ensuring the continuous professional development of the social service workforce. To enhance the social service sector, it is recommended that diploma and degree programmes in social work, counselling, and legal aid be broadened to encompass all relevant workforces. Staff should be encouraged to pursue these qualifications through career advancement opportunities and salary increases.

This suggestion also supported NISD to propose the professionalization of social work by outlining a plan for technical and financial assistance from UNICEF, with initial stakeholder consultations beginning in 2022. All stakeholder in agreement and long overdue for Establishing registration systems for social work qualification holders is essential to uphold professional standards and address workforce requirements. Consequently, NISD drafted a professionalization roadmap for social work and began forming a Steering Committee. The proposed roadmap comprises 11 activities aimed at achieving 12th major action on national legislation (A National Act for Social Workers) and 13th action for establishing a national council for the social work in Sri Lanka.

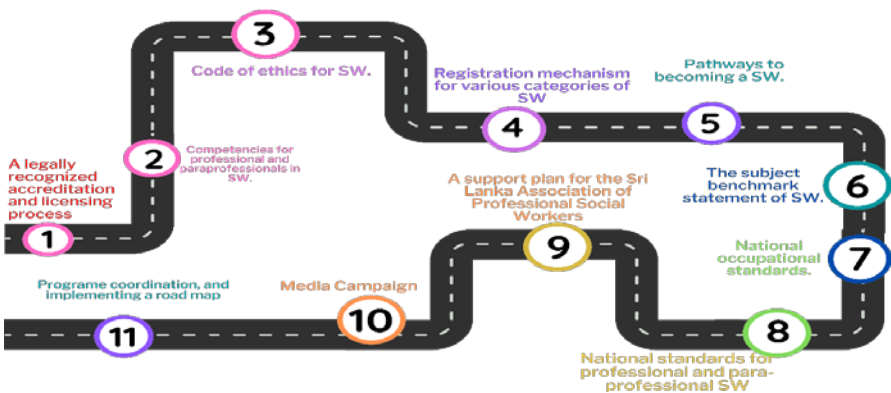


Diagram 1: Road Map of Professionalization of Social work. Source: NISD, Project on professionalization of social work

The Sri Lanka Association of Professional Social Workers (SLAPSW) established through an Act of Parliament in 2014, marking a significant step towards the recognition of professional social work. However, this act was a private act which is not granted for the national registration which need to be done by line ministry of Rural Development, Social Security and Social empowerment. To ensure the successful implementation of social work professionalisation, NISD initiated a preliminary consultation process. This involved engaging with various stakeholders, including SLAPSW members, social work educators, field supervisors, development officers, child welfare officers, as well as BSW and MSW students who had been awaiting registration from the National Institute of Social Development (NISD). This preliminary consultation aimed to gather insights and perspectives from across the field to inform the professionalisation process. Establishing registration frameworks for social work qualification holders plays a vital role in the professionalization and regulation of the discipline. These frameworks fulfil solutions to Current problems and future directions

1. Quality assurance: Ensures that practicing social workers meet minimum educational and professional standards.
2. Public protection and Community sanction: Safeguards vulnerable populations by verifying the credentials of social work practitioners.
3. Member of organizations of professional association(OPA): SLAPSW has not registered in the OPA for enhancing recognition
4. Professional accountability: Establishes a mechanism for addressing misconduct and maintaining ethical standards.
5. Continuing professional development: Encourages ongoing learning and skill enhancement with accredited trainers and practice supervisors
6. Eligibility criteria: Clearly defined educational and experience requirements for registration.
7. Application process: A streamlined procedure for submitting and reviewing applications.
8. Verification mechanisms: Processes to authenticate qualifications and work experience.
9. Database management: A secure, up-to-date repository of registered social workers.
10. Renewal procedures: Regular renewal requirements to maintain active registration status.

11. Disciplinary procedures: A framework for addressing complaints and ethical violations for protecting the community sanction
12. Public access: A searchable database for the public to verify a social worker's registration status.

Challenges in developing registration systems:

1. Ensuring consistency across different contexts of secularism, faith based and religious based activities and inclusion and exclusion with diverse interests.
2. Addressing the needs of experienced practitioners who may not meet new educational requirements.
3. Facilitating mobility for social workers across borders for employment and recognition of registration and qualification holders and demand for practice.
4. Implementing user-friendly, secure online systems for registration and verification access to employers and other country's registration body.
5. Securing funding and personnel to manage the registration system effectively.

Conclusion

The nation's cultural identity is influenced by its native traditions, colonial past, and ongoing societal evolution. The National Institute of Social Development (NISD) and Sri Lanka Association for Professional Social Workers (SLAPSW) have been advancing social work education and professional activities. Bachelor's and Master's programmes in social work are in line with the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) and international standards for social work education and training. Practical field experience is vital in preparing students for social work practice in both institutional and community contexts. Adapting social work principles to the local context is crucial for meeting the specific needs of Sri Lankan society. Obstacles remain in diversifying educational systems, producing qualified professionals with specializations in social work field settings and acquiring community support with legal recognition for social work in Sri Lanka. The chapter concludes by outlining a plan for the professionalisation of social work in Sri Lanka. The establishment of

registration systems for social work qualification holders is essential to maintain professional standards and address workforce needs in Sri Lanka.

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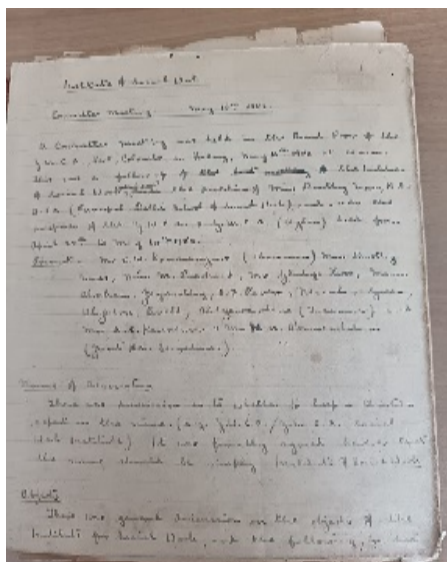
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Source: Minutes, Ceylon Institute of Social work, 1952

The Department Social work, University of Delhi, traces its origin to the establishment of the Y.W.C.A School of Social Work in 1946 at Lucknow. It was established by the Y.W.C.A of India, Burma and Ceylon, which later became National Y.W.C.A of India. It started a one year programme to give training in social

work to the women who were demobilized by the Armed Services, known as the Women's Auxillary Corps of India, following the end of World War II in 1946.

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Chapter 8: Vietnam

Social work education in Vietnam: historical development and future directions

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Abstract

Introduced in the 1930s and more professionalized from 1940s to early 1970s, social work education in Vietnam experienced more than a decade of neglect before being officially reintroduced in 2004. Over the years, social work education in Vietnam has gone through several stages of development with the both engagement of foreign stakeholders and internal efforts to contributing to its growth. Currently, 35 institutions offer social work programs, including 34 BSW (Bachelor of Social work), 9 MSW (Master of Social work) and 3 PhD programs. After two decades of official development, social work education in Vietnam has made recognized progress and successes, with improvements in development of various training programs and increasing the quality of training staff. However, challenges remain, including the need to build indigenous training programs, an imbalance between theoretical and practical components in curricula, a shortage of qualified faculty and field supervisors, a lack of indigenous training materials, and inadequate infrastructure. To address these challenges, a strategic plan is needed to promote indigenous social work training programs that are both locally relevant and aligned with regional and global standards. Additionally, the government should focus on establishing a legal framework for social work education and reevaluating the current system of training institutions. Training institutions also continue to invest in improving curriculum quality, with an emphasis on practical field education, while also conducting capacity building initiatives for teaching staff and field supervisors, developing indigenous training materials.

Keywords: social work, education, development, challenges, future directions, Vietnam

Historical, social, political and cultural context of professional social work education

Like many other countries, professional social work education in Vietnam was introduced during the colonial period, though social support activities had been practiced since the feudal era and before the colonization (Mai et al., 2011; Oanh, 2002). The first formal program training social assistants was established by the French in the 1939 at the Social Support College in Hanoi (Hoàng & Trần, 2023). During post French-colonial period in South Vietnam (1945–1954) the Caritas School of Social Work was founded in 1947 (Oanh, 2002). Social work education in Vietnam continued to develop during the American neo-colonization from 1954 to 1975 in the south of Vietnam (Oanh, 2002) with the establishment of three school of social work: The Vietnam Army School of Social Work (founded in 1957), the Buddhist Youth School for Social Service, the National School of Social Work (established in 1968). Additionally, social work was also offered as a university discipline at Da Lat University and Van Hanh University (Oanh, 2002, p. 86). In northern Vietnam, after the declaration of independence in 1945, some short social work courses were provided at Bach Mai Hospital by the French Red Cross (Hoa & Minh, 2012). However, due to ideological differences under Socialist regime, which did not acknowledge the existence of social problems, social work was abandoned (Oanh, 2002). Professional social work education was absent from 1975 to the mid of 1980s. Only few courses on social protection and social relief were offered in vocation training programs for staff working in social welfare area (Hugman et al., 2007; Nguyen et al., 2007).

The paradigm shift in economic in 1986, known as “Đổi mới [renovation] resulted in the emerge social issues and problems that required professional social work response (Nguyen et al., 2007; Nguyen et al., 2010). In response, short courses in social work were introduced to trained front-line workers to address the intermediate social issues with active engagement from international organization and oversea partners, such as UNICEF, UNV, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK (Nguyen et al., 2007; Oanh, 2002). In 1992, an undergraduate social work program was offered at the Hochiminh Open University under Women Studies field and the content was a combination between sociology and gender and development (Lê, 2021a). In 1995, the University of Hanoi cooperated with the Vietnam Committee for the Protection, Care and Education of Children launched the first bachelor’s class on social work with children (MOET, 2023). Later in 1997 College of Labour and Social Affairs began offering three-year social work program degree under Sociology fields (Nguyen et al., 2007).

In 2002, two universities: DaLat University and Trade Union University launched pilot undergraduate social work programs. A year later, in 2004, Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued Decision No 35/2004/QĐ-BGD&ĐT, which officially introduced a National Curriculum on Social Work Education at university (four-year program) and college (three-year program) level (MOET, 2004). This decision also marked the assignment of distinct training code for social work in the national education system, allowing graduates to earn degrees in social work rather than borrowing other training disciplines' name.

Following this important government documents, the number of social work training institutions has been increasing dramatically from only two undergraduate training programs in 2004 to 46 offering social work programs, including 34 bachelor's degrees (two programs stopped providing training in 2021), 10 master's degrees, and two doctoral degrees in 2023. Notably, after the Government issued the Decision 32, a project to develop the social work profession in the period 2010-2020 (GOV, 2010), many more programs were established, including 20 undergraduates, 8 masters and two doctorates during the 2010-2020 period. (Table 1)

Table 1. Number of programs of Social work opened at higher education institutions to 31 June 2023

	2002-2010	2010-2020	2021-2023	Total
Bachelor's degree	14	20	-	34
Master's degree	01	08	01	10
Doctoral level	-	02	-	02
Total	14	30	01	46

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2023

Universities providing social work programs are located mainly in the two big cities Hanoi (Red river delta) and Hochiminh city (Southeast) (table 2)

Table 2. The geographical distribution of universities providing social work programs

Region	Number of univeristy offering PBSW
Red river delta	14
Northwest	4
North Central	3
Central Highlands	1
South Central	2
Southwest	1
Southeast	9
Total	34

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2023

According to the most recent statistics from MOET, from the 2002 up to 31st August 2023, training institutions have enrolled 24,947 undergraduate social work students, of whom 16,472 have graduated. For graduate programs, there are 819 MSWs and 22 PhDs. While the recruitment number of undergraduates has remained stable, the number of both master and doctorate candidates has declined (MOET, 2023).

The total number of lecturers teaching social work is 418, including 01 Professor, 13 Associate Professors, 163 lecturers with PhD degrees (accounting for 39% of the teaching staff), 236 lecturers with master's degrees (accounting for 56.4%) and five lecturers with university degrees (accounting for 4.6%) (MOET, 2023). Another study conducted with 30 training institutions showed professional improvement in the quality of social work lecturers, with an increase in lecturers with social work degrees from 20.43% to 38.01% of the total staff. The number of lecturers holding PhD degrees increased from 24.84% to 43.57% (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Overall, social work education in Vietnam has shown significant progress. The number of graduate social work training programs has grown from only two pilot undergraduate programs in 2002 to 34 in 2024, along with 9 MSW and 2 PhD programs. The curricula have been improved, granting more authority to training institutions to build their own specialties. There has also been an increase in both the quantity and quality of teaching staff and infrastructure for social work education (MOET, 2023).

Legal foundation for the development of the Social work profession

The development of the social work profession and education has received special attention since 2000s, through a series of key government documents.

The two most important government decision on the development of the social work profession are: i) the Decision No. No 32/2010/QĐ-TTg- the decision on the approval of the Social Work Profession development Project 2010-2020 that lay the foundation for the official recognition the profession in Vietnam (GOV, 2010), and ii) the Decision 112/QĐ on the development of the social work profession 2021-2030 (GOV, 2021) with the following specific objectives:

1) Building human resources:

by 2025, 60% agencies, organizations, social assistance institutions, drug addiction treatment centers, judicial agencies, schools, hospitals, communes, and related units will employ social workers. By 2030, this number is expected to reach 90%.

2) Fostering professional capacity:

30%-40% of social workers are trained to improve professional capacity of social work

3) Ensuring the provision of social work services:

50%-60% of social assistant institutions will provide social work services:

4) Ensuring the provision of social work services for children with special circumstances:

80%-95%

Recently the government issue a Decree 110/2024/ND-CP on Social work, which regulates the rights and responsibilities of social work clients; the rights and responsibilities of social work practitioners; requirements for social work practicing registration social work practice; and authority, profile, procedures for granting, re-granting and revoking certificates of registration to practice social work (GOV, 2021).

Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training also issued a number of decisions and circulars to promote the social work education and practice.

- Decision 35/2004/QĐ-BGDĐT and Circular 10/2010/TT-BGDĐT on the grand of core curricula for university and college of social work programs.
- Dispatch No. 2196/BGDĐT-GD&H on guiding the development and promulgation of output standards for training majors.
- Circular No. 07/2015/TT-BGDĐT providing regulations on the minimum

amount of knowledge, competency requirements for higher education.

- Circular No. 04/2016/TT-BGDĐT on regulations on standards for assessing the quality of training programs at all levels of higher education
- Decision No. 327/QĐ-BGDĐT issued Plan for developing the social work profession in the education sector for the period 2017-2020.
- Circular No. 33/2018/TT-BGDĐT providing guidance on Social Work in schools.
- Circular No. 17/2021/TT-BGDĐT dated June 22, 2021 of the Minister of Education and Training regulating training program standards; developing, appraising and promulgating training programs for all levels of higher education.
- Decision No. 4969/QĐ-BGDĐT on promulgating the Plan for developing social work in the education sector for the period 2021-2025.

Professional education curriculum, qualification/registration system

Professional curriculum development

The first national core curricula for social work programs were issued by MOET in 2004 under the Decision No 35/2004/QĐ-BGD&ĐT for both three-year (college level) and four-year (university level) programs. These curricula remained in effect until 2010, with the total minimum requirement for university-level program set at 185 credits (1 credit = 15 periods, and 1 period = 45 minutes). Of these 74% (137 credits) of the curriculum was core national content, while the remaining 26% (48 credits) was determined by the training institutions.

However, after five years of implementation, several limitations were identified. These included insufficient credits allocated to knowledge base, particularly in developing practice skills, as well as short time for field placement and practicum, and difficulties for training institutions to develop specialized program (Nguyen, 2010). As a result, MOET revised core curricula in 2010 with Circular No 10/2010/TT-BGD&ĐT. Under this revision, training institutions were given more credits to flexibly design their own curricula. For the university level program, the proportion of core national content was reduced to 59% (106 credits), while the remaining 41% (a 157 % increase from the 2004 curriculum) was allocated to the training institutions (MOET, 2010).

The third change in curricula was made in 2015, following the Circular No. 07/2015/TT-BGDĐT, which established regulations for the minimum amount of knowledge and competence-based requirements that learners must achieve upon graduation. Based on these new standards, universities were tasked with developing their own training curricula (MOET, 2015).

Currently, the training curricula for the 32 active bachelor of Social work (BSW) programs range from 120 to 135 credits. The professional knowledge structure is divided into three learning knowledge blocks, with a clear distribution of credits. The general knowledge block comprises from 13% at the lowest to the highest of 36.7% of the total credits, with a median of 24.2%. This indicates that general knowledge makes up nearly one fourth of the training program. The specialized knowledge block ranges from 19.2% to 64.3%, with a median of 41.9%. The percentage of credits dedicated to practice and professional internship is relatively low, ranging from 4.4% to 18%, underscoring the importance of these practical components in the BSW curriculum. (Table 3)

Table 3. Distribution of BSW credits

	Max	Min	Median
Total Credits of BSW	135	120	128
Percentage of General Knowledge Block	36.7%	13.0%	24.2%
Percentage of SW Knowledge Block	64.3%	19.2%	41.9%
Percentage of practice and Internship	17.6%	4.4%	9.2%

Source: Moet (2023), Report on the development of the social work programs

However, there are some challenges in development of appropriate curricula. First, some training institutions find it difficult to build and develop modules to reflect their strengths and unique capabilities. Second, the standards of designing social work training programs still have shortcomings, such as the lack of full involvement of social work service users and stakeholders in the curriculum development process. Therefore, graduates often fail to meet the practical requirements for the profession. Third, some program contents still focus too heavily on theories and learning models from abroad, which may not be fully aligned with practical realities in Vietnam. Additionally, graduates often lack the in-depth practical skills needed to work effectively with certain vulnerable groups (MOET, 2023).

Qualification/registration system

Social work program quality assurance/accreditation

From 2021 to September 2024, 16/32 BSW (51.6%) and 3/9 active (33.3%) MSW programs have been accredited by the local Center for Education Accreditation (MOET, 2024). These programs need to meet 11 standards for quality assurance, including:

- Standard 1. Program Objective and Expected Learning Outcomes
- Standard 2. Program description
- Standard 3. Programme structure and content
- Standard 4. Teaching and learning approach
- Standard 5. Student Assessment
- Standard 6. Academic staff
- Standard 7. Support staff
- Standard 8. Students and Support services
- Standard 9. Facilities and Infrastructure
- Standard 10. Promoting program quality
- Standard 11. Output and Outcomes

It is a strategic goal that all education program has to get quality assurance assessment.

Registration of practice.

As a relatively young profession, social work education in Vietnam was officially recognized in 2010 through the government's Decision 32. Since then, the country has not yet to fully develop a comprehensive licensing and registration system for practitioners. Social workers are employed in various public and private settings, including government sectors (such as in the fields of social affairs, health care and education), in public and private service providing sectors like social protection centers, non-government and international organizations. The recruitment for these positions is typically based on education qualification and training fields with the job requirements.

In 2022, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs issued circular No 26/2022/TT-BLĐTBXH, which established three level of social workers (junior social workers, social workers and senior social workers). This circular also specifies that graduates from social work, sociology, psychology, special education or other social science field appropriate to the duties of social work are eligible to apply for social work position.

More recently, on August 30, 2024, the Vietnamese government enacted Degree No110/2024/ND-CP, which comes into effect on October 15, 2024. This decree provides a legal foundation for profession licensing and registration. According to the degree, individuals seeking certification to registration to practice social work must meet the following requirements:

- a) The applicant must have relevant training qualifications
- b) The applicant must practice at organizations providing social work services (social assistance facilities, drug rehabilitation facilities, medical facilities, educational facilities and other facilities as prescribed by law) with a scope of professional activities appropriate to the practice content.
- c) The practice period for university degrees or higher is at least 12 months, for college degrees is at least 9 months, for intermediate degrees is at least 6 months at organizations providing social work services.
- d) Practitioners must comply with the assignment and guidance of the practice instructor and must respect the rights and obligations of the clients using social work services.

The degree also accepts practitioners who hold a license granted by a competent foreign agency or organization. About license, social workers are granted a certificate of registration to practice social work valid in five-year time. At present, the registration system for social workers in Vietnam is not yet fully implemented.

Actual conditions of the field placement (practicum) training in professional social work education

Social work practice is a mandatory component of the social work training program at all universities. Among 32 active training programs, the time allocated to social work practice varies widely, ranging from appropriate 5 % to more than 17% of the total training time. On average, practical modules account for 12.8 credits out of 128 total credits for the total BSW program (Table 4). Students typically complete about 500 hours of practice, which includes both university-based and fieldwork placement. The field practice is structured into five modules: Social Work Practice with Individuals, Social work practice with groups, Community development practice, Internship, and Practicum. In these modules, students are placed in different social work, social welfare agencies, as well as community settings, where they apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in the classroom.

Table 4. Ratio of time allocated for social work practice

	Universities	Total credits of program	No of Credits for practice	Ratio of time for social work practice
1	Cuu Long University	120	12	10.0%
2	University of Science and Education - The University of Danang	161	18	11.2%
3	Hue University of Sciences	124	11	8.9%
4	University of Labour and Social Affairs	135	13	9.6%
5	Quy Nhon University	135	6	4.4%
6	Ton Duc Thang University	131	11	8.4%
7	Thai Nguyen University of Sciences	135	18	13.3%
8	University of Thanh Hoa Culture, Sports & Tourist	125	22	17.6%
9	Hoa Binh University	128	10	7.8%
10	National University of Arts and Education	132	6	4.5%
11	Academy of Journalism and Communication	130	9	6.9%
12	VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities	125	11	8.8%
13	Vietnam Women's Academy	121	11	9.1%
14	Vietnam Youth Academy	133	13	9.8%
15	Hochiminh City Cadre Academy	120	11	9.2%
16	Trade Union University	126	19	15.1%
17	Vietnam National Forestry University	128	9	7.0%
18	Hochiminh City Open University	124	11	8.9%
19	Metropolitan University	130	9	6.9%

20	Hochiminh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities	120	16	13.3%
21	Dong Thap University	134	22	16.4%
22	Hanoi National University of Education	125	16	12.8%
23	Hochiminh City University of Education	130	14	10.8%
24	Da Lat University	131	11	8.4%
25	Thu Dau Mot University	120	14	11.7%
26	Vinh University	126	8	6.3%
27	Hai Phong University	131	6	4.6%
28	Hung Vuong University	125	13	10.4%
29	Tan Trao University	130	8	6.2%
30	Vinh Long University of Technology Education	135	14	10.4%
31	Hanoi University of Public Health	135	15	11.1%
32	Tra Vinh University	123	11	8.9%

Source: Moet (2023), Report on the development of the social work programs

Students can apply for their placement settings, including social assistant centers, hospitals, schools, communities, and NGOs, where they provide social work and social welfare services. It is required that these settings have qualified field supervisors available. However, in practice, many service providers struggle to provide qualified field supervisors. There is a number of field supervisors who do not have social work background and are not attend any supervision training courses. Recently, educational institutions have begun building a network of field placement agencies by signing contracts with organization to provide placements and supervisors for professional practice. Additionally, training institutions have initiated to use academic supervisors to support field supervisors, aiming to enhance the quality of field practice.

Post-graduation (post-qualification) workplaces and the state of employment

Graduates of social work program can pursue careers in various fields, including government agencies, enterprises, social-professional organizations, research institutes, universities, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, companies. The current social work service delivery system includes i) under the auspices of the government such as Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education and Training and their systems to the local levels (provincial, district and commune); ii) mass organisation systems (Women Union and Youth Union), and iii) NGOs, INGOs, faith-based organizations.

For the labor, war invalids and social affairs sector, social work graduates serve as public servants from the government to grass root levels and in 425 social assistant facilities and 105 drug rehabilitation facilities nationwide. These facilities provide support to different groups of clients, such as children in need of special protection, people with disabilities, mentally ill people, and homeless elderly people and drug abusers. In the education sector, social workers work at schools. In the area of health care, social workers are employed in hospitals, with social work department in 35/35 central hospitals, 5/6 hospitals under the University of Medicine and Pharmacy and over 95% of provincial hospitals, over 90 district hospitals, and some health stations at communities (SPD & UNFPA, 2022).

The Ministry of Justice is currently planning to open social work positions in supporting juvenile justice system.

Additionally, there are a number of social work positions working in social service providers operated by mass organizations (Women's Union, the Labor Federation, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union). Graduates can find a job in private facilities providing psychological therapy services for children. They can work at other settings, such as research and training institutions related to social work and social welfare.

Current problems and future directions

Current problems

Social work education in Vietnam is unique in its significant contribution to the professionalization, beginning with training programs and driving changes in

practice and social service system (Hugman & Nguyen, 2020). After two decades of official integration into the national training and education system, social work education has achieved notable progress. These include the development of a legal foundation, an increase in the number of training institutions, and the expansion of programs at various levels - from short-term courses to undergraduate and graduate (MSW and PhD in SW) degrees. Additionally, there has been improvement in quantity and quality of teaching staff (MOET, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024).

However, social work education continues to face a number of challenges.

Firstly, as an imported training discipline, social work education in Vietnam has struggled to fully meet the needs and context. Despite efforts to better align program with Vietnam's unique social issues and problems, social work training institutions and educators face significant challenge in indigenizing/localizing their curricula (Hugman & Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2024). Programs need to integrate more local knowledge. Introducing Vietnamese theories and practice models, and reduce dependency on foreign training materials.

Secondly, many social work programs still lack clearly defined competence-based curricula. Furthermore, there is no established framework or output standards for training institutions to guide the development of the curricula (MOET, 2023). Another concern is the allocation of credit hours in different knowledge blocks of curricula. In many undergraduate programs, the time dedicated to professional knowledge and skills is less than 50%, while general and supplementary knowledge occupies more than 30% of the total program time. Particularly, in some programs, general knowledge accounts for more than one third of the curricula, with professional knowledge receiving only one fifth or one fourth of the total time.

Third, regarding to social work practice, the balance between theoretical learning and practice in social work education is a critical issue. Some programs allocated less than 5% of the total training time to practice modules. Moreover, the lack of network of qualified field supervisors present another challenge. Many training institutions struggle to provide sufficient field placement opportunities for students. Additionally, there are no established standards ensuring the quality of field supervisors. Many field supervisors lack a social work background and have not been trained in supervision, making it difficult for them to effectively guide students in their practice. Although training institutions have made initiatives in building the field supervisor network, it remains limited. Furthermore, even when academic staff are sent to support field supervisors, their lack of practice experience does not significantly improve the quality of fieldwork. Many agencies

also fail to recognize the importance of social work practice and are not fully supportive of training institutions (Lê, 2021b).

Forth, capacity of teaching staff remains a concern for maintaining the quality of social work programs. There are still insufficient numbers of lecturers with master's and doctoral degrees in social work. Moreover, a high proportion of lecturers conduct i field placement and practice modules lack adequate professional practical experience in the field (MOET, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024)

Fifth, as a relatively new profession, social work suffers from low public awareness, which affects appeals as a field of study. Training institutions face challenges in recruiting students, and graduates often struggle to find a job due to the low recognition of the profession (Hugman & Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2024).

Sixth, although some progress has been made in developing local training materials, there remains a heavy reliance on foreign textbooks and sources. There is a significant gap in locally developed training materials that incorporate indigenous knowledge and Vietnamese examples and case studies, particularly in specialized subjects (Nguyễn, 2021).

Future directions

To enhance the quality of social work education and ensure its alignment with the regional and global standards, Vietnam must develop relevant strategies for the sector.

First, it is crucial to establish a strong legal framework for social work education. This includes introducing relevant government documents for quality assurance, accreditation of training programs, as well as regulations for recruitment standards for social work graduates. The government also should prioritize the replanning of development of training institutions and promoting the specialization of training program based on each training institution's strengths and specialized orientation.

Second, training institutions need to pay attention to indigenizing their training program that meet the local needs and context, especially in response to emerging challenges, such as climate change, impact of modern technologies. At the same time, they should critically assess and make their program align with the regional and international standards for social work education standards. Furthermore, institutions should restructure their curricula to ensure a balanced allocation of credit hours, with adequate time dedicated to professional knowledge and practice modules.

Third, ongoing efforts in capacity building for teaching staff and field supervisors is essential, not only to ensure the quality of training at classroom, but also provide practical experience for students. Additionally, institutions should plan to enhance the capacity of front-line practitioners to ensure they are regularly updated with knowledge and skills.

Forth, building a strong network of field placement settings and field supervisors is important in immediate future to ensure the quality of practice component of the social work programs in the near future.

Fifth, developing local training materials that incorporate indigenous knowledge is crucial for enriching the curricula and improving the quality of training.

Sixth, fostering regional and international cooperation and collaboration is important to facilitate the exchange the knowledge and best practices. This will support the promotion of capacity of training institutions and help bridge gaps between the local and regional and global in social work education.

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Chapter 9: Indonesia

The Professionalization of Social Work in Indonesia: Context, Curriculum, and Legislative Frameworks

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SECTION 1: HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

This chapter examines the historical, social, political, and cultural context of professional social work education in Indonesia, highlighting the evolution of the profession from its inception to the current landscape. The modernization of social work in Indonesia is a multifaceted process shaped by the interplay of local traditions, state policies, and global influences.

Historical Development of Social Work in Indonesia

The roots of social work in Indonesia can be traced back to indigenous forms of social welfare that existed prior to colonial rule. Various religious traditions—including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam—played a significant role in providing social support within communities. The ***Gotong Royong*** system, which emphasizes mutual cooperation and communal assistance, exemplifies these indigenous approaches to social welfare. However, the arrival of colonial powers, such as the Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese, significantly altered Indonesia's social landscape, often neglecting the welfare needs of the Indonesian population (Hakim, 2004)

The establishment of formal social work practices in Indonesia began in the mid-20th century. Significant milestones include the founding of the ***Sekolah Pembimbing Kemasyarakatan (SPK)*** in Solo in 1946, which marked the beginning of formal social work education. Despite initial resistance and the challenges posed by political instability, social work began to take root through training programs that incorporated Western methodologies.

Hakim (2004) identified three historical arguments as the primary characteristics of Indonesian social work's genesis, indicating that these factors profoundly shaped its developmental trajectory:

- 3 **Natural Resource Abundance:** Indonesia has long been known for its rich natural resources.
- 3 **Religious Traditions:** Major religions practiced in Indonesia—including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam—actively contributed to community support through charity and social assistance practices such as ***Zakat*** in Islam and ***Daanam*** in Hinduism.
- 3 **Strong Community Spirit:** Indigenous culture fosters communal relationships and support, evident in concepts such as ***Swadaya*** (self-help), ***Swasembada*** (self-sufficiency), ***Gotong Royong*** (mutual assistance), and ***Kekeluargaan*** (sense of family).

During colonial rule, oppression, marginalization, and exploitation characterized the Indonesian experience. While the Dutch's liberal and ethical policies aimed to improve conditions, they simultaneously laid the foundation for social work and welfare institutions. Various educational foundations were established under these policies, which opened opportunities for Indonesians in education and expanded their role in the workforce. As nationalist forces gained influence in the early 20th century, organizations like ***Muhammadiyah*** emerged, focusing on social and economic reform.

Hakim (2004) documented three characteristics of the evolution of Indonesian social work during post-colonial times:

1. **Increasing state engagement in modern social work.**
2. **The roles and strategies of social workers in response to diverse social issues.**
3. **The influence of Western practices in establishing social work as a professional field.**

Throughout the **Old Order** (1945-1966), Indonesia faced significant instability, leading to the establishment of the **Ministry of Social Affairs** to tackle social challenges associated with colonial injustices. The ministry focused on improving quality of life, assisting disaster victims, and addressing refugee needs.

The **New Order** (1966-1998) introduced development-oriented policies under President Soeharto, emphasizing a welfare state. This regime adopted **W.W. Rostow's Five Stage Scheme**, impacting educational systems and embracing standardized social work curricula. The **Reformation Era** (1998-present) saw the establishment of the **Indonesian Professional Social Workers Association (IPSPI)**, which aimed to redefine social work standards and practices relevant to local contexts following the economic crisis and political upheaval.

Political Context and Its Influence on Social Work

The political climate in Indonesia has profoundly influenced social work development. The establishment of the **Ministry of Social Affairs** laid the groundwork for formal social work practices, although challenges remained. In 1999, President Abdurrahman Wahid's controversial dismissal of the Minister of Social Affairs sparked debates about the state's role in social welfare.

The three political regimes—Old Order, New Order, and Reformation Era—distinctly shaped social work narratives. The Old Order's instability hampered the development of social work frameworks, while the New Order integrated social work into state modernization. With the onset of the Reformation Era, decentralization of social policies emerged, leading to the establishment of the IPSPI and advocating for professional standard (Hakim, 2004)

During Jokowi's presidency, social work education and the profession have significantly evolved, shaped by various governmental initiatives and policy reforms aimed at improving social welfare in Indonesia. The administration's focus on comprehensive social welfare programs, such as the Family Hope Program or Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), has necessitated a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce in the social work sector (Suryahadi & Al Izzati, 2018). This has led to a greater emphasis on the quality and relevance of social work education, prompting educational institutions to revise curricula to include contemporary social issues, community engagement strategies, and culturally sensitive practices. Moreover, the enactment of the Social Work Law in 2019 has formalized the profession, establishing critical standards for practice, education, and competency requirements. This legal framework has enhanced the professional status of social workers, encouraging greater public recognition and respect for their crucial role in addressing social issues such as poverty, health disparities, and community resilience. As a result, social work education has not only become more aligned with national development goals but has also played a pivotal role in shaping trained professionals capable of effectively contributing to

the welfare and empowerment of Indonesian communities within a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

A pivotal force in advocating for formal recognition of social work in Indonesia has been the Indonesian Consortium of Social Work (KPSI). Established in August 2011, KPSI emerged from the ASEAN Consortium of Social Work and has played a crucial role in lobbying for the Social Work Law, passed in 2019, which marks significant progress in the profession in Indonesia. The enactment of this law has been crucial in formalizing the social work field, establishing standards for practice, education, and licensing, thereby enhancing the professionalism of social workers across the country. Beyond advocating for the law itself, KPSI has also been instrumental in shaping its derivative regulations, such as the Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 14/2020 on social work practice standards and Regulation No. 17/2020 concerning social worker registration and practice permits. Additionally, KPSI has contributed to the development of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Regulation No. 15 of 2022, which addresses professional education and competency tests for social workers. This regulation sets forth comprehensive guidelines for educational institutions and training organizations, ensuring that curricula are aligned with current professional standards and effectively prepare graduates for the demands of the social work field. Through these initiatives, KPSI not only fosters an environment of accountability and transparency within the profession but also promotes the integration of social work into Indonesia's broader social welfare policies and practices. Ultimately, KPSI's efforts significantly strengthen the infrastructure of social work education and practice, enhancing the quality of services available to vulnerable populations in Indonesia.

Social Work Education: Structure and Challenges

Social work education in Indonesia is primarily categorized into two segments: **academic** and **professional**. Despite its development, the social work education system in Indonesia faces considerable challenges, including the lack of a standardized national curriculum and consistent accreditation processes. This absence contributes to significant variability in the quality of social work programs across institutions (Nugroho & Santi, 2014).

The evolution of social work education began with short-term training programs, which gradually shifted to more formal academic structures within universities and colleges (Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2020). However, this transition has not been uniform across the country; many institutions continue to struggle with providing

comprehensive, culturally relevant training that resonates with the diverse needs of Indonesian society (Resnawaty et al. 2022).

Cultural relevance is particularly crucial in a multicultural country like Indonesia, where social work practitioners must navigate a complex landscape of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Current educational frameworks often fail to adequately incorporate indigenous knowledge and approaches, leading to a disconnect between academic training and the practical social work needs of communities. As Fahrudin (2013) emphasizes, this gap threatens the effectiveness of social work interventions, making it imperative for educational institutions to revise curricula that reflect local traditions and practices.

Current Issues and Future Directions

Contemporary challenges facing social work in Indonesia include:

1. **Supply and Demand Imbalance:** A significant gap exists between the number of trained social workers and the increasing demand for their services across sectors like healthcare, education, and public welfare. This disparity limits effective service delivery and curtails the potential impact of social workers on pressing social issues (Resnawaty et al. 2022).
2. **Inter-Organizational Collaboration:** Enhanced collaboration among educational institutions, governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is essential for improving social work practice. Such partnerships can facilitate better resource sharing, foster effective training programs, and promote holistic approaches to social issues (Nugroho & Santi, 2014).
3. **Cultural Relevance:** The importance of culturally relevant social work practice cannot be overstated. Social work curricula must reflect local traditions, values, and indigenous knowledge systems to foster community-centered interventions that resonate with the populations they serve (Fahrudin, 2013)
4. **Integration of Traditional Support Systems:** Modern social work practices should incorporate traditional support systems and communal practices that have been effective for generations. Strategies that blend traditional and modern approaches will enhance the relevance and acceptance of social work in Indonesia (Fahrudin, 2013; Nugroho & Santi, 2014).
5. **Fieldwork Supervision and Quality Control:** A lack of qualified professionals to supervise fieldwork placements hampers training quality. Educational institutions must invest in strengthening supervisory capacities and developing clear guidelines for fieldwork to ensure students gain valuable practical

experience alongside their academic learning (Yuliani, 2021; Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2020).

6. **Distance Learning Opportunities:** Given Indonesia's vast geographical expanse, particularly with remote locations, distance education presents a promising solution to improve access to social work training. Developing robust online and distance learning programs would not only promote equitable access to education but also address the urgent need for training social workers throughout the archipelago (Yuliani, 2021; Saumya & Singh, 2020; Resnawaty et al., 2022).
7. **Standardized Student Selection Mechanisms:** The current system for selecting students into social work programs lacks uniformity, making it difficult to ensure that all candidates possess the necessary skills and commitment to succeed in the field. Establishing clear selection criteria is crucial for enhancing the quality of graduates entering the profession (Nugroho & Santi, 2014).

Recommendations for Enhancing Social Work Education

In light of the identified issues, several recommendations can be proposed to improve the quality and effectiveness of professional social work education in Indonesia:

1. **Development of a Standardized National Curriculum:** A comprehensive national curriculum that integrates cultural relevance with international standards is essential. Such a curriculum should be developed in consultation with stakeholders from various sectors, including government, academia, and community organizations, to ensure its applicability and effectiveness.
2. **Establishment of Accreditation and Licensing Procedures:** Implementing clear accreditation processes and licensing systems for social work programs will help regulate educational quality and ensure that graduates are effectively trained and prepared for the profession.
3. **Investment in Fieldwork Supervision:** Educational institutions should prioritize training qualified supervisors who can provide necessary guidance during students' field placements. Partnering with social service agencies can help facilitate structured, supervised fieldwork experiences essential for professional development.
4. **Promotion of Distance Learning Programs:** Institutions should explore the potential of distance education options, allowing broader access to social work education for individuals in remote or underserved areas. This approach can promote equality in educational opportunities and expand the reach of social work training.

5. **Standardization of Student Selection:** A systematic mechanism for selecting students into social work programs is necessary. Implementing standardized selection criteria can ensure that candidates possess the skills and dedication required for the field, enhancing the overall quality of the profession.
6. **Integration of Indigenous Knowledge:** Actively incorporating indigenous practices and knowledge into social work curricula will prepare future practitioners to work effectively within diverse cultural contexts. Encouraging research and scholarship in indigenous methodologies can significantly enrich the educational landscape

The landscape of social work in Indonesia is characterized by a rich history steeped in indigenous traditions, colonial influences, and contemporary challenges. As the field modernizes, it is crucial to navigate the complexities posed by these diverse factors. The development of the social work profession during Jokowi's presidency has highlighted the importance of integrating formal frameworks, community involvement, and educational reforms.

Significant progress, such as the implementation of the Social Workers Law and the establishment of the Indonesian Social Work Consortium (KPSI) as well as the association of social work schools and the professional association of social workers, marked a turning point in the recognition and professionalization of social work in Indonesia. The enactment of these laws has provided an important legal framework that enhances the status of social workers and aims to improve service delivery and community engagement.

However, numerous challenges remain, including gaps in implementation, cultural adaptation, and socio-political influences. Addressing these issues requires ongoing collaboration among educational institutions, government entities, and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, it necessitates a focused effort to create educational programs that meet the needs of Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape while fostering the growth of qualified practitioners equipped to tackle social challenges effectively.

Future research should continue to explore the dynamics between traditional support systems and modern social work practices, seeking to develop models that bridge these worlds. By promoting collaboration among various stakeholders and ensuring that social work education is culturally relevant and community-focused, Indonesia can cultivate a social work profession that is responsive to local needs, reflective of its rich cultural identity, and capable of contributing to the country's overall development.

SECTION 2: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM, QUALIFICATION/REGISTRATION SYSTEM, AND RELATED LEGISLATION IN INDONESIA

As the fields of social work and professional education continue to evolve in Indonesia, a comprehensive understanding of the existing curriculum, qualification and registration systems, and relevant legislation is essential. This chapter provides a detailed examination of these components, their historical context, and the current framework that guides social work education and practice in Indonesia.

Overview of Social Work Education Curriculum in Indonesia

Social work education in Indonesia is primarily offered through universities and colleges, with programs designed to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to address social issues effectively. The curriculum is influenced by a mix of indigenous practices, Western methodologies, and the unique socio-political landscape of Indonesia.

Historical Context of the Curriculum

Initially, social work education in Indonesia began with short-term training programs, primarily established in the mid-20th century. One of the notable institutions, the **Sekolah Pembimbing Kemasyarakatan (SPK)**, was founded in 1946 in Solo and marked a significant step toward formal education in social work. Over time, these programs evolved into degree-granting institutions, with universities beginning to offer bachelor's, master's, and even doctoral programs in social work. The curriculum at the outset largely mirrored Western social work models, focusing on individual case management and social administration. However, as the profession has grown, there has been a gradual shift towards incorporating local traditions and community-based approaches that resonate more closely with Indonesian cultural values (Fahrudin, 2016).

Curriculum Components

The curriculum for social work education in Indonesia typically includes several core components (Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2020; Nugroho & santi, 2014):

- **Theoretical Foundations:** Students study the principles of social work, including human behavior, social environment, social justice, and ethics. This foundational knowledge is essential for understanding the complex interplay between individuals and their environments.
- **Practical Skills:** Hands-on training is an integral part of the curriculum, equipping students with practical skills through internships and fieldwork placements. These experiences allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, enhancing their competencies in addressing social issues.
- **Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** Recognizing the importance of local practices, some programs have begun to incorporate indigenous knowledge and community-based practices into their curriculum, including traditional methods of communal support, such as **Gotong Royong**, as well as understanding local belief systems that inform social interaction.
- **Research Methods:** Education programs emphasize research, equipping students with the skills to conduct studies relevant to social work. Understanding research methodologies is crucial for evidence-based practice and contributes to the professional development of social workers.
- **Cultural Competency:** Given Indonesia's diverse society, social work education emphasizes cultural competency, allowing future professionals to navigate and respect the various ethnicities, religions, and cultural practices present in the country.

Qualification and Registration System in Social Work

To ensure the quality and professionalism of social workers in Indonesia, a robust qualification and registration system is necessary. While progress has been made, various challenges still need to be addressed to develop an effective system.

Qualification Framework

The qualification framework for social work professionals in Indonesia is still evolving. Currently, individuals must hold at least a bachelor's degree in social work or a related field to be eligible for registration as a professional social worker. Graduate degrees provide additional credentials, enabling professionals to pursue advanced practice positions, research roles, or academic careers (Nugroho & Santi, 2014).

Despite the requirement for a relevant educational background, there is no centralized accreditation system for social work programs in Indonesia. This

situation leads to variability in the quality of education and practice across institutions. Ongoing discussions are taking place among stakeholders to establish a national accreditation body to standardize educational quality in social work (Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2020).

Registration System

The registration system for social workers in Indonesia is primarily regulated by the **Indonesian Professional Social Workers Association (IPSPI)**. Established in 1999, IPSPI plays a critical role in advocating for social work professionals and establishing standards for practice.

To become registered as a professional social worker, candidates typically must:

1. Hold a degree in social work from a recognized institution.
2. Complete supervised fieldwork or internship requirements.
3. Pass the registration examination administered by IPSPI.
4. Adhere to the ethical standards outlined by IPSPI and related legislation.

While the registration system aims to enhance professional accountability, challenges remain. The voluntary nature of registration means that not all social workers pursue registration, leading to a disparity in professional recognition and adherence to ethical standards (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2019 on Social Workers).

Professional Development and Continuing

To maintain registration, social workers are required to engage in continuing education and professional development. This ongoing education helps professionals stay current with industry trends, emerging practices, and changes in legislation impacting social work. Various short courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences are organized by IPSPI and other professional bodies to facilitate continuous learning (Barker, 2014). Such initiatives are vital for ensuring that social workers remain competent and can effectively address the complexities of contemporary social issues (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022; Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020a, 2020b).

Related Legislation Governing Social Work in Indonesia

The practice of social work in Indonesia is significantly shaped by **Law No. 14 of 2019** concerning Social Workers. This law serves as the primary legal framework, defining the profession, outlining qualifications, and establishing regulatory structures for practice and education. Key aspects of the law include:

- **Definition of Social Work and Social Worker:** The law clearly defines "social work" and "social worker," establishing the scope of practice and the necessary qualifications. It emphasizes the professional nature of the work and its adherence to ethical standards, providing a much-needed standardization that contrasts with previous, less formalized definitions.
- **Certification and Competency Testing:** Law No. 14/2019 mandates competency testing (*Uji Kompetensi*) as a prerequisite for becoming a certified social worker. This ensures that professionals possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective social work services. The law outlines the process for certification, including the involvement of educational institutions and professional organizations. The specific procedures and standards for this competency testing are further detailed in the **Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 Year 2022**, which details the processes for implementing professional education and social worker competency tests.
- **Practice License (*Surat Izin Praktik – SIPP*):** The law establishes a system for obtaining a practice license, which is required for social workers to practice independently. The specific requirements for obtaining and maintaining the license are elaborated upon in related ministerial regulations.
- **Education and Training Standards:** Law No. 14/2019 sets minimum standards for social work education and training to ensure that social workers receive the necessary preparation to meet the demands of the profession. The law also specifies the roles of universities and other educational institutions in providing and overseeing training programs, with further details provided in ministerial regulations.
- **Professional Organizations:** The law recognizes the role of professional organizations in regulating and promoting the social work profession. It outlines the responsibilities and powers of these organizations, including oversight of professional standards, ethical conduct, and continuing education requirements.

Ministry of Social Affairs Regulations

The **Ministry of Social Affairs (*Kementerian Sosial – Kemensos*)** has issued several crucial regulations to operationalize the provisions of Law No. 14 of 2019. Key regulations include:

- **Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 14/2020 on Social Work Practice Standards:** This regulation outlines the expected practice standards for certified social workers in Indonesia. It includes aspects such as professional behavior, ethical considerations, and various types of interventions that social workers may provide. This regulation provides much-needed specificity for the standards mentioned in Law No. 14/2019.
- **Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 17/2020 on the Registration and License to Practice for Social Workers:** This regulation serves as a guideline for social workers in conducting their practice. It acts as a reference for the competency test for social workers, provides protections for both clients and social workers, and enhances the quality of social work practice. More specifically, this regulation outlines standard operating procedures, standards of competency for social workers, and service standards.

Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 Year 2022

This regulation provides a detailed framework for implementing professional education and competency tests for social workers. It outlines curriculum standards, assessment procedures, and the process for the accreditation of educational programs. This significantly strengthens the educational aspect of the profession's development, addressing a previous gap in standardized education requirements.

Ongoing Challenges and Future Directions

Despite the significant progress made with Law No. 14/2019 and its supporting regulations, challenges remain in the implementation and enforcement of this legal framework. These include:

- **Harmonization of Regulations:** Ensuring consistency and alignment between the national law, ministerial regulations, and local-level regulations (such as those concerning SIPPS) is crucial for effective implementation.
- **Awareness and Compliance:** Raising awareness among social workers and relevant stakeholders about the legal requirements is an ongoing challenge.

Ensuring compliance with licensing and registration procedures is essential for maintaining standards within the profession.

- **Resource Allocation:** Adequate resources are needed to support the implementation of the regulations, including funding for training, education, and enforcement.
- **Capacity Building:** Further investment in capacity building for social work educators and supervisors is crucial to ensuring high-quality
- education and training programs that meet the standards outlined in the law.
- The future direction of social work in Indonesia hinges on the successful implementation and enforcement of Law No. 14/2019 and its associated regulations. Continued efforts in professional development, capacity building, and harmonization of regulations will be essential to cultivate a strong and well-regulated social work profession that effectively serves the needs of the Indonesian population.
- Additionally, fostering collaboration between educational institutions, government bodies, and professional organizations is critical for addressing the challenges that lie ahead. By creating a unified approach to social work education and practice, stakeholders can enhance the overall quality of social services in Indonesia, promoting greater social justice and well-being throughout the country.

SECTION 3: THE CRITICAL STATE OF FIELD PLACEMENT (PRAKTIKUM) TRAINING IN INDONESIAN PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

This chapter examines the current state of field placement (praktikum) training within Indonesian professional social work education. It analyzes the challenges, strengths, and opportunities inherent in this crucial component, providing a nuanced understanding of its role in shaping future social workers. A primary focus will be on the documented lack of adequate supervision and its detrimental impact on the quality and variety of student field experiences. This chapter concludes with actionable recommendations for improvement, integrating the findings of Fahrudin and Yusuf's (2016, 2020) research on social work education in Indonesia to provide context and support for the analysis.

The Indispensable Role of Field Placement in Social Work Education

Praktikum, the Indonesian term for field placement, is not merely an adjunct to social work education; it is indispensable. Bridging the gap between theory and practice, it provides students with crucial opportunities to:

- **Develop Core Competencies:** *Praktikum* offers a unique environment for developing and refining essential social work skills. Students apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, honing competencies in assessment, intervention planning, case management, ethical decision-making, and report writing (**Ministry of Social Affairs Regulation No. 14/2020**). This hands-on experience builds confidence and practical skills, laying the groundwork for competent and confident professional practice. Nugroho and Santi (2014) likewise emphasize the importance of *praktikum* for developing practical skills and bridging the gap between theory and practice, highlighting its role in shaping future social workers. Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016) stress the need for standardization in curriculum design, teaching, learning, fieldwork, and supervision to ensure consistent quality in social work education.
- **Gain Exposure to Diverse Settings and Populations:** Indonesia's diverse social landscape demands culturally sensitive and adaptable social workers. *Praktikum* exposes students to various settings—hospitals, schools, community centers, NGOs, government agencies, and private practices—allowing them to work with diverse populations spanning socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (Healy, 2014; Ministry of Social Affairs Regulation No. 14/2020). This broad exposure is crucial for developing culturally competent and effective social workers. Nugroho and Santi (2014) also highlight the importance of exposure to diverse settings and populations through *praktikum*, noting that such experiences are key to developing adaptable social workers. Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016) emphasize that a robust social work education is necessary to address Indonesia's fundamental social problems, including poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, and HIV/AIDS.
- **Cultivate Professional Identity and Networking:** Working alongside experienced practitioners fosters a strong professional identity. Mentorship and observation of role models within real-world settings provide invaluable guidance and support, shaping professional values and ethics (Bogo, 2015). Furthermore, *praktikum* facilitates the creation of essential professional networks, providing ongoing support and enhancing career development opportunities. The development of professional identity and networking through mentorship are also key aspects highlighted by Nugroho and Santi (2014) in their discussion on the importance of *praktikum*. Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016) note the importance of addressing issues such as accreditation and licensing for social workers to strengthen the profession.

- **Grasp the Complexities of Practice:** Praktikum provides direct exposure to the challenges and complexities of real-world social work. Students confront ethical dilemmas, resource constraints, interagency collaboration demands, and the emotional toll of the profession (Dominelli, 2012; Ministry of Social Affairs Regulation No. 14/2020). Navigating these complexities under the guidance of experienced supervisors prepares them for the multifaceted nature of social work practice and builds resilience. Nugroho and Santi (2014) also recognize that praktikum is essential for students to understand and navigate these complexities effectively. Fahrudin and Yusuf's (2016, 2020) work highlights the need for Indonesian social work education to find a theoretical model suitable for Indonesian society.

Current Conditions of Field Placement Training: A Systemic Deficit in Supervision

Despite the recognized importance of praktikum, its implementation in Indonesia suffers from a critical shortage of adequately trained and experienced social work supervisors. This systemic deficiency significantly impacts the quality of field education. Nugroho and Santi (2014) discuss several challenges associated with praktikum in Indonesia, including limited time allocated for placements, a shortage of supervisors, and insufficient integration between theoretical learning and practical experience. They highlight this as a significant challenge given the increasing complexity of global issues and stress the necessity of high-quality praktikum experiences, including the need for more training for supervisors. Fahrudin and Yusuf (2016, 2020) further elaborate on these challenges, emphasizing the need for improved curriculum design, fieldwork supervision, and online education to address these shortcomings.

- **Inadequate Supervision and Mentorship:** Many Indonesian praktikum placements struggle with alarmingly high student-to-supervisor ratios. This limits individualized attention and guidance, hindering student learning and development. Furthermore, many supervisors lack formal training in supervision methodologies, further diminishing mentorship quality (**Permensos No. 14/2020; Nugroho & Santi, 2014**).
- **Limited Variety of Placement Sites:** The scarcity of qualified supervisors directly restricts the availability and diversity of praktikum sites. Many agencies are unable or unwilling to host students due to a lack of qualified supervisors, resulting in fewer options for students and limiting exposure to the full range of practice settings. This disproportionately impacts access to placements in underserved rural communities (**Nugroho & Santi, 2014; Fahrudin & Yusuf,**

2016, 2020). The limited variety of placement sites also hampers students' ability to gain experience in different facets of social work, further constraining their professional development.

- **Additional Persistent Challenges:** Beyond the supervision deficit, several additional challenges compound the praktikum experience:
 - **Disparities in Placement Quality:** Significant disparities exist between urban and rural placement sites, with rural settings often facing fewer opportunities and potentially lower quality supervision (Nugroho & Santi, 2014; Ministry of Social Affairs Regulation No. 14/2020).
 - **Limited Integration of Indigenous Knowledge:** Many praktikum experiences may not adequately integrate indigenous knowledge and cultural practices, potentially hindering the development of culturally sensitive practice skills (Fahrudin, 2013).
 - **Lack of Standardized Curricula and Evaluation:** Inconsistent curricula and evaluation methods across different institutions impede accurate assessment of student learning and hinder the development of consistent professional standards (Fahrudin & Yusuf (2016, 2020); Permendikbudristek No. 15/2022).
 - **Inadequate Funding and Resources:** Insufficient funding constraints resource allocation for praktikum, impacting supervisor training, student support, and the overall quality of the experience (Bogo, 2015; Nugroho & Santi, 2014, Sari & Wibowo, 2024).

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Despite the significant challenges facing praktikum in Indonesian social work education, several strengths and opportunities exist for improvement. These can be leveraged to create a more robust and effective field education system.

- **Growing Recognition of Praktikum's Importance:** There is a growing understanding among educators and policymakers of the crucial role of high-quality field education in producing competent social workers. This awareness provides a foundation for advocating for systemic change and improved resource allocation (Nugroho & Santi, 2014; Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2016, 2020).
- **Role of Professional Organizations:** Professional organizations like the **Indonesian Association of Social Work (IPSPI)** are well-positioned to advocate for improved standards, develop training programs for supervisors, and establish networks connecting universities with high-quality praktikum sites. Their involvement is crucial for establishing best practices and promoting collaboration (IPSPI, 2015; Law No. 14/2019).

- **Potential of Technology:** The e-supervision system, described in Yuliani's (2021) research paper, offers a significant opportunity to overcome geographical barriers and enhance supervision. Online platforms can facilitate communication, provide access to training resources, and enable remote supervision, particularly beneficial in reaching underserved areas.
- **Collaboration with Community Organizations:** Partnerships between universities and community-based organizations (CBOs) can expand the range and diversity of praktikum sites. CBOs often have unique insights into local needs and offer diverse settings for students to gain experience. Successful collaborations can improve the relevance and impact of social work education (Nugroho & Santi, 2014; Fahrudin & Yusuf, 2020).

Recommendations for Enhancing Field Placement Training

To effectively address the current deficiencies and leverage the identified strengths, the following multi-faceted approach is crucial:

- **Invest Heavily in Supervisor Training:** Implement comprehensive and ongoing training programs for field instructors, incorporating essential supervision techniques, mentorship strategies, culturally sensitive practices, and approaches to address specific Indonesian contexts. The training should draw on best practices from successful supervisor training programs in other countries, adjusted to fit the local context.
- **Establish a National Network of Accredited Praktikum Sites:** Create a national registry or network of accredited praktikum sites to enhance transparency and ensure equitable access to high-quality experiences for all students. The accreditation process should establish rigorous standards for supervision quality, diversity of settings, and student support.
- **Develop Standardized Curricula and Evaluation Methods:** Formulate and implement standardized curricula and evaluation methods for praktikum to ensure consistent learning outcomes. This curriculum should integrate indigenous knowledge and cultural sensitivity.
- **Increase Funding and Resource Allocation:** Secure adequate funding to support praktikum, including supervisor training, student stipends, travel expenses, and other essential resources. Addressing these resource constraints is critical for improving the quality of the praktikum experience.
- **Incentivize Supervisor Participation:** Offer financial incentives, professional development opportunities, or other forms of recognition to attract and retain qualified social workers as field instructors. This strategy can help alleviate the current shortage of qualified supervisors.

- **Integrate Indigenous Knowledge:** Actively incorporate indigenous practices and knowledge into praktikum curricula to ensure that students develop culturally sensitive and contextually relevant social work skills.
- **Leverage Technology:** Utilize technology to improve communication, supervision, and access to resources for field instructors and students, particularly in geographically remote areas.

The e-supervision system, as described in Yuliani's (2021) research paper, provides a promising model for enhancing the quality and accessibility of supervision in Indonesia. Online platforms can facilitate regular communication and support between students and supervisors, making it possible to provide guidance even when geographic distances present challenges.

Conclusion

Transforming the praktikum experience requires a sustained and multi-faceted approach. Addressing the critical shortage of qualified supervisors is paramount. Implementing the recommendations outlined above, combined with a steadfast commitment to human resource development and infrastructure investment, will significantly improve the quality of field education. This ensures that future social workers are well-equipped to address the complex social challenges facing Indonesia.

Success hinges on collaborative efforts among universities, professional organizations, government agencies, and community-based organizations. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation to local contexts, Indonesian social work education can cultivate a robust framework for preparing skilled practitioners who can effectively contribute to the well-being of diverse communities across the nation.

SECTION 4: POST-GRADUATION (POST-QUALIFICATION) WORKPLACES AND THE STATE OF EMPLOYMENT IN INDONESIA

This chapter examines the current state of employment for social work graduates in Indonesia, analyzing the challenges and opportunities within the profession. It explores the factors influencing job prospects, the types of workplaces available, and the overall outlook for social work professionals. The analysis will draw upon existing research and data to paint a comprehensive picture of this critical area.

The Evolving Landscape of Social Work in Indonesia

The Indonesian social work profession is undergoing a period of significant transformation. (Lisnawati et al. 2015; Law No. 14/2019). Lisnawati et al (2015); highlight several key developments that have shaped the professional landscape:

- **Strengthened Legal Framework:** The enactment of laws such as **UU No. 11 Tahun 2009** (Law No. 11 of 2009) on Social Welfare, **UU No. 13 Tahun 2011** (Law No. 13 of 2011) on the Handling of the Poor, and **UU No. 11 Tahun 2012** (Law No. 11 of 2012) on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System have solidified the role of social workers as primary professionals in social welfare initiatives. This legal recognition provides a foundation for the professionalization and expansion of the field.
- **Competency Certification:** The introduction of competency certification for social workers and social welfare professionals, launched in 2012 by the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs, marks a crucial step toward professional standardization. The certification, facilitated by the Social Work Certification Board (LSPS), provides recognition and licenses, enhancing credibility and professionalism within the sector. Additionally, the establishment of the Social Welfare Institution Accreditation Board (BALKS) further strengthens professional standards for related organizations.
- **Legislation on Social Work Practice:** The Ministry of Social Affairs initiated the drafting of an academic document and a bill concerning social work practice. This bill aims to legally define social work, outline practice requirements, and specify the roles and responsibilities of social workers. The ongoing discussions in the Indonesian parliament represent a continuous effort toward formalizing and standardizing the profession.
- **Integrated Social Services ("One Stop Services"):** The Indonesian government's initiative towards integrated social services, implemented through programs such as the Integrated Services and the Community Care Movement for Prosperous Districts/Cities (Pandu Gempita), positions social workers at the forefront of community assistance. These initiatives aim to consolidate social welfare services under a unified system. The five initial pilot regions (Sukabumi, Payakumbuh, Sragen, Bantaeng, and Berau) demonstrate the government's commitment to integrating social work into comprehensive social welfare programs.

The Demand for Social Workers in Indonesia

Despite these developments, the demand for qualified social workers in Indonesia significantly outweighs the current supply. Lisnawati et al. (2015) cite estimates indicating a substantial gap between the number of social workers and individuals needing social welfare services. The large number of individuals facing social welfare issues necessitates a much larger workforce. The need for social workers extends across various sectors, including:

- Medical social work in hospitals
- Industrial social work
- Forensic social work in prisons and probation offices
- Clinical social work in rehabilitation centers
- Specialized social work for child protection
- Specialized social work for disaster management

Post-Graduation Workplaces and Employment Challenges

The current employment landscape for social work graduates faces several challenges (Nugroho & Santi, 2014; Law No. 14 of 2019):

- **Competition for Limited Positions:** The limited availability of positions leads to significant competition among graduates seeking employment. This competition intensifies due to the varying levels of experience and specialization among applicants. A recent study indicated that many social work graduates struggle to secure positions shortly after graduation, highlighting the urgent need for more job opportunities.
- **Geographic Distribution:** Employment opportunities for social workers are often unevenly distributed, with a concentration in urban centers and a shortage of positions in rural and underserved areas. This geographic disparity presents significant challenges for graduates seeking employment in specific regions or those committed to serving rural communities.
- **Salary and Benefits:** Compensation and benefits for social workers may not always be competitive with other professions requiring similar education and training levels, which can discourage qualified professionals from entering or remaining in the field. A study comparing salaries across similar sectors has revealed that social workers often receive lower compensation packages than their peers in other fields.
- **Lack of Professional Development Opportunities:** Access to ongoing professional development opportunities, including advanced training and continuing education, is often limited. This situation hinders professional advancement and restricts opportunities for specialization within the field.

Insufficient funding for training programs further exacerbates this issue, resulting in fewer options for social workers seeking to enhance their skills.

The Role of Social Workers in Community Development

Beyond traditional social work settings, the profession plays an increasingly important role in community development. The theme of the March 19th World Social Work Day in 2024, "Buen Vivir: A Shared Future for Transformative Change," emphasizes the need for innovative, community-based approaches rooted in local wisdom and harmonious coexistence with nature (IPSPI, 2024). This highlights the evolving role of social workers as facilitators, assessors, and mobilizers of community resources. The ability to connect communities with essential resources and opportunities is key to advancing sustainable development goals in Indonesia.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Indonesian social work profession is poised for growth, yet significant challenges remain. Addressing the existing imbalances between supply and demand, ensuring fair compensation and benefits, and promoting professional development opportunities are crucial steps for supporting the profession's expansion and effective service delivery throughout Indonesia. Further research is needed to explore and quantify these challenges, particularly the gap between employment demand and supply.

Investing in social work education, increasing the number of qualified supervisors, and strengthening support for social workers in underserved areas are critical priorities for achieving equitable access to social work services across Indonesia. By fostering a collaborative environment among educational institutions, government entities, and professional organizations, Indonesia can better prepare its social work graduates to address the complex social issues facing its diverse communities.

SECTION 5: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

Introduction

Social work education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of social services and community support systems in Indonesia. As the nation grapples with complex social issues, including poverty, inequality, and health disparities, the demand for skilled social workers is increasing. This necessitates not only a focus on recruitment and training but also an examination of the current educational frameworks that prepare these professionals.

Over the past few decades, social work education in Indonesia has evolved significantly, moving from informal training to more structured academic programs. However, despite this progress, several challenges remain that hamper the effectiveness and reach of social work education. Variances in the quality of education across institutions, a shortage of qualified faculty, and inadequate practical training opportunities present significant barriers to establishing a robust workforce capable of addressing Indonesia's pressing social problems.

Moreover, the need for culturally competent social work curricula that reflect the diverse context of Indonesian society is more critical than ever. The interplay of local customs, political landscapes, and economic conditions requires a tailored approach to social work education that can equip future practitioners with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively intervene in various communities.

This chapter will delve into the current problems facing social work education in Indonesia, examining the underlying challenges and their implications. In doing so, we will also explore potential future directions for the field, emphasizing the need for innovation, collaboration, and advocacy to enhance the quality and effectiveness of social work education. Addressing these issues is paramount not only for the advancement of the social work profession but also for the enhancement of social welfare in Indonesia, paving the way for healthier, more equitable communities.

Current Problems

Social work education in Indonesia faces a multitude of challenges that hinder the preparation of competent professionals to address the nation's complex social

issues. This section explores several critical problems, including the quality of education, limited faculty expertise, practical training opportunities, cultural context, and deficiencies in the policy framework.

1. Quality of Education

One of the most pressing concerns regarding social work education in Indonesia is the variability in the quality of programs offered by different institutions. While some universities have made strides in establishing comprehensive and well-structured social work curricula, others lack consistency in their educational standards. This discrepancy results in graduates who may not possess the requisite skills and knowledge needed for effective practice. Research by Nugroho & Santi (2014) highlights this issue, noting that without a standardized curriculum, graduates from different institutions may enter the workforce with vastly different levels of competence, undermining the credibility of the profession as a whole (Law No. 14/2019).

2. Limited Faculty Expertise

The effectiveness of a social work program depends significantly on the expertise of its faculty. In Indonesia, there is a notable shortage of qualified educators with advanced degrees and specialized training in social work. Many existing faculty members may lack direct practice experience or the necessary academic credentials, which can further compromise the quality of education provided. According to Rusyidi et al. (2023) the inability to attract and retain experienced faculty exacerbates this issue, limiting students' exposure to current practices and theories in the field. This gap in faculty expertise not only affects the educational experience but also perpetuates the cycle of underprepared graduates entering the workforce.

3. Practical Training Opportunities

Effective social work education necessitates practical, hands-on training, often referred to as field education. Unfortunately, students in Indonesia face challenges in securing adequate field placements. There is a lack of collaboration between educational institutions and social service agencies, which can limit opportunities for students to engage in real-world practice. Nugroho & Santi (2014) and Fahrudin & Yusuf (2020), emphasizes that without sufficient exposure to practical settings, students may struggle to apply theoretical knowledge in professional environments, leading to a disconnect between what they learn in the classroom and the realities of social work practice. Addressing this gap is essential for

fostering competent social workers who can meet the needs of various communities.

4. Cultural Context

Indonesia is a nation characterized by its rich cultural diversity, with thousands of ethnic groups and languages. However, social work curricula often do not adequately reflect this diversity, resulting in a lack of cultural competence among graduates. The curriculum must be relevant and contextually appropriate to empower students to work effectively in diverse communities. Fahrudin & Yusuf (2020) argues that incorporating local values and cultural practices into the educational framework is vital for preparing practitioners who can navigate the complexities of Indonesian society. Failure to do so may lead to interventions that are ineffective or even harmful, as they do not resonate with the local population's needs and beliefs.

5. Policy Framework

An additional concern is the inadequacy of the policy framework surrounding social work education in Indonesia. Social work as a profession lacks recognition and support from the government, which has significant implications for education and practice. According to Al Yasir et al. (2023) this lack of recognition can result in limited funding, inadequate resources, and insufficient infrastructure for social work programs. Furthermore, the absence of clear professional standards and regulations hinders the establishment of consistent educational practices across institutions. Advocating for supportive policies and greater governmental involvement in social work education is crucial for reinforcing the profession's legitimacy and enhancing its overall impact (Law No. 14/2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the landscape of social work education in Indonesia is marked by significant challenges that hinder the ability of future practitioners to effectively respond to the pressing social issues faced by the nation. The variability in educational quality, coupled with a shortage of qualified faculty and insufficient practical training opportunities, has created obstacles that must be addressed to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the complexities of social work practice.

Moreover, the need for curricula that reflect Indonesia's rich cultural diversity is critical for fostering cultural competence among social work students. Educators must be equipped to integrate local values and contextual relevance into their teaching, thereby preparing graduates to engage meaningfully with the communities they serve. Additionally, the lack of recognition and support for the social work profession within the governmental policy framework further complicates efforts to enhance education and practice in this field.

Addressing these current problems requires proactive collaboration among universities, government agencies, and social service organizations. By fostering partnerships and advocating for supportive policies, stakeholders can create a more robust educational environment that better prepares social workers for the realities of their roles.

Looking ahead, the future directions of social work education in Indonesia will depend on the collective commitment to innovating curricula, enhancing faculty training, and strengthening field education opportunities while also addressing the systemic barriers that persist. By prioritizing these initiatives, social work education can evolve to meet the demands of an ever-changing society, ultimately leading to improved social welfare and community well-being across Indonesia.

In summary, the journey toward reforming social work education in Indonesia is essential for establishing a competent and compassionate workforce capable of advancing social justice, equity, and support in a nation characterized by diversity and complexity. The recommendations outlined in this chapter should serve as a guide for stakeholders seeking to make impactful changes that will empower future social workers and elevate the profession as a whole.

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Chapter 10: Japan

Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in Japan

Development of Registration Systems for Qualification Holders

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I. Historical, social, political and cultural context of professional social work education

1. Regional and national context of social work

In addition to the legal framework described later, professional social work education in Japan adopts the 2014 *Global Definition of the Social Work Profession* by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). While situated in this global context, Japanese professional social work education is also positioned in its local context as shown in the regional and national amplifications of the global definition.

The 2016 *Amplification of the Global Definition for the Asia Pacific Region*, by the Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE) and the International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific Region (IFSW-AP) states the following about the regional context in its preamble (APASWE & IFSW-AP, 2016):

The Asia Pacific region represents many different communities and peoples. The region has been shaped by its migrations and indigenous and colonizing histories. It contains some of the richest and some of the most economically deprived nations. It is a region where East meets West, and South meets North with differing religious, philosophic and political perspectives. It is a region that has been severely impacted by climate

change, overuse of finite resources, natural, and human-made disasters, yet the strength and resilience of its peoples have been demonstrated over and over again.

In relationship with this regional context, Japan's position can be described as follows. Regarding 'migrations', before and after the Second World War, Japan used to be a source country of immigration, mainly to the Americas, as well as its former colonies in the Asia Pacific Region. In fact, when it comes to 'indigenous and colonizing histories', while Japan has indigenous populations, historically it has been a colonizing nation until the Second World War; a fact that still has contemporary implications for certain delicate diplomatic and demographic (ethnic) issues.

When it comes to economic context, Japan can be considered to be among the richer nations in the region. It has the fourth-largest economy in the world, with a real GDP of 5.761 trillion USD, and a GDP growth rate of 1.92%, while per capita GDP is at 46,300 USD (CIA, 2024). Politically, it is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with the current Constitution being in effect since 1947. The bicameral National Diet consists of the House of Councilors and the House of Representatives, and the Prime Minister is the head of government. There are 47 main administrative divisions, called prefectures. Culturally, the ethnic and linguistic makeup of the country is 97.5% Japanese, and while religion is multiple choice in the Japanese context, Shintoism (48.6%) and Buddhism (46.4%) can be seen as the two major ones with Christianity (1.1%) ranking as a distant third.

Just as the regional amplification, the preamble in the *Japanese Amplification of the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession* of 2017 by the Japanese Association of Schools of Social Work (JASSW) and Japanese Federation of Social Workers (JFSW) also refers to similar themes (JASSW & JFSW, 2017):

Social work in Japan has developed by integrating Western derived social work to unique cultures and institutions. While contemporary Japanese society has a hold of high scientific technology and has achieved remarkable economic development, on the other hand it is experiencing low-birth rate combined with population aging ahead of the world and struggling with a variety of issues ranging from the individual and the family to politics and economy. Although people living in Japan traditionally have been aspiring for harmony with the natural environment, it is necessary to further respond to frequent natural disasters and environmental destruction.

The first point that the amplification notes is that social work in Japan has developed by integrating Western models to the local context. One specific characteristic that is mentioned and provides the dominant social context for present day professional social work education is population aging combined with low birth rates and related major social issues. In fact, 29.5% of the population is 65 years old or older with a life expectancy of 85.2, while total fertility rate is at 1.4 children born/woman (CIA, 2024). Under these circumstances, total dependency ratio is 71.1 (youth dependency at 20.1 and elderly dependency at 51.0), and Japan's population is already shrinking at -0.43 annually (see **Figure 1** for the country's demographic composition by age). On the other hand, net migration rate is at 0.7 migrant(s)/1,000 population, and can be expected to grow in view of the current demographic situation. As of June 2024, there are already approximately 3.6 million foreign nationals living in Japan; a more than 20% increase in five years even when compared to the pre-pandemic peak (ISA, 2024).

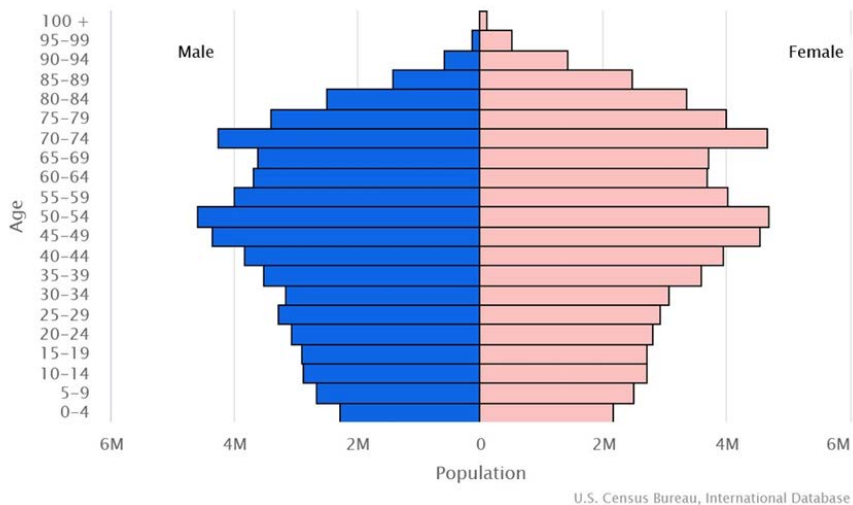


Figure 1: Japan's population pyramid (not a 'pyramid' any more, rather 'mushrooming')

Source: CIA (2024) *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency.

(https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/about/archives/2024/static/e24fba58f9bab7067b80c8f3e9608f3b/15d60/JA_popgraph2023.jpg)

One common theme in both the regional and the national amplifications is the emphasis on 'disasters'. The former mentions natural and human-made disasters. Common natural disasters in Japan are earthquakes (including resulting tsunamis)

and typhoons. Meanwhile, while Japan had a series of industrial pollution related issues (such as outbreaks caused by poisoning like Minamata Disease) in the past, a recent example for partially human-made disaster was the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident, caused by multiple factors, both natural and human-made. As the amplifications stress, such coexistence with disasters requires unique strength and resilience from people, as well as the aspiration for harmony with nature that can be considered a spiritual aspect of Japanese society and culture.

2. Historical development of social work education

As a brief history of the development of professional social work education pre-dating the current professional qualifications, a summary by Sasaki (2010) is available for readers in English too.

Although traces of proto social work can be found even earlier, this summary mentions that professional social work education in the 1920s started in mainly religious universities (both Buddhist and Christian). However, with the rise of militarism, these social work programs had to change their names in pre-war Japan.

As the Second World War ended, the United States occupying forces, namely GHQ (the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, had an important influence on post war Japanese social work. Initiatives with GHQ's guidance led not only to the formation of the social welfare system through related legislation with the Constitution at its foundation, but also to the (re)establishment of professional social work education to train personnel who can operate this system.

Following post-war recovery, Japan entered an era of rapid economic growth accompanied by considerable social changes and consequential social problems. This led to the enactment of additional welfare related legislation in the 1960s. Without any professional degrees yet, Japan hosted the 9th International Conference of Social Work in 1958. Prior to the event, 14 schools of social work founded the Japanese Association of Schools of Social Work (JASSW) in 1955 and joined the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in 1956.

As the Japanese welfare state developed and expanded further during the 1970s, the need for trained social workers grew with it simultaneously to provide services in an increasing number of social care facilities and social service agencies. Finally, the Certified Social Worker and Certified Care Worker Act and the Certified Mental Health Social Worker Act, respectively in 1987 and 1997, established the basic

foundations of the current national qualification system, with only relatively smaller revisions since then. This period also marked the beginning of additional growing social needs due to the previously mentioned tendency of low birthrates combined with population aging, with ever more diverse and complicated social problems continuing to arise to the present day.

II. Professional education curriculum, qualification / registration system and related legislation

1. National social work qualifications

The two major national qualifications for social workers in Japan, namely the Certified Social Worker and the Certified Mental Health Social Worker, are state-regulated.

The former qualification is regulated by the Certified Social Worker and Certified Care Worker Act of 1987. Article 2 of this law defines a Certified Social Worker in the following way:

...a person with expert knowledge and skills who has received registration and uses the appellation Certified Social Worker to provide advice, guidance, or welfare services in consultations about welfare to persons with physical disabilities or mental disorders and intellectual disabilities or persons facing difficulty in leading a normal life due to environmental factors, and a person engaged in the business of communicating and coordinating with and providing other assistance to doctors, other health and medical service providers, and other related parties.

Meanwhile the latter qualification is regulated by the Certified Mental Health Social Worker Act of 1997. Similarly, Article 2 in the law defines Certified Mental Health Social Worker as follows:

...a person with expert knowledge and skills related to the health and welfare of persons with mental disorders who has received registration and uses the appellation Certified Mental Health Social Worker to provide advice or guidance in consultations about the use of community consultation support and about social rehabilitation or about mental health for persons with mental disorders and persons with mental health issues to persons receiving medical treatment for mental disorders in psychiatric hospitals or other medical facilities or using facilities intended to promote

the social rehabilitation of persons with mental disorders, and a person engaged in the business of providing training and other assistance necessary for adaptation to daily life.

It must be noted that in both cases the phrase of ‘using the appellation’ in the relevant law ensures only nominal monopoly (monopoly in name only), but not actual practice monopoly (certain duties that only such certified and qualified social workers would be permitted to carry out). As of November 2024, there are 306,654 registered Certified Social Workers and 108,728 registered Certified Mental Health Social Workers (SWPNEC, 2024a).

2. Other social work qualifications

As initiatives for possible higher qualifications, relevant professional bodies operate an Accredited Certified Social Worker and an Accredited Certified Mental Health Social Worker system too. However, professionals with these qualifications are still very few.

There are other non-national qualifications accredited by professional bodies in specific areas of social work. For example, in the field of elderly and disability welfare, these qualifications include the Care Manager. Such professionals have played a crucial role in preparing care plans for the elderly since the enactment of the Long-Term Care Insurance Act (2000).

Also, in the field of child and family welfare, the qualification of School Social Worker was originally promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) since 2008. Most recently the Child and Family Social Worker launched in 2024 under the Japanese Social Work Center (JSWC) and mainly expected to prevent and respond to child abuse cases, as well as otherwise advance child and family welfare.

Due to its physical limitations, this chapter’s primary focus is on the two major state-regulated national qualifications introduced above and professional social work education in relation to them.

3. National social work curriculum

To qualify as a Certified Social Worker or a Certified Mental Health Social Worker, first one must be eligible to take the national qualifying examination, then actually to take it, and register after passing (SWPNEC, 2024b & 2024c). There are several routes (more than ten ways for each qualification) to gain eligibility to take the examination, depending on various combinations of educational background and/or practice experience. One of the most common is enrollment in a school of social work (for instance a four-year bachelor course at a university) after freshly graduating from high school.

In a nationally (state) accredited social work program, students are required to take the designated subjects set forth in the previously mentioned legislation by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW). For both qualifications, the total number of required hours is 1,200 for lecture and practical training. Practical training includes skill laboratories, practicum guidance before, during and after field placement, and the field placement itself.

Below is a list of required subjects for Certified Social Workers and Certified Mental Health Social Workers after the latest revision of relevant legislation (MHLW, 2019a & 2019b). Note that the underlined 13 subjects (510 hours' worth) are common subjects for both qualifications.

Certified Social Worker curriculum

- 1) Introduction to medicine (30 hours)
- 2) Psychology and psychological support (30 hours)
- 3) Sociology and social systems (30 hours)
- 4) Social welfare principles and policy (60 hours)
- 5) Basics of social welfare survey (30 hours)
- 6) Foundations of the social work profession/common (30 hours)
- 7) Foundations of the social work profession/specific (30 hours)
- 8) Theory and methods of social work/common (60 hours)
- 9) Theory and methods of social work/specific (60 hours)
- 10) Community welfare and integrated support systems (60 hours)
- 11) Organization and management of welfare services (30 hours)
- 12) Social security (60 hours)
- 13) Elderly welfare (30 hours)
- 14) Disability welfare (30 hours)
- 15) Child and family welfare (30 hours)
- 16) Poverty alleviation (30 hours)
- 17) Healthcare and welfare (30 hours)

- 18) Legislation for rights advocacy (30 hours)
- 19) Criminal justice and welfare (30 hours)
- 20) Social work laboratory/common (30 hours)
- 21) Social work laboratory/specific (120 hours)
- 22) Social work practicum guidance (90 hours)
- 23) Social work practicum (240 hours)

Total: 23 subjects, 1,200 hours

Certified Mental Health Social Worker curriculum

- 1) Introduction to medicine (30 hours)
- 2) Psychology and psychological support (30 hours)
- 3) Sociology and social systems (30 hours)
- 4) Social welfare principles and policy (60 hours)
- 5) Community welfare and integrated support systems (60 hours)
- 6) Social security (60 hours)
- 7) Disability welfare (30 hours)
- 8) Legislation for rights advocacy (30 hours)
- 9) Criminal justice and welfare (30 hours)
- 10) Basics of social welfare survey (30 hours)
- 11) Psychiatry and psychiatric care (60 hours)
- 12) Contemporary mental health issues and support (60 hours)
- 13) Foundations of the social work profession/common (30 hours)
- 14) Principles of mental health social work (60 hours)
- 15) Theory and methods of social work /common (60 hours)
- 16) Theory and methods of social work profession/specific (60 hours)
- 17) Theory of mental disorder rehabilitation (30 hours)
- 18) Mental health welfare systems (30 hours)
- 19) Social work laboratory/common (30 hours)
- 20) Social work laboratory/specific (90 hours)
- 21) Social work practicum guidance (90 hours)
- 22) Social work practicum (210 hours)

Total: 22 subjects, 1,200 hours

These subjects in the professional education curriculum can be generally divided into five categories. 1) Introductory subjects such as medicine, psychology, and sociology offer a basic understanding on humans and society. 2) Basic social welfare subjects on fundamental principles, social security, and rights advocacy provide the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of social work. 3) Subjects on specific client groups and areas of practice lead to comprehensive understanding and necessary perspectives to be able to work with cases that include multiple issues. Finally, subjects for acquiring social work-specific competencies can be divided into

4) theoretical social work subjects and 5) practical social work subjects (including both laboratories and practicum) with a cyclical learning relationship between these two categories.

III. Actual conditions of the field placement (practicum) training in professional social work education

1. Certified Social Worker practicum standards

In the above professional social work education curricula, field placement for Certified Social Worker students is a minimum of 240 hours at more than two agencies (in different areas of practice). Ministry requirements indicate the following goals and content for practicum itself and practicum guidance (MHLW, 2021a).

The 5 goals of field placement are set as follows:

- A) To integrate knowledge and skills learned in each subject necessary for social work practice, and to gain competence for providing support based on values and ethics as a social worker
- B) To understand the situation of people and communities in need of support, and to assess their life issues/needs
- C) To respond to life issues/needs by planning, implementing and evaluating support that utilizes people's inner resources, as well as formal and informal social resources
- D) To gain practical understanding of the role that the field placement agency fulfills in the local community
- E) To gain practical understanding of ways and concrete content of inter-professional and inter-agency, as well as community resident collaboration in general and comprehensive support

To achieve these 5 goals, the MHLW designates the following 10+1 specific contents to be included during practicum:

- a) Formation of basic communication and human relationships with clients and a variety of stakeholders
- b) Formation of professional social work relationships with clients and their families etc.
- c) Understanding the situation of clients and the community, assessing their life issues/needs, and planning, implementing and evaluating support

- d) Advocacy and its evaluation for clients and their families etc.
- e) Practical understanding of inter-professional collaborations and team approaches
- f) Understanding of the role that the field placement agency fulfils in the local community, and actual community engagement
- g) Understanding the formation of relationships across fields of practice and professions in the community, and the utilization, coordination and development of social resources
- h) Understanding financial and service management/operation of the field placement agency (including team management and human resources)
- i) Understanding professional ethics as a social worker, as well as roles and responsibilities as a member of an organization
- j) Practical understanding of skills needed for social work practice such as outreach, networking, coordination, negotiation, facilitation, presentation, and social action
- * Through regular field placement visits, the faculty member in charge of practicum guidance frequently coordinates with the student in field placement and the field instructor at the field placement agency, assesses the student's progress of practicum while providing sufficient individual guidance during field placement

Also, the subject of practicum guidance (90 hours) is positioned before, during, and after actual field placement (practicum). MHLW sets these 4 goals for this subject:

- A) To understand the significance of social work field placement
- B) To understand roles expected from social workers, and to learn professional attitudes based on values and ethics
- C) To concretely and practically understand social work knowledge and skills, and to gain basic abilities to fulfil social work functions
- D) To review the field placement, and to foster general abilities for systematically conceptualizing and theorizing concrete experiences and support activities during the practicum as professional skills

Furthermore, required content for practicum guidance includes the following 11 items:

- a) Understanding the significance of field placement and practicum guidance (including supervision)
- b) Experiential learning or study visits at diverse agencies
- c) Basic understanding of the actual practicum field (including understanding of the client group), the agency, and the local community

- d) Basic understanding of the expertise and duties of other professions at the field placement agency
- e) Understanding of social work value codes, ethics, knowledge, and skills necessary at the field placement agency
- f) Understanding individual privacy protection and confidentiality during field placement
- g) Understanding record content and recording methods for keeping a field note
- h) Field placement planning and post-placement evaluation based on tripartite consultation between the student, the faculty in charge of practicum guidance, and the field instructor at the field placement agency
- i) Regular field placement visits and guidance (by the faculty)
- j) Reviewing issues, and preparing a summary report on field placement based on the practicum experience and the field note
- k) Evaluation of the field placement and overall review meeting

Based on the above standards set by the ministry, the Japanese Association for Social Work Education (JASWE) has set these 19 targets for practicum evaluation in its guidelines (JASWE, 2021).

- ① Ability to engage in basic communication to form human relationships with clients etc.
- ② Ability to form a professional social work relationship with clients etc.
- ③ Ability to conduct an assessment of clients, groups, community residents etc., and to clarify their needs
- ④ Ability to conduct a community assessment, and to set goals for solving community issues and problems
- ⑤ Ability to form and implement plans using various formats
- ⑥ Ability to monitor and evaluate plan implementation
- ⑦ Ability to engage in and evaluate practice with clients and diverse people, including advocacy and empowerment
- ⑧ Ability to describe the function and role of various professionals at the field placement agency
- ⑨ Ability to describe the function and role of social resources related to the field placement agency
- ⑩ Ability to collaborate and work with community residents, stakeholders, and other agencies
- ⑪ Ability to plan and manage various meetings
- ⑫ Ability to describe the field placement agency's role in the local community
- ⑬ Ability to engage community residents and agencies

- ⑭ Ability to describe social resources across fields of practice and professions in the community, utilize them for problem solving, and consider developing new ones
- ⑮ Ability to describe management principles and strategies of the field placement agency based on their analysis
- ⑯ Ability to describe the legal basis, finances, operation methods etc. of the field placement agency
- ⑰ Ability to engage in practice at the field placement agency based on social work ethics, and to resolve dilemmas
- ⑱ Ability to describe regulations of the field placement agency
- ⑲ Ability to describe the goals, methods, and key points of skills such as outreach, networking, coordination, negotiation, facilitation, presentation, and social action

JASWE member schools can use these 19 practicum targets for reference in their field placement education framework.

2. Certified Mental Health Social Worker practicum standards

In the Certified Mental Health Social Workers curriculum, field placement is a minimum of 210 hours at more than two agencies (including both community care and medical/psychiatric care for people living with mental disorders). The ministry sets the goals and content shown below for practicum and practicum guidance (MHLW, 2021b).

The 4 goals of field placement are set as follows:

- A) To gain practical skills through action and reflection in the field of mental health social work based on the understanding of professional knowledge and skills as social workers during the social work field placement
- B) To assess life conditions and life issues at the social work field placement agency based on knowledge about the current state of people living with mental illness, mental disorders, or mental health issues
- C) To gain abilities by undergoing the field instructor's supervision for comprehensive response including attitudes, skills, ethics and the self-assessment of issues necessary for mental health social workers
- D) To gain practical understanding of ways and concrete content of general and comprehensive support for community living and collaboration with professionals in relevant fields

These 4 goals require practicum content in the following 5 areas.

- a) Under the guidance of the field instructor at the field placement agency, students on field placement at psychiatric inpatient hospitals etc. should gain experience in individual support to patients and other specific experiences such as:
 - Consultation with patients and their families before and during hospitalization or in acute state
 - Consultation with patients and their families for hospital discharge or community transition/living support
 - Inter-professional support to inpatient and outpatient patients and their families
 - Social work through collaboration with relevant agencies and community residents outside the hospital

- b) Under the guidance of the field instructor at the field placement agency, students on field placement at psychiatric outpatient clinics etc. should gain experience in individual support to patients and other specific experiences such as:
 - Consultation with patients and their families before and during treatment
 - Consultation with patients and their families about problems in everyday life and social life
 - Inter-professional support to outpatient patients and their families
 - Social work through collaboration with psychiatric hospitals and other relevant agencies and community residents

- c) Under the guidance of the field instructor at the field placement agency, students on field placement should gain the following experience at disability welfare service providers or government agencies, psychiatric hospitals or other medical agencies as much as possible:
 - Formation of basic communication and human relationships with clients and a variety of stakeholders
 - Understanding clients, assessing social work needs, and preparing social work plans
 - Formation of professional social work relationships with clients and their families etc.
 - Advocacy, support (including empowerment), and their evaluation with clients and stakeholders (family, friends, neighbors etc.)
 - Participation in team approaches for social work, especially Inter-

professional collaboration between psychiatric care, healthcare, and welfare services

- Examination of the meaning of and adherence to professional ethics and legal obligations as a mental health social worker
 - Adherence to staff employment regulations at the field placement agency, and awareness of roles and responsibilities as a member of an organization
 - Observation of financial and service management/operation of the field placement agency
 - Examination of the role that the field placement agency fulfills in the local community, and observation of actual community engagement such as instances of outreach, networking and utilization, coordination, and development of social resources
 - Exploration of issues for raising mental health welfare levels in the field placement agency or in the community, and examination of policy advocacy
 - Examination, description, presentation, and summary review of the field placement experience and practicum outcomes, as well as clarification of learning task as a social worker, and planning for self-improvement
- d) The student should examine and record field placement experiences, undergo supervision by the field instructor at the field placement agency, as well as visiting guidance at the field placement agency and homecoming day guidance at the school by faculty in charge of social work practicum guidance, thereby receive individual and group guidance
- e) Through regular field placement visits, the faculty member in charge of practicum guidance frequently coordinates with the student in field placement and the field instructor at the field placement agency, assesses the student's progress of practicum, while providing sufficient individual guidance during field placement

For the 90-hour subject of practicum guidance, the 5 goals are:

- A) To understand the significance of social work field placement
- B) To understand the current state of people living with mental illness or mental disorders, and their life conditions and life issues
- C) To concretely and practically understand social work knowledge and skills, and to gain practical skills through individual and group guidance related to social work field placement

- D) To gain abilities for comprehensive response including attitudes, skills, ethics, and for the self-assessment of issues necessary for mental health social workers
- E) To foster abilities for systematically conceptualizing and theorizing concrete field placement experiences as professional knowledge and skills

Finally, MHLW indicates the following 13 content items necessary to include in practicum guidance for achieving these 5 goals of this subject:

- a) Understanding the significance of individual and group guidance during social work field placement and in practicum guidance
- b) Basic understanding of the current state of psychiatric medical care and mental health welfare (including the understanding of client groups)
- c) Basic understanding of the actual field placement agency and the local community
- d) Experiencing actual narratives by people living with mental illness or mental disorder
- e) Experiential learning or study visits
- f) Understanding of professional knowledge and skills as mental health social workers necessary at the field placement agency
- g) Understanding of professional ethics and legal responsibilities expected of mental health social workers
- h) Understanding individual privacy protection and confidentiality during field placement (including understanding of the Certified Mental Health Social Worker Act and the Personal Information Protection Act)
- i) Understanding of record content and recording methods for keeping a field note
- j) Field placement planning based on tripartite consultation between the student, the faculty in charge of practicum guidance, and the field instructor at the field placement agency
- k) Regular field placement visits and guidance (visiting guidance and supervision by faculty)
- l) Reviewing issues, and preparing a summary report on field placement based on the field note and the practicum experience
- m) Evaluation of the field placement and overall review meeting

3. Actual fields of placement

As for where social work students actually complete their field placements, the current data on placement agencies on the national level is hard to grasp. However, a recent survey of students just a few months before graduation upon taking the mock national exam by JASWE (2023) gives an informative overview (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Fields of placement for social work students

Field of placement	Ratio (%)
Disability welfare	38.4
Elderly welfare	36.7
Community welfare	29.2
Child and maternal welfare	23.9
Mental health	20.1
Healthcare	12.0
Employment assistance	11.2
Livelihood assistance (social security)	8.3
Poverty alleviation and independence support	7.3
Government administration	5.8
School education	3.4
Justice (legal system)	1.7

Source: JASWE (2023) *Career Intention Questionnaire Results* (in Japanese), Japanese Association for Social Work Education.

https://jaswe.jp/researchpaper/20230301moshi_jukensha_report.pdf

Unfortunately, it must be noted that the same survey shows that the actual field of placement does not necessarily reflect students' interest (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Fields of interest for social work students

Field of interest	Ratio (%)
Child and maternal welfare	38.1
Elderly welfare	32.3
Disability welfare	31.4
Community welfare	27.8
Healthcare	17.1
Mental health	15.1

School education	12.6
Government administration	11.3
Employment assistance	8.8
Livelihood assistance (social security)	8.8
Poverty alleviation and independence support	6.1
Justice (legal system)	5.2

Source: JASWE (2023) *Career Intention Questionnaire Results* (in Japanese), Japanese Association for Social Work Education.

(https://jaswe.jp/researchpaper/20230301moshi_jukensha_report.pdf)

As we can see, especially fields of practice where students doing their practicum can work with children (such as child and maternal welfare or school education) are more popular than actual placements are available. This is an issue that is apparent in employment too as described in the next section.

IV. Post-graduation (post-qualification) workplaces and the state of employment

1. Tendencies of fresh social work graduates

The formerly introduced survey by JASWE (2023) clarifies the recent tendencies of social work students a few months prior to graduation, specifically when they are taking JASWE's mock national exam as part of their studies and preparation for the real exam. According to results, 15% of students do not intend to work in social work even though they are taking the exam for qualification. In fact, these 15% chose private companies or other forms of employment. Those who plan to stay in social work, are employed as follows: 40% in welfare service providers, 15% in healthcare service providers, 15% in government agencies (as public servants), 8% in welfare-related private companies, 5% in community welfare agencies, and 2% in non-profit organizations.

Those who wish to utilize their qualifications hope to work on issues listed in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Issues of interest for social work students

Issue of interest	Ratio (%)
Supporting children and parents, preventing abuse	35.6
Supporting people in systemic service gaps	34.8
Networking between social workers and community residents	25.5
Protecting the rights of vulnerable people	25.4
Supporting community living for people living with disabilities	24.9
Working on one's own carrier development	23.6
Community organization and revitalization	16.5
Supporting elderly people living with dementia	16.5
Multiculturalism	10.1
Creating new welfare services	8.4
Supporting disaster survivors	7.6
Supporting people's living in depopulating communities	6.7
Policy advocacy and/or operation (implementation)	5.6

Source: JASWE (2023) *Career Intention Questionnaire Results* (in Japanese), Japanese Association for Social Work Education.

(https://jaswe.jp/researchpaper/20230301moshi_jukensha_report.pdf)

Also, **Table 4** shows their actual field of employment. The top 3 reasons to choose social work for employment is because they thought it is an important job for society (72.1%), because they wanted to be of use to others (59.6%), and because they like to work with people (34.1%)

Table 4: Fields of employment for social work students

Field of employment	Ratio (%)
Elderly welfare	27.9
Disability welfare	24.7
Child and maternal welfare	22.3
Healthcare	12.8
Community welfare	11.1
Government administration	8.7
Mental health	7.5
Employment assistance	4.3
Livelihood assistance (social security)	3.7
School education	2.9
Poverty alleviation and independence support	2.2
Justice (legal system)	0.8

Source: JASWE (2023) *Career Intention Questionnaire Results* (in Japanese), Japanese

Association for Social Work Education.

(https://jaswe.jp/researchpaper/20230301moshi_jukensha_report.pdf)

2. Tendencies of registered Certified Social Workers

The Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination Center that conducts the national examinations and where social workers register after passing regularly collects data about the employment of Certified Social Workers; the latest survey being in 2020 (SWPNEC, 2020). According to the results, 77.4% work as practitioners in the profession, 1.2% work in social worker education and training (as faculty members of schools of social work), 9.4% work outside the profession, and 10.7% are not in employment.

The fields of practice for those who work in the profession are shown in **Table 5**. As for the form of employment, 81.6% are regular employees, 8.4% are contract employees, 9.3% are part-time employees, and 0.2% are temporary employees.

Table 5: Fields of employment for registered Certified Social Workers

Field of employment	Ratio (%)
Elderly welfare	39.3
Disability welfare	17.6
Healthcare	15.1
Community welfare	8.4
Child and maternal welfare	8.2
Government administration	6.7
School education	1.0
Livelihood assistance (social security)	0.7
Employment assistance	0.6
Poverty alleviation and independence support	0.5
Justice (legal system)	0.4
Other	1.3
NA	0.1

Source: SWPNEC (2020) *Results Report of the Survey on the Employment Conditions of Certified Social Workers, Certified Care Workers, and Certified Mental Health Social Workers* (in Japanese), Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination Center. (https://www.sssc.or.jp/touroku/results/pdf/r2/results_all.pdf)

Regarding the previously mentioned 9.4% qualified and registered Certified Social Workers who work outside the profession, the top 3 reasons given are workplace environment and relationship problems (30.6%), poor physical and mental health (29.5%), and unsatisfactory salary or wage standards (27.6%). For the 10.7% who are not in employment, the top 3 reasons are child birth and parenting (30.2%), no need to work (18.4%), and current job seeking (18.0%). Also, those few who are qualified and registered but have never even worked in the profession raise more attractive job opportunities (39.9%) and unsatisfactory salary or wage standards (39.76%) as the two overwhelming reasons.

3. Tendencies of registered Certified Mental Health Social Workers

The same survey includes Certified Mental Health Social Workers too (SWPNEC, 2020). The results show that 75.2% work as practitioners in the profession, 1.4% work in social worker education and training (as faculty members of schools of social work), 9.3% work outside the profession, and 12.8% are not in employment.

Similarly, **Table 6** shows the fields of practice for those who work as registered Certified Mental Health Social Workers. Their form of employment is as follows: 80.6% are regular employees, 9.2% are contract employees, 9.5% are part-time employees, and 0.2% are temporary employees.

Table 6: Fields of employment for registered Certified Mental Health Social Workers

Field of employment	Ratio (%)
Disability welfare	24.4
Healthcare	23.3
Elderly welfare	15.2
Government administration	10.8
Child and maternal welfare	5.3
Community welfare	5.2
School education	4.1
Employment assistance	1.8
Livelihood assistance (social security)	0.8
Justice (legal system)	0.8
Poverty alleviation and independence support	0.6
Other	6.3
NA	1.3

Source: SWPNEC (2020) *Results Report of the Survey on the Employment Conditions of Certified Social Workers, Certified Care Workers, and Certified Mental Health Social Workers* (in Japanese), Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination Center.

(https://www.sssc.or.jp/touroku/results/pdf/r2/results_all.pdf)

The 9.3% of Certified Mental Health Social Workers who do not work as social workers, name workplace environment and relationship problems (31.5%), unsatisfactory salary or wage standards (27.2%), and more attractive job opportunities (22.3) as the top 3 reasons. The 12.8% not in employment state the top 3 reasons as retirement (29.4%) child birth and parenting (21.4%), and poor physical and mental health (16.9%). The few who do not even have work experience as Certified Mental Health Social Workers despite being qualified and registered give the main reasons as more attractive job opportunities (33.7%) and unsatisfactory salary or wage standards (24.3%).

V. Current problems and future directions

1. Problems related to demographic changes

As the Japanese population is aging and decreasing, many social problems occur that require social workers (provision of elderly care, isolation and loneliness, depopulation and dissolution of communities, fading intergenerational ties and various forms of abuse etc.). However, due to low birthrates, the high school and college age generation is already shrinking, meaning that not enough young people enter social work education and higher education in general. In addition to changes in population, another reason for this is the profession's social reputation as hard work while being underpaid. As we have seen in the previous section, this leads not only to less social work students, but also to even less of them entering the social work workforce upon graduation. This is also one of the reasons why only about three quarters of qualified and registered social workers are actually engaged in practice. In short, under such demographic conditions, even though population aging and related social issues increase demand for social workers and social work education/training, low birthrates and actual population decline, as well as the wage problem decrease student and workforce supply.

Another demographic change that social workers and social work education need to deal with is the intensifying influx of immigrants. As immigrants everywhere, they face unique challenges in Japanese society (possible discrimination and

exclusion, as well as resulting oppression and marginalization) and have special needs in terms of language, culture, spirituality etc. Unfortunately, we must note that Japanese social services, including social work education, are designed and operate mainly within the premise of Japanese professionals providing services to Japanese service users. For example, depending on immigration status, most documented immigrants can use most services, but not entitled to any cross-cultural accommodation such as linguistic or religious considerations. Furthermore, as described in this chapter, traditionally the national qualifying curricula and examinations for social work professionals (Certified Social Workers and Certified Mental Health Social Workers) do not include sufficient and substantial content on cultural competence and cross-cultural issues.

2. Problems in international comparison

When compared to the *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training*, we must say that social work education in Japan and the national qualification system historically does not necessarily satisfy all international criteria (IASSW & IFSW, 2020).

Upon viewing standards in *The School* section, we can conclude that Japanese social work education in general reaches global standards related to 1. *Core Mission, Aims and Objectives* and 2. *Resources and Facilities*. However, when it comes to the curriculum, we see some deficiencies. While compulsory standards and most of the aspirational standards of 3. *Curriculum* are well covered, in view of the previously mentioned lack of content on immigrants and other cultural minorities, the state of the last two aspirational standards can be questioned; namely, curricula that:

- Reflect the needs, values and cultures of the relevant populations
- Are based on human rights principles and the pursuit of justice

The same tendency can be observed about standards of 4. *Core Curricula*. Regarding *Social Work in Context* and *Social Work in Practice*, due to lack of explicit content on diversity, equity, global issues and environmental problems beyond natural disasters, it may be difficult for the national qualifying curriculum to satisfy compulsory global standards such as the following:

- Critical understanding of how socio-structural inadequacies, discrimination, oppression, and social, political, environmental and economic injustices impact human development at all levels, including the global must be considered

- Knowledge of how traditions, culture, beliefs, religions and customs influence human development across the lifespan, including how these might constitute resources and/or obstacles to growth.
- Critical understanding of historical injustices affecting service user communities and the role of social workers in addressing those
- Knowledge of human rights, social movements and their interconnectedness with class, gender and ethnic/race-related issues
- Critical understanding of the impact of environmental degradation on the well-being of our communities and the promotion of Environmental Justice
- A focus on gender equity
- An understanding of structural causes and impact of gender-based violence
- An emphasis on structural issues affecting marginalized, vulnerable and minority populations
- Social Work contribution to promoting sustainable peace and justice in communities affected by political/ethnic conflict and violence
- Facilitate and advocate for the inclusion of different voices, especially those of groups that have experienced marginalization and exclusion
- Engage in critical analysis of how social policies and programs promote or violate human rights and justice

As for *Practice Education (Placement)*, the practicum component in the Japanese national curriculum as described in Section III . of this chapter satisfies most compulsory global standards, but recently some schools might struggle with the standard that refers to *Policies for the inclusion of marginalized populations, and reasonable accommodation and adjustment for people with disabilities and special needs*. On the other hand, we must note that none of the three aspirational standards are completely met. First of all, placement does not reach 25% (300 hours) of the total 1,200 hours. The Certified Social Worker curriculum is currently at 240 hours (an additional 60 hours would be needed) and the Certified Mental Health Social Worker curriculum is only 210 hours (an additional 90 hours would be needed). Also, service users are not fully involved in decision-making about practice education and evaluation of students. Furthermore, international placements cannot be included in the national qualifying curriculum.

While all global standards on 5. *Research and Scholarly activity* are only aspirational, the last two may be difficult to adhere to in the Japanese bachelor level national curriculum:

- Involvement of students in research activities.

- Support students to acquire and develop program/practice evaluation skills, including partnering with them in such work

Considering standards in *The People* section, few schools in Japan would satisfy the compulsory standard about 1. *Educators* that asks for *A clear statement of its equity-based policies or preferences, with regard to considerations of gender, ethnicity, 'race' or any other form of diversity in its recruitment and appointment of members of staff*. Next, sufficiency in the following four global standards on 2. *Students* can be questionable in most cases (the first two compulsory, the latter two aspirational):

- Clear articulation of admission criteria and procedures; when possible, practitioners and service users should be involved in the relevant processes.
- Ensure that social work students are provided with opportunities to develop self-awareness regarding their personal and cultural values, beliefs, traditions and biases and how these might influence the ability to develop relationships with people and to work with diverse population groups
- Positive action should be taken to ensure the inclusion of minority groups that are underrepresented and/or under-served
- Democratic and sustained representation of students in decision-making committees and fora

Moreover, none of the global standards (three compulsory and one aspirational) on the involvement of 3. *Service Users* in social work education are fully met in the Japanese context.

Finally, it can be stated that social work education in Japan satisfies global standards in the first two areas of *The Profession* section (1. *A shared understanding of the Profession* and 2. *Ethics and Values*). Yet, consistent with the above assessment, the state of the five global standards (four compulsory and one aspirational) on 3. *Equity and Diversity* and the six global standards (three compulsory and three aspirational) on 4. *Human rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice* may not be satisfactory altogether (the latter especially in relation to environmental justice, colonial influences, and indigenous social workers).

3. Towards a more inclusive future

Based on the above problems, future directions of social work education in Japan are expected to point towards inclusion, both in terms of entry to education and

later practice, and in terms of its content. First, to increase the social work workforce, we need higher passing rates in the qualifying national exams (especially for Certified Social Workers). Partially in response to lobbying by professional organizations such as JASWE, the ministry seems to have realized this, and exam passing rates have been increased gradually since the most recent curriculum revision. This trend is long awaited and welcomed, so preferably it will continue. On the other, it is not enough to qualify more social workers, we need them to stay in the profession too. Therefore, to make social work a more attractive carrier choice for high school students before professional education and for university graduates after professional education, the improvement of working conditions including salary and wage standards, as well as better social recognition for social workers and better social perception of the work they do are also necessary.

Further on, the content of social work education must be more inclusive too. As we have seen in relation to recent demographic changes and the global standards of professional education and training, Japanese social work education needs more content on diversity, equity, and justice issues including environmental justice. More inclusive principles such as faculty and staff recruitment practices, service user and student involvement in decision making are also required in how schools of social work or social work programs are managed and operated.

Fortunately, an overall trend towards inclusion is visible in MHLW policy and social work education is also expected to play a role in training social workers who can contribute on the practice level. For example, a recent social policy development is the establishment of Comprehensive Support Systems to realize so called Local Communities for Coexistence (MHLW, 2024). The aim is to create a socially inclusive society in which local residents and other diverse actors engage in collaboration beyond barriers of professional fields and social groupings, regardless of the traditional dichotomy of being in a position of 'supporting' or 'being supported'. It is a comprehensive approach involving businesses and residents along with government agencies, and tries to address complex and multi-faceted issues that cannot be dealt with by formal support. This policy trend is a break from traditional government policies that are divided according to government sectors or social groupings, so it has the potential to pay more attention to human diversity. In fact, the Social Welfare Act was revised to build new Multi-layered Support Systems including the following six programs: 1) Comprehensive consultation ('refusing service to no one'), 2) Participation support (for social participation), 3) Community organization (intergenerational and other diverse exchanges), 4) Continuous support via outreach (for latent and/or involuntary clients), 5) Interagency collaboration (for clients with multiple issues),

6) Support planning (according to the specific program).

When social workers work to create these Local Communities for Coexistence, they also need to advocate for the inclusion of people who have been historically excluded. Therefore, as articulated in the global standards, Japanese social work education in the future will hopefully have more 'emphasis on structural issues affecting marginalized, vulnerable and minority populations' and 'facilitate and advocate for the inclusion of different voices, especially those of groups that have experienced marginalization and exclusion'. Already, the most recent curriculum revision started to introduce some content on multiculturalism to the subject of *Community welfare and integrated support systems*, as well as additional content on social action to the subject of *Theory and methods of social work* (MHLW, 2021a & 2021b). What makes further development of social work education and practice difficult in this area is rather the lack of comprehensive legislation for integration and for the provision of more inclusive support and social services systematically to immigrants, as well as general and consistent immigration policy in society as a whole beyond the field of social work.

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Chapter 11: South Korea

Current Status and Challenges of Social Work Professional Education in Korea

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Summary

This study examines the current status and challenges of social work education in Korea and explores the need to strengthen the professionalism and qualification system for social workers. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution era, simple tasks are expected to be mechanized, increasing the importance of creativity and multidisciplinary knowledge. The demand for social work professionals will likely grow due to Korea's low birthrate and aging society. Social work education in Korea has rapidly developed since the 1980s but faces significant challenges. These include disparities in the quality of practical training, weaknesses in the qualification system, and difficulties in securing employment after graduation. To address these issues, this study analyzes the Korean social work education and qualification systems, considering opportunities for mutual learning. The analysis delves into the historical, social, and political context of these systems. It also examines the state of practical training and post-graduation employment. This study further explores the application of artificial intelligence, a key component of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, to advance economic growth, enhance the professionalism of social workers, and support international cooperation. The findings aim to provide foundational data for improving the social work field in Korea.

Keywords: Korean social work education, social work field practice, welfare education, social workers

I. Introduction

The number of births in South Korea is expected to fall below 250,000 in 2022, with deaths outnumbering births for the first time in 2020. Population dead-crossing, a concept introduced by renowned American economist Harry. The population cliff leads to a contraction in economic activities, such as production and consumption, resulting in a severe economic crisis. According to Statistics Korea, South Korea's working-age population was expected to peak at 37.04 million in 2016 and then decline rapidly.

The population dead cross refers to the natural decline in population as deaths outnumber births. According to Statistics Korea, South Korea was expected to reach this population dead cross in 2020. Monthly data shows the decline had already started: in November 2019, the population decreased by 1,682, followed by a drop of 5,628 in December.

In the Special Projections of Future Population (covering the period from July to the following June) released in March 2019, Statistics Korea forecasted that the number of births would decline from 350,000 in 2017 to 310,000 in 2019 and further to 210,000 by 2067. Meanwhile, the number of deaths was projected to increase from approximately 290,000 in 2017 to 310,000 in 2019 and to 740,000 by 2067.

As of 2020, South Korea recorded the lowest total fertility rate among OECD countries, at 0.84. This rate was expected to decline further to 0.78 in 2022, marking the lowest fertility rate globally for ten consecutive years. Between 2020 and 2025, South Korea had one of the lowest levels of ageing among OECD countries. However, it is projected to become the most aged country by 2045 (OECD, 2018). Specifically, South Korea will enter the category of a super-aged society, with over 20 per cent of the population aged 65 and older by 2025 (Statistics Korea, 2024 Elderly Statistics).

By 2023, 118 areas in South Korea were identified as at risk of depopulation, representing 52 per cent of all municipalities and covering 59.4 per cent of the country's land. However, only 9.6 per cent of the population resides in these depopulated areas, with the majority concentrated in large cities. As of June 2023, Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon collectively accounted for 50.6 per cent of the population, while around 70 per cent resided in the country's five largest metropolitan areas.

This demographic shift has been evident since 2021, when the number of 18-year-olds entering university fell below enrolment capacity, a gap expected to widen

further. Since the closure of a university in Gwangju in 2000, several other general and vocational colleges have followed, with additional closures by August 2023 (Kim, Dong-gi, 2023). In light of this crisis, it is crucial to establish a clear direction for social work education (Kim, Hyung-Yong, 2023; Nam, Chan-Seop and Choi, Kwon-Ho, 2023; Weiss et al., 2006).

Social workers require training in local organisation, resource development, and community engagement. Furthermore, addressing the needs of international students has become essential (Kim, Seung-Kyung et al., 2019). Currently, most universities only offer Korean language support programmes for these students, underscoring the necessity of preparatory courses tailored for those entering social work departments (Kim, Dong-gi, 2023).

In times of crisis, social work education must prioritise case management skills to address the complex needs of new clients effectively (Jeong, Jonghwa and Kim, Jeesun, 2014). It should also focus on developing local organisational skills to identify community issues and mobilise resources. Social workers equipped to provide personalised care for elderly clients will become increasingly vital.

With advancements in artificial intelligence, social workers will move beyond routine tasks to adopt roles as creative and complex problem-solvers. This shift will enable the provision of preventive and personalised services. Artificial intelligence is now a critical tool for policy creation and implementation, leveraging data analysis and predictive capabilities. However, it is essential to uphold human values and ethical responsibilities in this process (Jin et al., 2021; Williams, F., 2021). Customised social work education, which incorporates each country's unique social and cultural contexts, along with creativity and interdisciplinary collaboration, will be increasingly important (Lee, Sun-Young, & Park, Soo-Soo, 2023).

This study examines the current status and challenges of social work professional education in the Asia-Pacific region. It includes an international comparison and explores the establishment of a registration system for qualified professionals. The study also identifies South Korea's unique characteristics and draws insights from the experiences and challenges faced by other countries.

II . Current Status of Social Work Education

Since the revision of the Social Welfare Act in 1983, numerous studies in Korea have explored the roles and responsibilities of social workers. Key research areas include defining core expertise, analysing job competencies, developing competency

models, and incorporating these findings into educational curricula. Recently, there has been growing emphasis on professional competencies for social workers across Asia. In Korea, discussions have also arisen regarding the establishment of a registration system for qualified professionals. These discussions are supported by research on training programmes, employment trends, and associated challenges.

1. Historical, social, political, and cultural contexts of professional social work education

The formation of the Korean state and the introduction of the social security system took place between 1948 and the 1960s. The Korean War in 1950 caused over five million casualties, amounting to nearly one-sixth of the total population, and left 10 million individuals displaced or orphaned. In response, the Ministry of Social Affairs drafted the National Livelihood Protection Act, building on the Korean Relief Decree. Key social welfare systems were introduced during this period of authoritarian governance, including social insurance, public assistance, veterans' benefits, and social services, which were supported by private relief efforts and foreign aid agencies. The Social Work Act was also revised in 1983.

Social work education in South Korea expanded rapidly during the transition to a welfare state in the 1980s, as education and qualification systems addressing social issues became increasingly institutionalised. However, the evolution of social work education has been influenced by changing social and political contexts, shaping its current structure. Institutional expertise in Korean social work has developed significantly at the organisational level.

In recent years, Korean society has shifted from providing welfare services targeted at vulnerable groups to implementing universal welfare for the entire population. This transition has led to a significant increase in expectations and demand for social welfare services, alongside a greater emphasis on ensuring their quality (Seok, 2022).

The social work field has historically addressed diverse client problems and needs in rapidly changing social, political, and cultural contexts. However, education for human resources in social work remains underdeveloped. Efforts to enhance professionalism in the workforce have been insufficient, and a continuous education system has yet to be established.

Although continuing education for social workers is legally mandated, it is limited to formal programmes that have minimal impact on improving professionalism.

The paradigm shift toward local welfare underscores the importance of high-quality, professional lifelong learning services. These services must meet citizens' welfare needs while ensuring accountability (Asmussen, K., 2017). Achieving this goal requires identifying field-relevant skills and integrating them into educational content.

2. Professional training courses, qualification, registration systems, and related legislation

Social workers are legally designated as essential personnel in social welfare facilities. Social welfare corporations and facility operators are mandated to employ them under Article 13 of the Social Welfare Work Act. However, significant challenges remain in strengthening social workers' professionalism and addressing the supply-demand imbalance. One critical issue is the mismatch between social work education and practical requirements. In South Korea, social work education is modelled on the U.S. system but lacks adaptation to local conditions, resulting in curriculum misalignment and complications in the qualification system.

To address these issues, improvements are needed across several areas. The treatment of social workers must be improved, with enhanced wages and working conditions to counteract the sector's undervaluation. Such changes would increase job satisfaction and promote longer tenure. Additionally, the curriculum should be revised to better align with job demands, and institutional reforms are required to further strengthen professionalism.

Social work education in South Korea begins at the bachelor's level and continues through graduate and doctoral programmes. Strict legal regulations govern the process of obtaining a social work licence (Jung, Jonghwa, & Kim, Jeseon, 2014). Students who do not major in social work as undergraduates can still acquire a second-level social work licence by completing relevant graduate-level courses. To obtain the first-level licence, they must pass the national social work examination.

According to the National University Alert, 180 graduate schools across the country offer social work programmes, including both day and evening classes. Academic training and field placements are mandatory components of these programmes. Even after obtaining their qualifications, social workers are required to undergo continuous training and retraining. The qualification holder registration system plays a vital role in enhancing social workers' professionalism, with relevant laws and regulations providing a strong legal framework to support this system.

3. Current Status of Field Placement(Practice) Education in Professional Social Work Education

Social work education in Korea is offered through various institutions, including vocational colleges, cyber colleges, four-year universities, graduate programmes (master's and doctoral), and the credit banking system. Vocational colleges offer two-year, practice-oriented programmes designed to equip students with practical skills in fields such as social work and child welfare. Cyber colleges provide flexible, online learning opportunities, enabling students to study independently of time and location (Curry, H., 2020).

Four-year universities deliver a comprehensive curriculum that combines theoretical and practical aspects of social work education. Graduate programmes, including master's and doctoral studies, emphasise advanced research, social policy development, and leadership training. Graduates holding a master's or doctoral degree in social work or social sciences can acquire the first-level social work licence by passing a specialised examination. Furthermore, the credit banking system provides flexible pathways for obtaining social work-related certificates and degrees through a variety of study options.

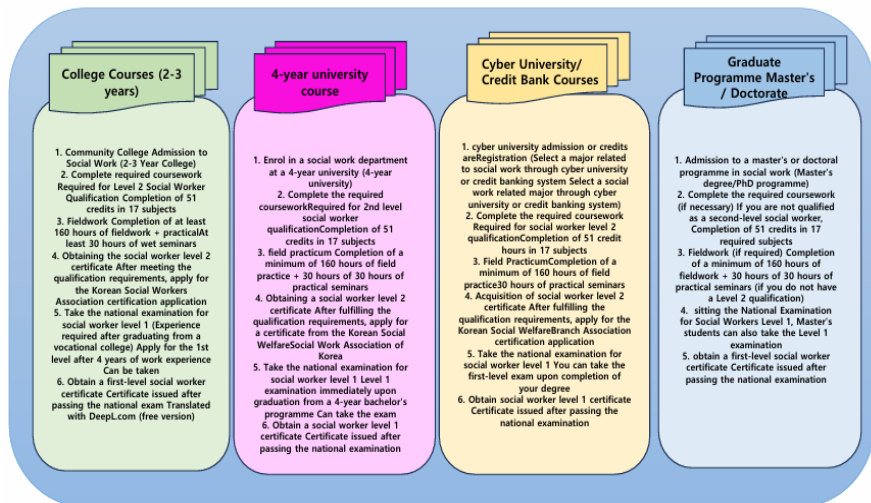


Figure 1: Social Worker Training Process in Korea

Since the onset of COVID-19, university education has predominantly shifted to non-face-to-face methods. This transition has profoundly affected not only social work practice education but also the broader patterns of university education (Choi,

Jisun, 2023; Nam, Chanseop, et al., 2022). Figure 1 depicts the changing landscape of professional education in social work.

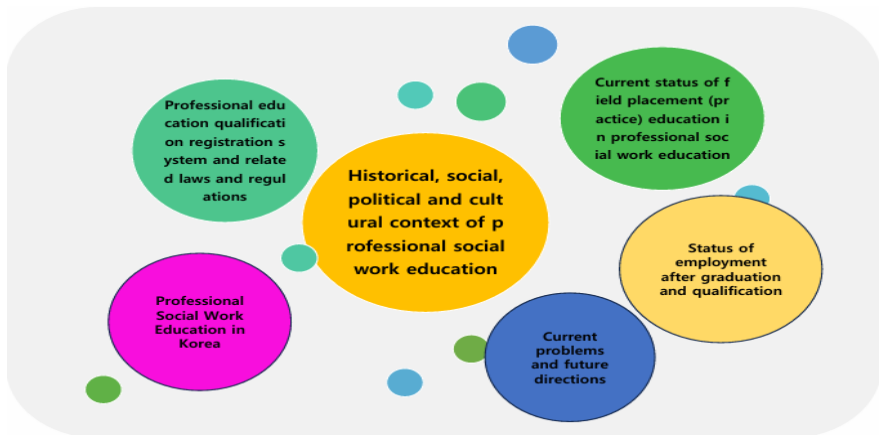


Figure 2: Current status of professional social work education in Korea

In November-December 2024, the fourth social worker remuneration education programme will be conducted. This session will feature 10 integrated online and offline training sessions, as well as three live Zoom sessions. Individuals can register for these programmes through the Korean Association of Social Workers' Continuing Education Centre. However, compared to other Asian countries, field practice in Korea remains inefficient and requires substantial improvement.

4. Employment after graduating from a social work degree program

Social work majors can pursue careers in various social welfare facilities, such as social welfare halls, Community welfare centres for the elderly, Community welfare centres for the disabled and community children's centres. They are also employed in social welfare living facilities, including rehabilitation centres for the disabled, child care facilities, mother and father welfare facilities, and elderly care facilities. Recruitment is typically conducted on a rolling basis as vacancies arise, involving examinations and interviews.

Medical and mental health social workers are employed in medical institutions, including nursing homes, general hospitals, and psychiatric hospitals, where they support patients with health-related challenges. Social workers in welfare institutions assist residents by managing daily activities, providing guidance,

supporting healthcare, facilitating programmes, offering educational assistance, preparing for independence, and conducting individual, group, and family counselling.

Social welfare officials develop welfare policies and oversee projects to address the basic needs of welfare recipients. Correctional social workers, employed as protection officers by the Ministry of Justice, operate in facilities such as juvenile detention centres. Their responsibilities include rehabilitating inmates and providing counselling and guidance to reduce recidivism.

Mental health social workers play a vital role in mental health institutions and psychiatric care facilities. Their duties include providing visitation guidance for individuals with mental illnesses, life and vocational training to support social reintegration, and education, guidance, and counselling for patients and their families. Medical social workers assist patients with psychosocial challenges in hospitals and clinics. School social workers help students facing difficulties adapt to school life, while occupational social workers aim to improve worker well-being in workplaces and businesses. Despite the diversity of roles and competencies in the field, social work is widely regarded as having a promising future.

The number of social workers is projected to increase from approximately 1,000 in 2019 to 1,000 in 2029, with an average annual growth rate of 2.0% (Korea Employment Information Service, 2020). According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare's 2019 Health and Welfare Statistics Yearbook, the number of civil servants dedicated to social welfare rose from 14,184 in 2013 to 23,125 in 2018, a significant 63.0% increase over five years (Choi, Kwon-Ho, and Nam, Chan-Sup, 2023; Bowles, 2020).

The scope of social workers' roles has expanded considerably. While traditionally centred on childcare centres and the public sector, social workers are now employed in a variety of settings, including companies, schools, the military, and hospitals. The growing demand for social work across these fields, along with the exclusion of social workers from the 52-hour working week policy, is expected to further increase demand for the profession.

5. Current Issues and Future Directions

The declining birthrate and aging population are causing a cascade of societal challenges in South Korea. The rapid decrease in the school-age population has led to an overabundance of educational infrastructure, including teachers and facilities,

and has placed significant financial strain on underfunded universities. This demographic shift is also contributing to broader issues, such as a shrinking productive population, economic stagnation, rural depopulation, an increased welfare burden, and rising elderly poverty. These trends pose a long-term threat to the nation's stability and survival.

South Korea's fertility rate has been declining due to various social and economic factors. Changing attitudes toward marriage and childbirth, soaring housing costs, private education expenses, gender conflicts, and unemployment have accelerated this decline. These challenges have created a vicious cycle of rising youth unemployment and declining marriage and fertility rates. Youth unemployment has, in turn, contributed to reduced economic vitality and increased crime rates, further intensifying societal issues.

Meanwhile, the aging population is compounding the nation's social burden. South Korea has one of the highest elderly poverty rates in the world, with many individuals inadequately prepared for retirement. The lack of a robust welfare system has exacerbated intergenerational conflicts. In the current inverted population pyramid, younger generations are shouldering increasing financial burdens to support the elderly, further diminishing societal vitality.

Social workers play a crucial role in tackling these challenges. They provide counselling, support, and policy development to improve the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Social workers are pivotal in advocating for social equality, safeguarding clients' rights, and promoting agency and self-determination. As demographic shifts intensify social problems, the efforts of social workers to enhance the social status and conditions of vulnerable populations are becoming even more critical (Kwonho Choi and Chanseop Nam, 2023).

To become a social worker in Korea, candidates must complete specific educational and practical training programmes, which are vital for ensuring professional expertise. However, the current curriculum lacks sufficient quality management. Furthermore, the role of social workers must adapt to the advancements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is redefining the nature of online and offline relationships. This shift necessitates a reevaluation of traditional approaches to social work.

III. Conclusions

This study examined the current state of social work professional education in Korea to enhance the quality of education and the system for training professionals. The findings aim to lay a foundation for closer collaboration in addressing social welfare challenges in the country.

Unlike the population bonus era, which was characterised by steady economic growth and an increasing working-age population, Korea is entering a period of "population ownership." This transition involves a declining working-age population and a growing elderly population (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2022, The Fourth Basic Plan for a Low-Fertility and Aging Society 2022 Implementation Plan, 5). The working-age population, which drives economic growth through labour and consumption, peaked at 73.4% in 2012 and is projected to fall to 46.1% by 2070 (Statistics Korea, 2021, Future Population Projections: 2020-2070, 19).

This demographic shift highlights the critical role of social workers in promoting the well-being of diverse clients and improving their quality of life. Social workers address needs across a wide spectrum, from immediate crises to long-term support, helping individuals overcome challenges and improve their circumstances. Through these efforts, social workers significantly contribute to societal resilience and development (Han, Sangbeom, et al., 2022).

The diversification of welfare needs, an ageing population, and the move toward community-centred welfare systems present substantial challenges for Korean social work education. Addressing the evolving competencies required in the field—such as problem-solving, digital literacy, self-direction, communication, interdisciplinarity, empathy, and entrepreneurship—has become essential. These skills are vital for supporting the elderly, people with disabilities, and children in a rapidly changing social work environment.

First, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is reshaping the world of work, necessitating practice-oriented education that aligns with advancements in science and technology. Social workers need not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that adapt to a field increasingly integrated with machines and robots. Collaboration with technology and the application of digital knowledge are becoming essential. Enhancing workplace flexibility and increasing practice opportunities will help bridge the gap between education and real-world applications.

Second, the growing complexity of welfare issues has created new demands, requiring multidisciplinary education tailored to both the specialisation of existing professions and the emergence of new ones. Social workers must collaborate effectively with professionals in psychology, medicine, law, and government policy to address diverse and multifaceted challenges.

Lastly, on-the-job training and continuing education are critical for adapting to demographic shifts, technological advancements, and evolving societal values and lifestyles. Social workers need ongoing opportunities to refine their expertise and respond to the changing demands of their roles.

To improve the quality of social work education in Korea, a balanced approach that integrates theory and practice is essential. Adopting multifaceted educational strategies will help develop professional, field-oriented social workers capable of addressing complex welfare issues and contributing meaningfully to society.

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Chapter 12: Malaysia

International Comparative Study on the Current State and Issues of Professional Social Work Education in Asia: Development of Registration Systems for Qualification Holders

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Introduction

The development of social work education in Malaysia has its historical roots in the socio-political and economic context of the post-World War II era when the country was still under British colonial administration. During this period, rapid societal changes and increasing social challenges including widespread poverty, significant health disparities, and issues related to child welfare, demanded structured interventions and systemic approaches. Consequently, efforts were initiated to introduce professional social work formal educations and practices to address these pressing concerns.

The formal establishment of social work education in Malaysia began to take shape in the 1950s and 1960s by mirroring the models and practices developed in Britain. These programs were designed with a focus on three main pillars: casework, which involved individualized attention to clients and their unique challenges; social policy, aimed at understanding and influencing the frameworks governing social systems; and community engagement, emphasizing collective action and empowerment within local contexts.

A landmark development in this evolution was the establishment of Universiti Malaya (UM) in 1959, which served as a catalyst for institutionalizing formal social work education in Malaysia. UM not only introduced structured training programs

but also provided a platform for developing a local cadre of professionals equipped to address the nation's diverse social issues. This institutional backing contributed significantly to the formal recognition of social work as a professional field in Malaysia and laid the groundwork for the development of subsequent academic programs and research in the discipline.

Over time, the scope and focus of social work education expanded and incorporating global perspectives through adapting the changing needs of Malaysian society. This progression reflects the broader historical trajectory of the profession, moving from its colonial-era origins to a locally contextualized and internationally informed discipline that continues to evolve in response to contemporary challenges.

Importantly, the evolution of social work education in Malaysia may be viewed through the lens of professionalization theory (Freidson, 2001), which highlights the relevance of formal training, accreditation, and regulatory frameworks in legitimizing a profession. This theoretical lens helps to contextualize Malaysia's ongoing efforts to pass the Social Work Profession Bill as part of a larger institutional process.

Today, social work education in Malaysia is evolving in response to contemporary difficulties such as socioeconomic inequality, mental health issues, and intercultural integration, all while aspiring to be recognized as a fully regulated and professionalized discipline.

1. Historical, Social, Political and Cultural Context of Professional Social Work Education

The post-independence period (after 1957) saw a shift in focus toward nation-building, which influenced the development of social work education. Programs began to address broader societal issues, including rural development, poverty alleviation, and urbanization challenges. During 1980s, the government began recognizing the importance of social welfare professionals in national development, leading to the gradual expansion of social work programs in public universities such as Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Towards that, social work education in Malaysia has experienced steady development, with an increasing emphasis on professionalization and alignment with international standards. Universities such as Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaya (UM), and Universiti

Utara Malaysia (UUM) have established formal programs offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in social work fields (Zuraiju et al. 2020). These programs are designed to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills through a curriculum that covers diverse topics, including social policy, human behaviour, ethics, community development, and international social work. A critical component of the curriculum is fieldwork (practicum), where students gain hands-on experience by working with various organizations such as hospitals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government agencies under the supervision of experienced practitioners. Meanwhile, the Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW) plays a vital role in advocating for the advancement of social work as a recognized profession, including efforts to establish a regulatory framework through the Social Workers Bill (Shaffie et al., 2020).

While on social context, Malaysia's with its diverse population comprising Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous groups present unique social challenges that influence social work education. The curriculum has been adapted to address issues related to multiculturalism, religious diversity, and social inequality. On this too, social work education in Malaysia has increasingly focused on marginalized groups, including the urban poor, indigenous communities (Orang Asli), refugees, and people and children with disabilities.

On the other hand, rapid economic development in the 1980s and 1990s led to significant social transformations including urban migration and increased inequality (Kahn, 2013). Social work education expanded to address issues such as child protection, domestic violence, mental health, and aging. However, the lack of a unified legal framework has meant that many social issues remain inadequately addressed, with social workers often facing challenges in professional recognition and resource allocation.

Politically, Malaysia's social work education has been influenced by the broader development goals of the government. The emphasis on national unity, poverty reduction, and rural development under the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971–1990) shaped the focus of social work programs toward community development and social integration. Thus, social policies have been aligned with government priorities such as the eradication of poverty and the promotion of social harmony among different ethnic groups

The ongoing push for the enactment of the Social Workers Profession Bill highlights the intersection of social work education with political advocacy. The bill seeks to professionalize the field by establishing regulatory frameworks for practice, education, and ethics. This reflects growing political recognition of the need for

trained social workers in addressing complex societal challenges, including disaster response, human trafficking, and social justice issues.

Moreover, Malaysia's cultural diversity does play a significant role in shaping the values and practices of social work education. By respecting the cultural norms, religious beliefs, and traditional practices is deeply embedded in the training of social workers. The profession emphasizes cultural competence by ensuring that social workers are sensitive to the cultural and religious contexts of their clients. In this, as Islam is the dominant religion, influences many aspects of social welfare policy and practice. Concepts such as *zakat* (charitable giving) and *wakaf* (endowments) are integrated into social work practices, aligning with Islamic principles of social justice and community support (Hatta et al., 2021). Additionally, social work education incorporates indigenous knowledge systems and practices, particularly when working with the Orang Asli and other indigenous groups (Hatta & Saad, 2016).

2. Professional Social Work Education Curriculum, Qualification / Registration System, and Related Legislation

Social work education in Malaysia is offered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels by several public universities, private universities and private college including Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UniMas), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Lincoln University College (LUC) and many more. The curriculum typically blends theoretical knowledge with practical experience, reflecting both global standards and local needs. The curriculum mainly are based on National Association of Social Workers (NASW) key components and has been accredited by Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). Some key components of the curriculum include:

- i. **Core Subjects:** Social policy, human behaviour, ethics, research methods, and community work.
- ii. **Specialized Areas:** Child protection, mental health, aging, disaster management, and poverty alleviation.
- iii. **Fieldwork Practicum:** A significant portion of the curriculum is devoted to field placements, where students gain practical experience in various settings such as at hospitals, NGOs, and government agencies.

Field education (practicum) is considered the cornerstone of social work training in Malaysia. The students must complete certain hours of practicum based on NASW

requirements components. Usually, the students are supervised by experienced social workers or practitioners to ensure they develop skills aligned with theoretical knowledge. Despite its importance, issues such as inconsistent quality of placements and insufficient supervision remain challenges.

On qualification and registration system, to date, Malaysia is still lacking in formalizing national registration or licensing system for social workers although efforts are ongoing to establish one through the Social Workers Bill. Social work graduates typically enter the workforce in various roles within the public and private sectors, including positions in government social welfare departments, healthcare institutions, and NGOs. In this, the **Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW)** and *Institut Sosial Malaysia (ISM)* plays a vital role in professional development by offering courses and programs and advocating for the formal registration of social workers and practitioners. However, without a legal framework, social workers face challenges in gaining recognition and establishing clear career pathways.

On the other hand, with the long-anticipated Social Work Profession Bill marks a pivotal legislative step toward establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework for social work practice in Malaysia. The proposed bill is designed to professionalize the field by creating a national registry for social workers by ensuring that only those with the requisite qualifications and competencies are permitted to practice. This registry aims to safeguard clients and uphold the integrity of the profession by preventing unqualified individuals from misrepresenting themselves as social workers. Additionally, the bill seeks to set clear standards for ethical conduct, emphasizing the importance of accountability in practice and directives continuing education to ensure all practitioners remain updated with evolving knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, the bill potentials to grant legal recognition to social work as a formal and professional profession, enhancing its status in society and underscoring its critical role in addressing complex social issues in Malaysia. By doing so, it aims to elevate the credibility of the profession, provide better job security for practitioners, and encourage more people to pursue careers and formal education in the social work field.

Currently, the absence of such legislation has resulted in fragmented standards of practice, inconsistencies in service delivery, and insufficient legal protection for both social workers and their clients. This gap has left practitioners vulnerable to exploitation and malpractice while exposing clients to risks from inadequately regulated social work practice. Advocacy efforts led by the Malaysian Association of

Social Workers (MASW), alongside academic and professional institutions, have been instrumental in pushing for the bill's enactment. These groups emphasize that the legislation is critical not only for the professionalization of social work but also for improving the quality of services available to Malaysia's most vulnerable populations.

Perhaps, the establishment of a comprehensive qualification and registration system is crucial for the professionalization of social work in Malaysia may lead to:

- Accelerating the passage of the **Social Work Profession Bill** to ensure regulatory oversight.
- Enhancing **field education (practicum)** quality by standardizing supervision and increasing resources for training.
- Developing **specialized certification** programs in emerging areas.

While Malaysia's social work education system has made significant progress, the lack of a formal registration system and legislative support continues to hinder the profession's development. The implementation of the Social Work Profession Bill will be a critical step in addressing these gaps and ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of social work practice in Malaysia.

3. Actual Conditions of The Field Placement (Practicum) Training in Professional Social Work Education

Field placement or practicum is a cornerstone of social work education in Malaysia by offering students invaluable hands-on experience within real-world settings. This experiential learning component bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge acquired in classrooms and its application in professional practice. By engaging with diverse social work contexts, students cultivate practical skills, gain insights into the complexities of social service delivery, and develop a deeper understanding of their roles as future social workers. However, despite its importance, the conditions and quality of field placements in Malaysia vary widely across institutions and sectors, posing challenges to the effectiveness of this critical training phase.

Field placements are typically integrated into the later stages of both undergraduate and postgraduate social work programs, following a structured approach that unfolds in two distinct phases. The Initial Placement emphasizes observation and understanding agency operations, allowing students to become familiar with organizational structures, policies, and practices. In contrast,

Advanced Placement involves active engagement with clients under supervision, where students are expected to develop and refine essential skills such as case management, client assessment, and intervention planning. These placements occur across diverse settings, including government agencies like the Department of Social Welfare, hospitals, healthcare facilities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) addressing critical issues such as child welfare, domestic violence, and refugee support. While these varied environments significantly enrich students' learning experiences, they also present logistical and quality challenges that can influence the overall effectiveness of field education.

Despite its critical role in social work training, field education in Malaysia faces several enduring challenges that hinder its effectiveness. One of the major issue is the **inconsistent quality of supervision** as many field supervisors either lack formal training in social work or are constrained by time, limiting their ability to provide thorough guidance. This variability in supervision impacts the quality of feedback and support students receive, affecting their learning experiences. Additionally, **limited placement opportunities** pose another significant challenge, with a shortage of social work agencies and professionals, particularly in rural areas, making it difficult to secure suitable placements that meet students' educational needs. **Resource constraints** further compound the problem, as many host agencies operate with insufficient financial and logistical support, impeding their ability to effectively accommodate student placements. Lastly, there is often a **gap between theory and practice**, where discrepancies between university curricula and the realities of fieldwork leave students struggling to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. These challenges underscore the need for systemic improvements in the field education framework to ensure consistent and meaningful learning experiences for social work students.

Meanwhile, in response to the challenges faced in field education, several universities and institutions have introduced initiatives aimed at improving its quality and effectiveness. One significant step is the implementation of **specialized training sessions for field supervisors**, designed to standardize the quality of guidance and ensure more consistent mentorship for students. Additionally, universities are establishing **collaborative partnerships** with international institutions and local NGOs to expand placement opportunities, offering students exposure to diverse and specialized areas of practice. Another key development is the **integration of reflective practices**, where students are encouraged to maintain reflective journals and engage in regular supervision sessions. This approach enables them to critically evaluate their field experiences, fostering deeper learning and enhancing their practical skills. These measures collectively address

some of the pressing issues in field education and contribute to more robust training for social work students. Recommendations for Improvement

Thus, to address the challenges and to elevate the quality of field placements, several recommendations as follow are essential:

- i. **Strengthening Supervision Standards:** Establishing standardized training and accreditation for all field supervisors can ensure more consistent and effective mentorship.
- ii. **Expanding Placement Networks:** Developing collaborations with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and a broader range of agencies can help diversify and increase placement opportunities.
- iii. **Enhancing Government Support:** Increased funding for field education, including stipends for students and financial incentives for host agencies, can alleviate resource constraints and encourage greater participation from social service organizations.

Field placement remains an indispensable component of social work education in Malaysia, providing students with the practical skills and insights necessary for effective professional practice. However, significant improvements in supervision quality, resource allocation, and placement diversity are necessary to maximize its impact. By addressing these challenges, the field placement framework can better align with professional standards and directly will ensuring that social work graduates are well-equipped to meet the needs of Malaysia's diverse and evolving society.

4. Post-Graduation (Post-Qualification) Workplaces and The State of Employment

The employment landscape for social work graduates in Malaysia is expanding but faces some challenges in terms of recognition and role clarity. Graduates find opportunities in a variety of sectors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), healthcare settings, and educational institutions. Job roles often include case management, community development, counselling, and advocacy work. However, the field is still evolving, with growing but not yet sufficient public awareness and professional recognition of social work as a critical profession.

There is a significant demand for social workers in healthcare and community settings, particularly for roles in counselling, crisis intervention, and child welfare services. Positions such as school counsellors, clinical social workers, and case managers are increasingly advertised and needed with opportunities to work in urban and rural areas alike. Despite this demand, many roles are not explicitly labelled as “social work,” which may contribute to confusion about the profession’s boundaries and responsibilities.

Employment opportunities are also shaped by Malaysia’s evolving social policies and the increasing importance of addressing mental health, family welfare, and community resilience. This trend suggests an ongoing need for more structured career pathways and enhanced legislative support for the professionalization of social work in Malaysia. However, the lack of a standardized licensing system remains a challenge, which affects job stability and professional recognition across different sectors.

5. Current Problems and Future Directions of Professional Social Work in Malaysia

The professional social work sector in Malaysia faces numerous challenges that hinder its development and effectiveness. A major issue is the lack of legal recognition and regulation, as the long-anticipated Social Work Profession Bill, which aims to establish licensing and professional standards, remains pending. Without a formal regulatory framework, there is widespread confusion regarding the role and legitimacy of social workers, resulting in disparities in service quality and accountability. Furthermore, inconsistent professional standards and supervision exacerbate these challenges, with significant variations in the quality of social work education and field placements across institutions. Many field supervisors lack formal social work training, leading to uneven practicum experiences, while the absence of standardized career pathways post-graduation undermines the establishment of a cohesive professional identity.

Compounding these issues are resource constraints and limited funding. Many social work agencies, particularly those in the public sector and NGOs, struggle with inadequate resources, including insufficient funding, staff shortages, and a lack of infrastructure to deliver comprehensive services. These limitations severely restrict the capacity of social workers to provide effective and sustainable support to vulnerable populations. Moreover, public misconceptions about the profession further diminish its status. Social work is often misperceived as volunteerism or charity work, leading to undervaluation of its critical role in addressing social issues.

This perception, combined with low salaries and limited career advancement opportunities, makes it difficult to attract and retain skilled professionals.

Lastly, the profession is strained by emerging social issues and workforce capacity gaps. Malaysia is grappling with complex challenges such as an aging population, increasing mental health concerns, refugee crises, and urban poverty. However, the social work workforce is not adequately equipped to meet these demands due to a lack of specialized training programs and an insufficient number of professionals in the field. These interrelated issues highlight the urgent need for systemic reforms to strengthen the social work profession and enhance its ability to address Malaysia's evolving social needs effectively.

By looking at the future of professional social work in Malaysia hinges on strategic reforms and initiatives to strengthen its foundation and expand its impact. A key priority is the **enactment of the Social Work Profession Bill**, which will formalize licensing requirements, establish ethical standards, and ensure accountability. This legislation is essential for elevating the profession's status, standardizing practices, and protecting both practitioners and clients. Equally important is the need to **enhance social work education and training**. Universities must align their curricula with the profession's practical demands by expanding specialized training in critical areas such as gerontology, mental health, and disaster response. Additionally, efforts should focus on standardizing field education by improving supervision quality and ensuring equitable access to high-quality placements.

Furthermore, collaboration between professionals should be prioritized in both education and practice. In order to address complex social issues holistically, social workers need to be prepared to collaborate with educators, legal experts, and healthcare specialists.

To address workforce shortages, it is crucial to **strengthen workforce development** through investments in recruitment and retention strategies, including offering competitive salaries and defining clear career pathways. Continuing professional development opportunities must also be prioritized to help practitioners enhance their skills and adapt to emerging challenges. Simultaneously, **public awareness and advocacy** initiatives should aim to reshape perceptions of social work. National awareness campaigns can highlight the critical role social workers play in tackling societal challenges and promote the profession as a cornerstone of Malaysia's social development.

Finally, **leveraging technology and innovation** offers opportunities to modernize the profession and expand its reach. Utilizing digital tools such as tele-social work

can improve access to services for underserved rural communities, while data-driven interventions can enhance service delivery and outcomes. These future directions collectively underscore the need for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to ensuring that social work in Malaysia evolves into a well-recognized, impactful, and sustainable profession capable of addressing the nation's complex social needs.

6. Conclusion

The development of professional social work education in Malaysia is deeply intertwined with the country's historical, social, political, and cultural contexts. From its colonial roots to the present-day focus on multiculturalism and social justice, social work education has evolved to meet the complex needs of Malaysian society. However, challenges such as the absence of regulatory frameworks, resource constraints, and public misconceptions persist, underscoring the need for continued advocacy and reform. Professional social work in Malaysia is at a critical juncture, facing significant challenges but also presenting opportunities for growth and professionalization. Thus, the enactment of the Social Work Profession Bill, investment in education and workforce development, and public advocacy are essential to advancing the field. Addressing these issues feasibly will ensure that social work continues to play a vital role in promoting social justice, protecting vulnerable populations, and contributing to national development.

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* The National Association of Social Workers (**NASW**) is a professional organization of social workers in the United States. NASW has about 120,000 members. The NASW provides guidance, research, up to date information, advocacy, and other resources for its members and for social workers in general. Members of the NASW are also able to obtain malpractice insurance, members-only publications, discounts on other products and services, and continuing education.

* The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (**MQA**; Malay: Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia) is a statutory body in Malaysia set up under the Malaysian Qualifications Act 2007 to accredit academic programs provided by educational institutions providing post-secondary or higher education and facilitate the accreditation and articulation of qualifications.

Chapter 13: Singapore

Review of Social Work and Professional Education in Singapore

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Introduction

Social work is a dynamic profession, and its boundaries stretched from psychology to social development, issues from children to elderly, law and justice to therapy and casework, from peace to war, and from micro to macro practices. Social work needs to change and be versatile in dealing with emerging problems and challenges in a digital, increasing AI world (Tan & Shajahan, 2023).

There are basically two tertiary institutions offering social work training at the degree and post graduate levels. There are, however, a few preparatory and training programmes for the human services sector in Singapore, which will not be covered in this chapter.

This research format and report for this chapter will cover:

- (1) Historical, social, political and cultural context of professional social work education;
- (2) Professional education curriculum, qualification/registration system and related legislation;
- (3) Actual conditions of the field placement training in professional social work education;
- (4) Post-graduation workplaces and the state of employment; and
- (5) Current problems and future directions.

Historical, social, political and cultural context

Singapore can be considered a late starter in development of social work as a modern profession. In 1952, at the then University of Malaya was born a Department of Social Studies. The graduates were the pioneer batch of social workers embarked in post World War II disaster relief and social welfare concerns including tracing of missing persons, protection of girls and young women in danger of prostitution, treatment of medical conditions such as tuberculosis and rehabilitation of opium addicts.

With the colonial roots in British social casework, the Department of Social Welfare was instituted as a centralised social service centre dispensing social assistance and taking care of the handicapped, homeless and widows. Social services were limited and largely remedial in orientation.

Since independence in 1965, Singapore has to chart new territories of human welfare, and in hurry to trained postgraduate teachers and lecturers with doctoral degrees to staff the university level training for social workers. With the gradual maturation of the social work profession, Singapore has since the millennium, developed its own model of social services including the planned proliferation of Family Service Centres, Social Service Offices and other specialised social welfare organisations.

Community self-help groups were actively encouraged by the government and according to the major ethnic groups, Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), Eurasian Association (EA), Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) and Yayasan MENDAKI (MENDAKI). The Chinese Development Association, Malay Yayasan Mendaki and Indian Sinda were founded to provide culture specific and unique social services to their own community.

Professional education curriculum, and registration system

The social work education system in Singapore conforms to international standards with mainly American and British models of post-secondary tertiary training of three or more years with a basic degree and internship or practical exposure.

National University of Singapore, NUS

The earliest social work programme, since 1952, was at the current National University of Singapore (NUS) with a Bachelor of Arts (Social Work) as well as a Graduate Diploma in Social Work

It has since changed from a British semester system to a modular format and the Social Work curriculum follows an American system over 4 years with an Honours degree or three years for a bachelor's degree.

The undergraduate Social Work course at the National University of Singapore (NUS) aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to become professional social work practitioners. The curriculum includes classroom teaching, interpersonal skills training, and supervised field practice. Students are exposed to a wide range of social science theories, organizational planning in social services, human resource management, and research (NUS, 2024).

Key components of the NUS' social work course include various social science theories and practical knowledge, involvement in Interpersonal Skills Training with focus on communication and relationship-building skills (NUS, 2024).

The compulsory supervised Field Practice provide hands-on experience under the guidance of qualified social work practitioners.

The Masters in Social Work by coursework (or research. Is supplemented with the Graduate Diploma are for students preparing for advanced practice or research and administration.

Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)

The Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) offers both Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work. SUSS is suited for adult learners who are keen to upgrade skills as a working professional. The School's Bachelor in Social Work programme is either a 3-year basic degree and fourth and final year honours programme which is enrolled by invitation for those with the required Grade Point Average. The Graduate Diploma (which is also the pathway for the master's degree) is for students who want to qualify for registration as a certified social worker when they already had a degree that is not in social work. The Master of Social Work Programme is preparing social workers for leadership in the social service organisations especially for administration and management of social service organisations.

The SUSS' social work curriculum is divided into 4 years:

Year 1 covers the Introduction to Social Work and Social Services, Psychology as well as Human Growth and Life-Span Development courses and understanding of the Singapore Society

Year 2 includes Legal and Ethical Issues in Helping Professions, Biological Influences on Human Behaviour and Social Work Practice and Skills Lab I: Working with Individuals and Families, Small Groups, Research and Evaluation for the Social and Behavioural Sciences

Year 3 continues with Social Work Practice and Skills Lab as well as Working with Organisations and Communities plus the Elective Courses such as Children and their Issues, Families and their Issues, Social Work in Healthcare and Eldercare as well as Social Work Practicum and Field Seminar.

Year 4: Honours Level students take Statistics classes and the electives of Globalisation and Social Change and the Capstone Social Work and another Social Work Practicum and Field Seminar. The Elective Courses include Introduction to Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Introduction to and Assessment Framework for Youth Issues, Interventions for At-Risk Youths, Approaches to Community Development (SUSS, 2024).

Registration of Social Workers

These curricula conform to the global standards for social work training developed by IFSW and IASSW (SASW, 2024). They meet the basic requirements for qualifying as a registered social worker set by the Singapore Association of Social Workers. Singapore does not have a licencing system but accredits professionals with required training as registered social workers.

The Accreditation of Social Workers and Social Service Practitioners was launched in 2009 to ensure professional standards of Social Work practice; and to promote continuing education and training of Social Workers and Social Service Practitioners. In its objectives was also to Improve the professional image of Social Workers and Social Service Practitioners. The framework was first introduced by SASW with a pro-tem committee chaired by the then President and later it came under the sponsorship the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

Since its inception Singapore has registered around 1,000 social workers.

Field placement training in professional social work education

The basic training requires 800 hours of supervised fieldwork and where only 400 hours were recorded, this was topped up to the required hours with internship attachments or actual employment supervision before being able to register as a social worker.

Social Work Practicum and Field Seminars are offered by NUS Department of Social Work as well as SUSS' S R Nathan School of Human Development is focused on articulating theory into practice, Student are placed with a social service agency where the students practice under the guidance and under the supervision of an experienced professional social worker. The practicum is complemented with field seminars where students present their work and discuss issues and concerns. Topics covered include: What does it mean to be a professional? How can I build a professional relationship with placement supervisors and agency staff? How can I develop professional competencies over field placement? And Planning for the future: career plan and accreditation.

Registration with the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW) can be obtained when they have met the requirements of 1000 hours of supervised practical work. Graduates with an honours degree will qualify for registration immediately.

The SUSS requires only 400 hours of practicum but the registration with the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW) can be obtained when they have met the requirements of 1000 hours of supervised practical work at an agency. Graduates with an honours degree with 800 hours if field work will qualify for registration immediately. The need

Post-graduation workplaces and employment

Singapore adopts a systematic approach on manpower planning and development. As there is still a lack of the ideal number of social workers, a number of programmes and incentives were provided by the government to attract more social service professionals.

Career Conversion Programme for Social Workers

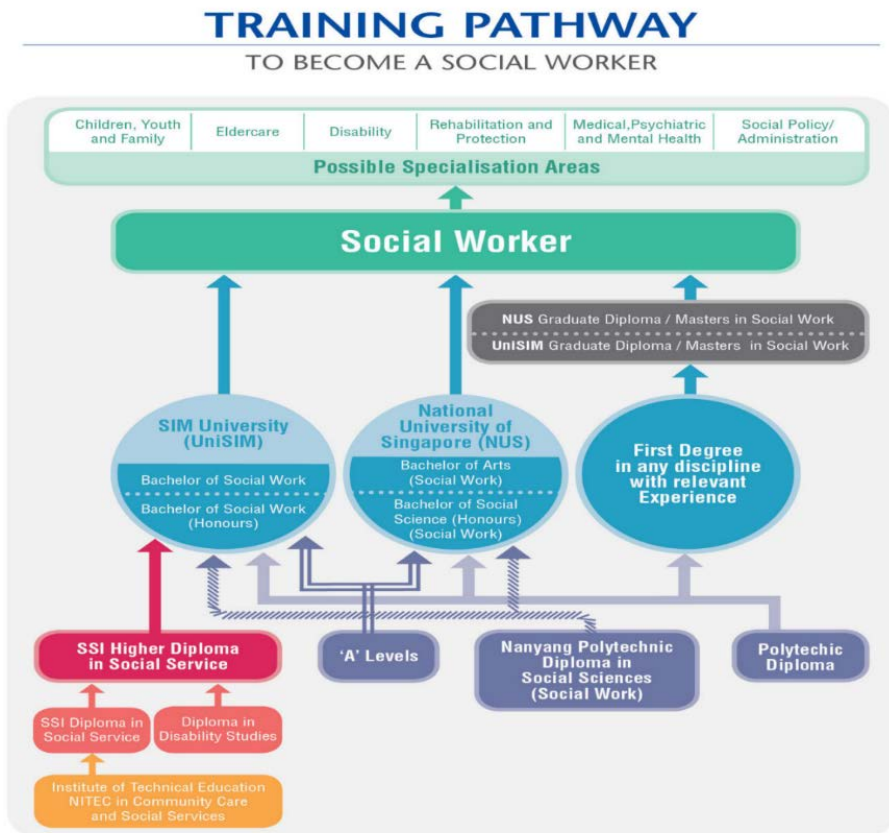
The Career Conversion Programme for Social Workers (CCPSW) allows mid-career professionals to become qualified social workers by working full-time with a sponsoring employer while studying at the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS). Graduates must serve a Minimum Service Period with their sponsoring employers upon completing the program. As the field needed more social workers, they can be qualified through Career Conversion Programme for Social Workers (CCPSW), introduced in recent years where trainees work full-time with their sponsoring employer while concurrently pursuing their studies at the SUSS. The CCPSW is for mid-career professionals interested in switching for a social work career and willing to work full-time with a sponsoring employer while studying at the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS). The graduates of CCPSW must

serve a Minimum Service Period with their sponsoring employers upon completing the program (MFS, 2024:).

VWO Capability Fund (VCF) Local Training Grant

In Singapore the Bachelor/Bachelor (Hons) of Social Work degree programme may be supported under the VWO Capability Fund (VCF) Local Training Grant, with up to 30% subsidy of the course fees. The Masters in Social Work programme can also be supported by the VCF Local Training Grant for upgrading staff of VWOs. This has attracted a number of welfare personnel to embark on professional training to be then qualified to be registered social workers.

Figure 1 Training Pathway to become a Social Worker



Source: SASW (2024)

The social workers are employed in various sectors of society such as children and youth, eldercare, rehabilitation, medical and mental health and policy and administration.

Singapore has developed a Skills Framework to promote skills mastery and lifelong learning. With the Ministry of Social and Family Development and National Council of Social Service, together with employers, industry associations, education and training providers and unions, the Skills Framework for Social Service provides information on the various pathways for the social worker's development:

Critical review of current problems and future directions

Not all social work graduates enter the social service sector. The attrition of social workers may be due to work demands, compensation and image of the profession. While many trained social work graduates take up other jobs their exposure to social work knowledge, values and skills may provide for better human relations and competence and thus may become champions for the professions.

Social work education should provide cutting edge practice based on empirical research and documentation. More is needed in model building in forgoing new grounds in the frontiers of social work. The social work curriculum needs to be forward looking with globalisation, climate change and use of technology

While accreditation helps to maintain standards and develop accountability for professional ethics and conduct, there need to be safeguards against exclusivity and opening of better pathways for entering the profession.

Future directions

Singapore, as an Asian state has focused rightly on strengthening the family and informal network. Greater emphasis on community development and shoring community support and resilience would strengthen the society as a whole.

While social work education prepares relatively well the students to enter the profession, most social workers in Singapore operate under the constraints of agency purview and government policies and directions, social work education needs to focus on critical thinking and creative problem solving and social workers should be trained to critically appraise situations and contexts and be engaged in social change, organisational and community development.

In a survey of Singaporean social workers and social work educators (Tan, 2023) it was found that social work and social work education needed to stay current and

relevant in the midst of globalization and change. Most social workers in Singapore are rather inward looking and not so concerned about international issues.

Civil society and NGOs in Singapore can be strengthened to play a greater part with balanced intervention from state. Holistic development of social work and social education addressing issues of equity and social justice and striking the balance for micro to macro approaches. The training of Masters level social workers must veer towards innovative leadership and strategic practice for organizational development.

Conclusions

Singapore has gone a long way in the development of the social work professions, there are new challenges facing our world and the future need is in dealing with the arenas of green social work, sustainable development and food security.

As the world becomes more and more fragile, the key to survival lies in the ability to enhance solidarity, be adaptable and resilient in an increasing vulnerable, hostile and conflicted global society.

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Chapter 14: Taiwan

Social Work Education and Professional Development in Taiwan

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Social work education in Taiwan has evolved since its emergence in the 1950s, encountering numerous challenges over this time. This paper examines challenges faced by social workers and advancements in the field of social work in Taiwan. The paper covers professionalization, specialization, licensing, and the education system and focuses on several key topics pertaining to social work in Taiwan, including social work curriculum design, professional qualification systems, legal evolution, and the practicum framework, while discussing the maturation of social work education, its alignment with societal expectations, and its future prospects.

Development of Social Work Education in Taiwan

The development of social work education in Taiwan can be divided into three main stages. (1) 1951–1970: Social work was regarded as a branch of sociology; (2) 1971–1990: Social work began to separate from sociology and became an independent discipline; (3) After 1991: Social work departments were established in various universities, aligning with changes in Taiwan's higher education policy. Historically, social work education originated within sociology departments and was primarily used by the government to achieve political objectives. Over time, social work has evolved in response to society, the economy, politics, Taiwan's democratization, and international influences. These shifts have led to its gradual transformation into a professional discipline, playing a crucial role in supporting disadvantaged groups and contributing to societal change.

1951–1970 Social Work Education as a Subdiscipline of Sociology

Following the end of World War II in 1945, the Kuomintang (KMT) assumed control of Taiwan and restructured governmental agencies, establishing the Social Affairs Department. During this period, social work functioned as both a measure to promote public welfare and a tool for eradicating the lingering influences of prewar colonial policies while advancing KMT ideology. Against this political backdrop, social work education began to develop in Taiwan. In 1951, the Taiwan Provincial College of Public Administration founded the Social Administration Section, marking the establishment of Taiwan's first social work program. Its primary goal was to train personnel for social assistance, preparing Taiwan's social welfare system in anticipation of reunification with Mainland China. In 1955, the government merged this college with another institution, renaming the Social Administration Section as the Department of Sociology. By 1958, this department was further divided into two departments, namely the Sociology department and the Social Administration department (Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin, 2021).

Between the mid-1950s and early 1970s, both public and private universities in Taiwan progressively established sociology departments. Tunghai University, National Taiwan University, Fu Jen Catholic University, Soochow University, and Taiwan Provincial College of Education established sections or programs under sociology or social education departments to train professional social workers. Because of a shortage of instructors with professional social work backgrounds, courses were predominantly taught by sociology faculty. As a result, the curricula were neither standardized nor aligned with actual social work practices. Social work education remained a subdiscipline of sociology during this period, leading to a frequent conflation of the two fields (Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin & Teyra, 2021; Lin, 2021, 2022).

1971–1990 Establishment of Separate Social Work Curricula and Departments

During the 1960s, Taiwan transitioned from an agricultural to an industrial economy, leading to the emergence of poverty as a pressing social issue. Community development became a central government strategy for addressing this challenge. With support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN), the government established the Research and Training Center of Community Development. Efforts to combat poverty increased the demand for social workers. In the 1970s, experimental programs were initiated to place social workers in communities and public-sector agencies. By 1980, 17 local governments in Taiwan had established social worker systems. This growth underscored the need for professional education, driving the development of social

work education during this period. In 1969, the Ministry of the Interior invited UN consultant Porthy Moses to collaborate with social work educators to address challenges in social work training. In February 1971, the Ministry of the Interior and the United Nations Development Programme jointly organized the “Social Work Education and Practice Seminar” in Taipei. During this seminar, Taiwan’s social work education curricula were comprehensively reviewed, and a restructuring plan involving the introduction of American social work education models was proposed (Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin & Teyra, 2021; Lin, 2021, 2022).

In 1973, the Department of Sociology at National Taiwan University⁵ began offering distinct curricula for sociology and social work, a practice subsequently adopted by other universities. In 1979, Tunghai University established the Department of Social Work, after which similar departments were founded at other institutions. Social work education began incorporating a structured system of required and elective courses, equipping students with a comprehensive professional knowledge base and driving the publication of teaching materials. During this period, numerous Taiwanese scholars who had studied abroad also returned to Taiwan to contribute as social work educators. Consequently, the 1980s witnessed an increase in social work publications, including textbooks, journal articles, master’s theses, and research reports, with practice-related publications experiencing the most substantial growth. The establishment of independent social work departments marked a key milestone in recognizing the professional status of social work. This period was pivotal in integrating international knowledge and advancing the professionalization of social work in Taiwan (Lin, 2021, 2022).

1991–Present Widespread Establishment of Social Work Departments Across Universities

With social work in Taiwan continuing to develop, professional organizations began to emerge. The Medical Social Work Association was established in 1983, followed by the founding of the Taiwan Association of Social Workers (TASW) in 1989. These organizations played a major role in advancing legislation for the profession, culminating in the passing of the Social Worker Act in 1997. The lifting of martial law in 1987 had spurred the formation and growth of private social welfare groups, which actively advocated for social policy reforms and regulatory development. In response to postindustrial challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, single parenthood, and an ageing population, these private groups exerted pressure on the government, prompting the enactment and amendment

⁵ The Department of Social Work did not become an independent department at National Taiwan University until 2002.

of numerous social welfare laws and regulations. These changes considerably expanded social welfare expenditures and programs. To meet the social welfare needs of the people, the government began commissioning nonprofit organizations to implement social welfare initiatives (Ku, 2020; Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin, 2021, 2022).

Political, economic, and social changes drove a rapid increase in the demand for trained social workers. The passing of the Social Worker Act and the substantial expansion of higher education in the late 1990s further facilitated the widespread establishment of social work departments across numerous universities (Ku, 2020; Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin, 2021). Table 1 illustrates the growth of social work, social welfare departments, and student enrolment between 1996 and 2020. During this period, the number of departments and students at all levels increased by two or three times. Between 1996 and 2020, the number of related undergraduate programs increased. Between 1996 and 2010, the number of related master's programs increased. Because of the higher establishment thresholds for doctoral programs, their numbers increased more slowly, reaching six by 2020. Since 2020, Taiwan's declining birthrate has led to a year-on-year decrease in university enrolment. Both the number of undergraduate programs and student enrolment have declined. The number of master's programs has continued to grow. Student enrolment has also continued to grow, albeit at a slower rate.

Table 1
Number of Social Work/Social Welfare Departments and Enrollment Quotas

	BSW Program	MSW Program	PhD Program
1996			
Number of Departments	14	10	2
Enrollment Quota	Approximately 1,100	Approximately 140	11
2010			
Number of Departments	26	24	4
Enrollment Quota	2,650	347	19
2020			
Number of Departments	34	24	6

Enrollment Quota	More than 3,300	More than 400	More than 20
2024			
Number of Departments	33	28	6
Enrollment Quota	Nearly 3,300	More than 400	19

Source: Referenced literature and related data from Ministry of Education (2024).

Professional Education Curriculum, Qualification System, and Legislation

The development of social work education in Taiwan occurred in stages. The passage of the Social Worker Act and its subsequent amendments marked a significant turning point in the evolution of social work education. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, curriculum design lacked uniformity, hindering the professional competence of social work graduates. Following the Social Worker Act's implementation in 1997, universities began to standardize their curriculum structures to align with the requirements for the national professional licensing examination. As the profession matured, social work in Taiwan increasingly moved toward greater specialization, influencing the structure and focus of social work curricula.

Before Enactment of Social Worker Act 1997

The early development of social work education in Taiwan—particularly prior to the 1970s—was hampered by the absence of dedicated departments or programs. This limited the establishment of comprehensive curricula. Course offerings were primarily contingent on the availability of faculty specializing in social work or social administration within sociology departments. These early curricula emphasized the social needs of the time, with areas such as casework, community development, social administration, and child welfare receiving particular attention (Lin, 2021, 2022). In 1971, the Social Work Education and Practice Seminar identified nine core professional courses essential for social work training: Introduction to Social Work, Social Case Work, Social Group Work, Community Organization and Community Development, Social Welfare Administration, Social Welfare Policy, Social Work Research Methods, Human Behavior and Social Environment, and Social Work Practicum. This marked a foundational step in shaping Taiwan's social work education curricula (Lin & Teyra, 2021; Lin, 2021, 2022).

In 1990, the government relaxed its control over higher education curricula, granting universities greater autonomy in curriculum design to promote academic development. In response, several social work departments established after the 1990s removed basic core courses, such as Human Behavior and Social Environment and Social Work Intervention Methods, from their curricula. Consequently, some graduates were unable to meet professional education standards, which affected their ability to deliver services effectively (Lin & Wang, 2010).

After Enactment of Social Worker Act 1997 and before Enactment of Social Worker Act 2008

The Social Worker Act, passed in 1997, established that social worker qualifications would be obtained through a national examination. This legislation introduced a new mechanism for setting the basic standards for social work education programs, namely, the professional accreditation system. According to the Senior Professional and Technical Examinations Regulations for Social Workers (also known as the Examinations Regulations for Social Workers), candidates must complete at least seven related courses totaling 20 credits or more, including a social work practicum. The examination consists of six subjects: Social Work, Human Behavior and Social Environment, Direct Social Work Practice, Social Work Research Methods, Social Work Management, and Social Policy and Legislation. In addition, the Ministry of Examination developed an outline of examination questions for social workers, ensuring that the questions are closely aligned with the foundational knowledge required for social work practice. These examination requirements influenced academic institutions to further standardize their social work curriculum structures (Lin & Wang, 2010).

Completion of the courses that meet the requirements of the aforementioned regulations enabled candidates to sit for the social worker licensing examination, which led to the emergence of social work credit programs. However, the introduction of these credit programs was somewhat contradictory to the development of formal social work education. The requirement of only 20 credits in seven subjects was perceived as insufficient for cultivating the core professional knowledge and skills needed for social work practice. Additionally, shortly after the passing of the Social Worker Act, the profession faced competition and challenges from related fields. For example, the Psychologists Act was enacted in 2001, setting much stricter qualification requirements than those established by the Social Worker Act. This raised concerns within the social work community about improving education quality, increasing examination thresholds, and advancing professional development (Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin, 2021, 2022).

After Enactment of Social Worker Act 2008 to Present

Through the combined efforts of several professional social work organizations, the amendment to the Social Worker Act was adopted in 2007 and came into effect in 2008. A major change was the introduction of the vocational social worker system. Social workers with at least 5 years of experience in their field and who had completed the prescribed training during this period were eligible to take the vocational social worker examination. Those who passed the examination received the vocational social worker certificate, establishing a tiered system for social workers. These vocational social workers were categorized into five specializations: medical; mental health; children, adolescents, women, and families; gerontology; and disability.

After the enactment of the Social Worker Act 2008, professional social work organizations continued to advocate for revisions to the Examinations Regulations for Social Workers, aiming to raise the standards for social work education and improve professional quality. The Examinations Regulations for Social Workers, amended and promulgated in 2009, stated that, starting in 2013, candidates must not only fulfill practicum requirements but also complete 15 prescribed subjects, with a maximum of 3 credits per subject, totaling at least 45 credits. This change had a substantial effect on the curriculum structures of social work programs at universities. The 15 subjects stipulated in the amended regulations became mandatory courses in most undergraduate social work departments (Table 2; Lin & Wang, 2010).

Table 2
Subjects Required for Eligibility for Social Work Licensing Examination

Fields	Subjects
Introduction to Social Work	1. Introduction to Social Work 2. Introduction to Social Welfare or Ethics in Social Work (either one)
Direct Social Work Practice	1. Social Case Work 2. Social Group Work 3. Community Work or Community Organization and Development (either one)

Human Behavior and Social Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human Behavior and Social Environment 2. Sociology 3. Psychology 4. Social Psychology
Social Policy and Legislation and Administrative Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Policy and Legislation 2. Administration of Social Welfare 3. Program Planning and Evaluation 4. Social Work Management or Non-Profit Organization Management (either one)
Social Work Research Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Work Research Methods or Social Research Methods (either one) 2. Social Statistics

Source: Examinations Regulations for Social Workers.

In addition to the required courses, the elective courses offered by social work departments have evolved over time. In the late 1990s, some universities divided courses into “direct service” and “indirect service” categories. Others grouped electives on the basis of departmental objectives or faculty expertise, offering specializations such as family social work, medical social work, social welfare, and children and adolescent services. At the master’s level, most programs adopted the direct/indirect service framework, allowing students to select their area of focus. This categorization reflects the aim of social work departments to cultivate students’ expertise in specific fields. Furthermore, the vocational social worker system underscores the trend toward specialization in Taiwan’s social work environment. Therefore, the ongoing challenge in curriculum development is to equip students, particularly at the master’s level, with the skills and knowledge required for these specialized areas (Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin, 2021).

Field Placement/Practicum

The social work practicum became a required component of social work education in Taiwan after 1971. With the passing of the Social Worker Act in 1997, the social work practicum was also made a requirement for those taking the social worker licensing examination. In 2009, the amendment to the Examinations Regulations for Social Workers further standardized the regulations for social work practicums.

Practicum Arrangement

Social work practicum placements are generally classified into two types: concurrent placement and block placement. A concurrent placement occurs intermittently throughout the semester while students are attending courses, whereas a block placement is an intensive, full-time practicum typically conducted during the summer break. Practicums can also be categorized as agency-based or program-based. In agency-based practicums, students intern at specific agencies, institutions, or community practice venues related to their field. In program-based practicums, students collaborate in small groups to plan and implement service programs addressing specific social issues or groups. Additionally, numerous universities now offer international internships, providing students with opportunities to gain experience in multicultural social work settings (Lin & Wang, 2010; Mo, 2016). Table 3 provides an overview of practicum arrangements for undergraduate programs⁶.

Table 3
Practicum Arrangement for Social Work Bachelor's Programs

	Concurrent Placement	Block Placement
Practicum Period	Second semester of junior year or first semester of senior year	Summer placement between junior and senior year
Weeks and Hours	Approximately 10–17 weeks, with 8–16 practicum hours per week	Continuous for 6–8 weeks, with 40 practicum hours per week
Types	Agency-based or program-based practicum	Agency-based or program-based practicum, or overseas internship

Source: Compiled by the authors.

⁶ Although practicum courses are included in the master's programs, most social workers complete the basic practicum stipulated by the Examinations Regulations for Social Workers as part of the requirements for obtaining their bachelor's degree. Therefore, the practicum arrangements in the bachelor's programs serve as the reference.

The 2009 amendment to the Examinations Regulations for Social Workers stipulates that candidates must complete at least two practicums, totaling a minimum of 400 h. It also establishes detailed regulations regarding practicum items, institutions, supervisor qualifications, and supervisor–student ratios to standardize practicum practices (Table 4). At present, most social work practicum programs in Taiwan adhere to these standards. In addition to legal requirements, each social work department also develops its own practicum regulations, which include specific rules and implementation details, such as practicum objectives, scheduling arrangements, methods, application procedures, supervision, the responsibilities of involved personnel, and evaluation methods. To prepare students for their practicum, undergraduate programs often include agency visits and introductory courses in the first and second years to familiarize students with social work practice. Some universities also offer practicum orientation courses between the second semester of the sophomore year and the junior year to provide students with further insights into practicum agencies and job responsibilities, thereby ensuring they have the necessary information and preparation before applying for their practicum placements (Lin & Wang, 2010; Mo, 2016).

Table 4

Standards for Fulfilling Social Work Practicum Requirement for Social Work Licensing Examination

Practicum Item	Practicum Content
Practice Content	Practice content must meet one of the following criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Social Case Work<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Practice in relationship-building, home visit skills, and interview techniques(2) Social and psychological assessment and intervention(3) Record writing(4) Case management and resource utilization(5) Social work ethics2. Social Group Work<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Group work planning(2) Group facilitation(3) Group evaluation and record keeping(4) Social work ethics3. Community Work

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Community analysis, including demographics, issues, needs, resources, and social indicators (2) Community program design, implementation, and evaluation (3) Community resource development and utilization (4) Community organizing and social action (5) Social work ethics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Administrative Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Social work research (2) Program design and evaluation (3) Resource development and utilization (4) Supervision, training, and evaluation (5) Social policy and legislative advocacy (6) Social work ethics
Practicum Frequency and Hours	Minimum of two practicums, totaling at least 400 h
Eligibility Criteria for Practicum Institutions	<p>Practicum institutions should employ at least one full-time licensed social worker or one full-time worker with a professional social work background, and such institutions must be one of the following types of organizations with a practicum system in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public welfare, labor, judicial, or health agencies/institutions 2. Legally registered private welfare, labor, judicial, or health agencies/institutions 3. Legally registered organizations (primarily those with social work or social welfare objectives or missions as specified in their articles of association) 4. Public and private universities/colleges, secondary schools, and elementary schools 5. Other institutions accredited by the central competent authority.
Qualifications for Practicum Supervisors	<p>Practicum supervisors must meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervisor is currently a licensed social worker 2. Supervisor has a professional social work background and the qualifications for the social work licensing examination, with at least 2 years of practical work or teaching experience
Limit on Number of Supervised Students	Each qualified practicum supervisor at an institution may supervise up to four students. For program-based

Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of the relevant regulation⁷.

Postgraduation Workplaces and Employment Trends

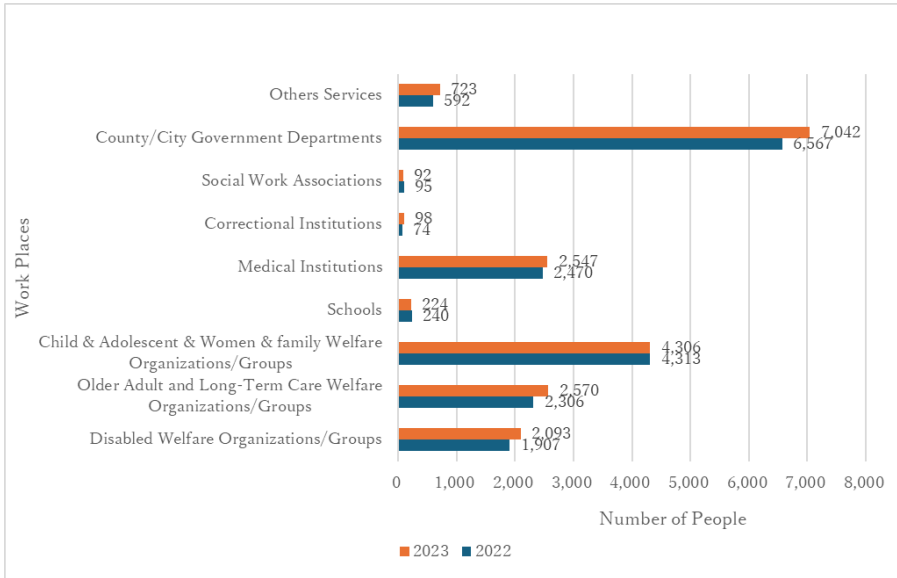
In recent years, factors such as changes in family structure, declining birthrates, and an aging population have led to an increasing demand for social welfare services. In response, the government has introduced more social welfare programs and expanded the social work workforce. Consequently, social work graduates typically find employment in government or private social welfare institutions, where they are involved in service delivery within the social welfare sector. At the same time, the employment conditions, occupational safety, and labor rights of social workers have been receiving increasing attention, and these aspects have been improved through various policies and regulations, thereby ensuring that social workers are adequately protected and supported in their professional roles.

Workplaces of Social Workers

In 2018, the government launched the Strengthening Social Safety Net Program, which integrated social assistance and welfare services, protective services for at-risk households, mental health and suicide prevention, and interministerial service coordination. This program also addressed issues around the supply and demand of social workers and made plans to increase salaries. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), the program recruited 3,021 new social workers between 2018 and 2020 and plans to recruit approximately 9,000 additional social workers between 2021 and 2025 (MOHW, 2019; 2021). This initiative has considerably increased the number of social workers employed in county and city government departments. According to MOHW (2024), Taiwan employed 18,564 full-time social workers in 2022 and 19,695 in 2023. The majority of this workforce is employed in county and city government departments, with 7,042 social workers in 2023, followed by 4,306 social workers in organizations serving children, adolescents, women, and families. Other major employers include older adult and long-term care welfare organizations, medical institutions, organizations supporting individuals with disabilities, schools, correctional institutions, and social work associations. The detailed statistics are presented in Figure 1.

⁷ Standards for Recognition of Social Work (Welfare) Practicum or Fieldwork for Senior Professional and Technical Examinations Regulations for Social Worker (2022) (in Chinese). https://wwwc.moex.gov.tw/main/controls/wHandEditorExtend_File.ashx

Figure 1
Workplaces and Number of Social Workers



Source: Statistics on Full-time Social Workers (MOHW, 2024).

State of Employment

With the continuing growth of the social work workforce, the government has also been focusing on increasing the salaries and benefits of social workers. In 2020, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) introduced the Social Worker Salary Plan, marking the first comprehensive systematization of social worker compensation in Taiwan. This plan included an overall increase in starting salaries and salary adjustments based on seniority, education level, licenses, and work-related risks. These changes were made to encourage long-term employment in the social work field. In 2024, the government implemented another major salary increase, raising starting salaries for social workers by approximately 8%, the highest increase in history (MOHW, 2023). The salary standards for the public and private sectors are presented in Tables 5 and 6, respectively.

Table 5
Salary Standards for Subsidized Social Workers in Private Sector in Taiwan⁸

	Starting Salary	Seniority-Based Pay	Master's Degree Benefits	License Benefits	Risk Allowance
2020	34,916	997	1,995	3,990	997-1,995
2024	37,765	1,000	2,000	4,000	1,000

Source: Compiled by the author.

In addition to improvements in compensation, issues such as the physical and mental health of social workers, personal safety, and labor rights continue to receive attention from professional social work organizations and relevant government agencies. In 2013, the TASW conducted the Survey on the Physical and Mental Health of Social Workers at Workplace in Taiwan and organized various forums. In 2015, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) launched the Workplace Safety Program for Social Workers (MOHW, 2018). The government also commissioned the TASW with conducting research on the personal safety of social workers and compiling the Workplace Safety Handbook for Social Workers (MOHW, 2016). In 2017, the Guidelines for Mental and Physical Health in the Workplace for Social Workers was compiled (TASW, 2017), along with a workplace safety promotion video produced by the TASW. Additionally, to safeguard the labor rights of social welfare personnel and facilitate grievance channels, the MOHW established the Labor Grievance and Communication Platform for Social Welfare Personnel in 2018. This platform enables social welfare workers to address or seek consultation on workplace-related issues, ultimately working to improve the overall working environment.

8 1. Amounts are denominated in TWD, 1 USD = 32 TWD. 2. "Subsidized social workers in the private sector" refers to those employed by private organizations supported by government subsidies. 3. The average monthly regular salary for newly hired employees in 2020 was TWD 28,719 (Ministry of Labor, 2020).

Table 6
Salary Standards for Social Workers in Public Sector in Taiwan⁹

	Starting Salary for Social Workers with a Bachelor's Degree	Starting Salary for Social Workers with a Master's Degree	Starting Salary for Licensed Social Workers	Risk Allowance
General Social Worker in the Public Sector				
2020	38,480	40,560	40,560	700
2024	41,528	43,773	43,773	700
Protective Services Social Worker in the Public Sector				
2020	41,683	43,820	43,820	1000-3000
2024	44,896	47,199	47,199	1000-3000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

In conclusion, employment opportunities and compensation for social workers in Taiwan have substantially improved, with steady progress in enhancing the working environment. Although advancements have been made in compensation, workplace safety, and labor rights, much room remains for improvement in terms of human resource allocation and working conditions. In the future, further efforts are required to protect the safety and the mental and physical well-being of social workers to ensure workforce stability.

Current Problems and Future Directions

Taiwan's social work education faces several challenges, influenced by social changes, global trends, and the evolving demands for professional development. The following issues are key to understanding the current landscape and potential future directions.

⁹ "Social Workers in the Public Sector" are divided into general and protective roles, with protective roles involving higher risk and therefore offering a higher risk allowance.

Current Challenges

Social work education in Taiwan currently faces major challenges in curriculum design, teaching quality, academic system standards, and practicum arrangements, all of which affect the overall quality of education. First, regarding curriculum design, although current curriculum structures are more aligned with the Examinations Regulations for Social Workers, this alignment has sparked criticism of an “examination-oriented education.” Scholars have argued that social work education has increasingly shifted toward market-driven, licensing examination preparation, gradually losing its core values as a professional education and failing to cultivate students’ ability to think and act effectively in real-world practice (Ku, 2016, 2020; Pong, 2016).

Second, the rapid expansion of social work departments and institutes since the late 1990s has not been matched by a corresponding increase in the number of faculty members with relevant professional backgrounds. Surveys conducted in 1998, 2010, and 2016 revealed that only 51%, 50%, and 48.5%, respectively, of faculty members in social work departments possessed professional backgrounds in social work, social welfare, or social policy, exhibiting a downward trend. Compared with the social work departments in North America, where 80% or more of faculty members hold social work degrees, the proportion of faculty members with professional social work backgrounds in Taiwan’s social work departments is low (Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin, 2000, 2021; Pong, 2016; Taiwan Association of Social Work Education, 2016).

In addition, the high student-to-teacher ratio in various departments remains a key challenge in social work education (Feng, 2007; Lin, 2021; Mo, 2007). This faculty-related issue may lead to social work professional courses and practicums being taught or supervised by instructors without professional social work backgrounds, affecting the overall quality of education (Ku, 2016; Lin & Wang, 2010; Lin & Teyra, 2021; Pong, 2016). Furthermore, although stricter qualification requirements were imposed for the social worker licensing examination after 2013, social work credit programs continue to expand. These programs have less stringent requirements compared with social work departments in universities and colleges, with less rigorous checks on faculty qualifications, curricula, and practicum systems. Within the social work departments of universities and colleges, 2-year short-term programs also exist. Consequently, the traditional 4-year bachelor’s program is no longer the basic requirement for professional training, and this trend has raised concerns about the professional development of social workers (Ku, 2016; Pong, 2016).

Regarding practicums, the TASW conducted a survey and multiple focus group interviews with novice social workers (those with 3 years or less of work experience) between 2022 and 2023. The TASW demonstrated that practicum experience is crucial in preparing novice social workers for practical work. The TASW observed that practicum arrangements often failed to provide sufficient and diverse practical experiences and recommended increasing the frequency and duration of practicums to enhance their depth and breadth (TASW, 2024). Given the considerable number of social work departments and credit programs, thousands of students require practicum venues each year. Whether these practical venues have the capacity to cooperate effectively with universities to train students and maintain practicum quality is unclear. Whether qualified institutions and supervisors are available is also unclear. With the current shortage of teaching staff with professional social work backgrounds and the lack of examination regulations regarding the qualifications of university practicum supervisors, assigning practicum supervision to teachers without a social work background may undermine students' learning opportunities and hinder cooperation between universities and institutions (Lin & Wang, 2010). This is a key problem currently affecting social work practicums.

Finally, with the social work profession evolving toward specialization, the curriculum design at universities is limited by faculty size and university regulations on minimum class enrollments, making it challenging to establish diverse and hierarchical specialized module courses (Lin & Wang, 2010). Social work education has long been expected to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to address domestic political, social, and cultural contexts, enabling them to become effective social workers (Lu, 2021; Mo, 2007). In the context of globalization and its associated social problems, social workers are increasingly involved in international work and serving diverse ethnic populations, highlighting the need for social workers to develop competencies to handle cross-border and multicultural issues (Ku, 2016; Lu, 2021). A key issue in developing social work education is designing curricula that emphasize local development while also aligning with global trends and the international community.

Social work education in Taiwan currently faces multiple challenges. To enhance the quality of professional education, future development should focus on comprehensive reform across the entire system. First, curriculum design should strike a balance between transmitting professional knowledge and addressing market demands, while strengthening students' awareness of both local and global contexts. Curriculum design should also focus on cultivating independent thinking and adaptability through the acquisition of practical work experience. Second, to improve teaching quality, policies and resources should be adjusted to

encourage experienced professionals with social work backgrounds to enter the field of education. This will help ensure a reasonable student-to-teacher ratio and provide a more supportive learning environment. Regarding academic system standards, clear professional development guidelines should be established to reduce the number of short-term social work credit programs.

Furthermore, in terms of practicum systems, exploring diverse practicum models and strengthening collaboration between universities and practical facilities are essential to ensure that students gain sufficient and varied practical learning experiences. The qualifications for practicum supervisors at universities should also be regulated and implemented. In summary, social work education in Taiwan must respond more effectively to the needs of modern society, cultivating professionals who are grounded in Taiwan yet equipped to meet both local and international demands for participation in a global context.

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Chapter 15: Thailand

Transforming Social Work Education and Profession in Thailand: Current status and future directions

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Abstract

This chapter aims to explore the historical, social, political, culture and transforming of social education and profession in Thailand. The social work practice evolved during the Second World War II in 1940, aimed to create public support, strengthen nationalism and culturism.. The “social worker” position has begun to employ during the period. The first western social work training program was launched during the economic crisis in 1942. The formal social work education with undergraduate program found in 1954. The Royal Thai Government issued Social Work Profession Act. of 2013. The Social Work Professions Council of Thailand (SWPCT) was established to control standards and code of conduct, promote and develop social work profession and provide social assistance or services relating to social work profession. The social work become a professional “license social worker” (LSW). In 2015, Thailand Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education (TASWE) was established to promote social work and social welfare education. Thailand Qualifications Framework for Social Work degrees were developed to direct and control learning outcome and professional standards of social work practice by TASWE. Social workers have played crucial roles in Thai society and variety of settings which reflected in difference legislations. Recently, license social workers employed largely by government welfare agencies. to providing direct social welfare benefits and assistance to people and families in needed and advocating for the better provision of community-based services. It's find that social work education have advanced significantly from the origins since 1942. However, there are many challenges for social work education and professional in Thailand

Key Words: Social Work Education, Profession, Qualifications Framework, License Social Worker, Thailand

Historical, social, political, culture and evolution of social work education in Thailand

The social work practice originated with the nationalistic ideology and a policy of economic nationalism and culturism of Prime Minister Field Marshal Phibunsongkram during the Second World War (World War II) in 1940, after political conflict and economic crisis with inflation and raising of foreign debt (Taweeyot, 2021). It's also impacted of Siamese Revolution of 1932, led to the declaration of democracy, end of long absolute monarch and the beginning of the constitutional monarchy with a democratic government in the country. After he visited western countries and realized that social studies were important to advance the nation to modern like the western country. The aim was to create public support and strengthen the Thai state through institutions upon which the Thai people could depend. He announced a policy of social welfare and social security to strengthen nationalism which impressed by the Elizabethan poor law in England, he implemented the Beggar Control Act in 1941, (Phongvivat, 2002). He became the first Director-General of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), which established in 1944 and aimed "to help and promote the well-being of Thai people," (Department of Public Welfare, 1997). The DPW was the government agency, under Ministry of Interior began employed "social worker" position to oversee homes for the aged, welfare for disability individuals, shelters for the homeless and destitute, orphanages as well as a land settlement schemes for landless people.

The first western social work training program was launched in 1942. It was a one-year program conducted by the Council of Women Culture as a training institution for social work practitioners. The Council offered a Diploma (Certificate) for those who completed the program. The trainees were government servants who worked in the council and the Department of Public Welfare. "Due to many difficulties, such as, a lack of appropriate teachers, the program terminated after 3 years of operation," (Mongkolnchaiarunya, 2009). Social work education had been established along with the socio-economic transformation and social welfare development of the country. The first school of social work was founded in the Faculty of Social Administration at Thammasat University in Bangkok in 1954. The faculty offered a social work degree program to serve the Department of Public Welfare during the period.

The current social work curriculums and degrees

Recently, there are six universities launched a social work degree program. The social work curriculum is approved and accredited by the Commission on Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation. The curriculum also requires gaining the recognition of the Office of Civil Service Commission. The social work degree programs are offered both at the undergraduate and graduate levels by higher educational institutions. The degree programs offered in the higher educational institutions include the Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work and doctoral programs at Thammasat University

The second school of social work was founded in 1990s at Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, a private university established by the Chinese philanthropic foundation, "Poh Teck Tung Foundation" in order to serve the increased need for the profession with the expansion of the social welfare system. The Educational Progress Report states in its description of the Faculty of Social Work and Social Welfare that, "due to the rapid social changes in Thailand, there is a great demand for professional social workers to work with individuals, families, groups, and communities who face social problems. The faculty believes in the abilities, dignity, and rights of human beings. With the assistance of well-trained social workers, people can more effectively cope with their own problems. Therefore, the social work program is designed to provide students with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and a code of ethics relevant to the social work profession in order to serve the needs of a changing society," (Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, 2000). In 1997, Thailand faced economic crisis "Tom Yam Kung crisis" it's brought rising unemployment millions of people lost their jobs due to financial institutions, factories, business sector shut down. The poverty rate, and social dislocation are also dramatically increased. However, in the year 2000s, Social work education has gradually grown and expanded to other parts the country, with four social work degree (B. SW) having been founded, 2 program in public universities and other 2 program in Buddhist institutions; including: 1) Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Buddhist University 2) Mahamakut Buddhist University 3) Prince of Songkhla University and 4) Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University.

The undergrad degree program recruited students from high school graduates with intentions to continue onto higher education. Until now, six bachelor of social work

degree program are available in Thailand, that produce social work graduates around 600 persons per academic year. There are two master's degree programs of social work. At the Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University provides master degree program of social work (M.S.W.). Meanwhile, the Faculty of Social Work and Social Welfare at Huachiew Chalermprakiet University offers one master degree program focused on social welfare administration (M.S.W. social welfare administration). Both institutes produce social work graduates around 30 persons per academic year. There are two doctoral programs conducted at both universities, which emphasize social policy (Ph.D. social policy) and social welfare (Ph.D. social welfare)

Table 1: Shows the current social work curriculums and degrees in Thailand

Institutions	Started	Status/ Location	Social work Degrees (License)	Related Degrees (Non-License)
Thammasat University (Faculty of Social Administration)	1954	Public Bangkok Pathumthani Lampang	-Bachelor of Social Work -Master of Social Work	-Bachelor of Arts in Social Policy (International Program) -Master of Art in Social Policy -Master of Community Development -Doctor of Philosophy (Social Policy)
Huachiew Chalermprakiet University (Faculty of Social Work and Social Welfare)	1990	Private Samutprakarn	-Bachelor of Social Work -Master of Social Work (Social	Doctor of Philosophy (Social Welfare)

			Welfare Administration)	
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (Faculty of Social Sciences)	1997	Buddist Ayuttaya	Bachelor of Social Work	None
Mahamakut Buddhist University (Faculty of Social Sciences)	2006	Buddist Nakornpathom Khon Khaen	Bachelor of Social Work	None
Prince of Songkhla University (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences)	2012	Public Pattani	Bachelor of Social Work	None
Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University (College of Community Management and Development)	2017	Public Pitsanulok	Bachelor of Social Work	None

Source: TASWE, 2024

Those educational institutions are producing social work graduates approximately 550 person per years which are not enough for the job market. Majority of them do not practice the social work profession. It's results in a shortage and insufficient for the job market that has a demand for social workers with a social work license. It is predicted that in the future there will be a shortage of social work professionals (SWPCT: 2022b).

Thailand Qualifications Framework in Social Work degrees: A tool to direct and control learning outcome and professional standards of practice

The challenges of globalization to higher education are the issue of cross-border education services and movement of students and graduates, future careers of graduates as a result of the integration of countries in the ASEAN region. Those issues require guarantees of educational quality. The higher education institutions need to build confidence in society that they can develop knowledge and produce graduates to respond to national development and international competitiveness both industry and services sectors, career development, quality of life of local and community livelihoods. In 2009, the Higher Education Commissioners announced the National Higher Education Qualification Standards Framework and the Guidelines for following the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework in order to provide higher education in accordance with higher education standards and to assure the quality of graduates at each qualification level and field of study. Thailand Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education (TASWE) has been established in 2013 by the network of existing schools of social work and social welfare, aimed to develop and promote social work and social welfare education, TASWE (2015) has developed Thailand Qualifications Framework for social work degrees in 2015, is designed based on standards of Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation

Recently, all social work degree programs need to adapt their curriculums to meet the requirement of the national educational standard framework and meet standard of learning outcome and professional standards of practice. The standard mentioned on the nature of the field, that its instruction focuses on social fairness, human rights, responsibility for society and respect for diversity, respect for differences in human beings, culture, religion, belief and ideology. This foundation will be combined with professional and academic knowledge base to work with an individual, group and community to solve current social problems in reasonable and ethical manner without using violence. Naturally, social work has continuously been developed and has had comprehensive procedures in micro, medium and macro levels. Social work study is, therefore, profession in which graduates aim to work in the field under supervision of the Social Work Professions Council of Thailand under Social Work Professions Act. of BE. 2013. As a result, bachelor and master in social work programs under this qualification framework must clearly

identify which field a program aims to produce graduates between social work in which graduates have to work as social workers in sectors directly providing services and working with service users in micro level and social work focusing on social services in medium and macro levels. The Qualifications Framework comprise as follows

1) Thai Qualifications Framework for bachelor's degree in social work

This study emphasized that graduates in bachelor level should have Generalist Social Work Practice skills as follows; 1) Be ethical in practicing social work, social welfare, social services and human services expressing professionalism through personality, behaviors in providing services to human beings and communication. 2) Possess knowledge and capability to protect people's welfare, consider rights and benefits of service users, organizations, and society as first priority and use it as guidelines in working. 3) Possess professional skills sustaining social fairness and human rights and promoting quality of life of service users, community and society through social welfare or social intervention. 4) Develop one's self in terms of profession and academic and responsibility for work on continuous and frequent basis. 5) Be active and responsible within scope of profession and/or overall responsibility for society. Attaining these qualifications must be based on ethics and morality; using capability to analyze and research, understanding and respecting human diversity and differences and complex social process and ability to response to environmental context from know-how, leadership and co-workers in related fields to other factors.

The Qualifications Framework is designed based on standards of Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation with requirement with 4 years study and minimum credits of 120 categorized into 3 sections as follows:

1. General education section with minimum (30 credits)
2. Social work course with minimum (84 credits)
 - 2.1 Foundation course with minimum (15 credits)
 - 2.2 Specific course with minimum (69 credits as follows)
 - (1) Foundation Theory related to professional course with minimum 9 credits
 - (2) Behavior science course with minimum 9 credits
 - (3) Field practice with minimum 36 credits (1,620 hours)
 - (4) Selective course related to target groups problems or enhance efficiency of practice or show the identity of the institution

minimum 15 credits

3. Elective course section with minimum (6 credits)

2) Thai Qualification Framework for Graduate Study in Social Work

2.1 Master of Social Work (M.S.W.), The program aims to create specialists in social work or specialized social work with minimum credits of 36 with minimum proportion that is in line with standard programs defined by Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation as follows:

2.1.1 Plan A, A-2 Type is a study plan requiring thesis completion with the following structure.

- 1) Core Course 12 credits
 - Behavioral Science and Applied Social Science with minimum of 3 credits
 - Foundation of Social Work and Social Welfare Policy with minimum of 3 credits
 - Analytical Method with minimum of 6 credits
- 2) Specific courses in Social Work Service or Social Work and Social Welfare Administration with minimum of 6 credits
- 3) Field Practice with minimum of 800 hours equal to 9 credits
- 4) Thesis with minimum of 12 credits

2.1.2 Plan B is study plan requiring additional courses without completing thesis with following structure.

- 1) Core Course with minimum of 12 credits
 - Behavioral Science/Applied Social Science courses with minimum of 3 credits
 - Social Work and Social Welfare Policy Foundation courses with minimum of 6 credits
 - Analytical Method courses with minimum of 3 credits
- 2) Specific courses in Social Work Service or Social Work and Social Welfare Administration with minimum of 12 credits
- 3) Field Practice with minimum of 800 hours equal to 9 credits
- 4) Independent Study with minimum of 6 credits

Instruction of the Master Program shall emphasize on several learning methods with participation of students in designing the course and defining learning outcomes and expectations. Instructors and students frequently share ideas and learnings and students are encouraged to do self-study from several media and learning methods. The program aims for learning achievement during the course of the program which is appropriate for learning outcomes in terms of theory and practice. The program shall allow students to integrate

experiences, ideas, and theory in social work and social policy, relevant fields and empirical evidence in providing services to clients in individual, group, community and social level including supervision of social work and social policy personnel.

2.2 Doctor of Philosophy (Social Work), Ph.D. (Social Work) or Doctor of Social Work (D.S.W)

The Doctoral Program focuses on creating a social work knowledge base in macro level to develop social policy beneficial to national and international levels while Doctor of Social Work program focuses on finding optimal clinical social work practicing pattern to develop servicing system which is up-to-standard for clients in any agencies. However, both programs aim to create clinical social work academics, researchers or experts divided into 2 plans as follows:

2.2.1 Plan 1 is a study plan focusing on research to develop new knowledge for which each institution may provide additional credit or non-credit courses as appropriate comprising

Plan 1.1 Students holding a master's degree must do a thesis with a minimum of 48 credits.

Plan 1.2 Student holding bachelor's degree must do thesis with minimum of 72 credits.

Thesis in Plan 1.1 and Plan 1.2 must be of the same standard and quality.

2.2.2 Plan 2 is a study plan focusing on research and additional course study comprising

Plan 2.1 Students holding master's degree must do a thesis with minimum of 36 credits and study additional courses with minimum of 12 credits.

Plan 2.2 Student holding bachelor's degree must do thesis with minimum of 48 credits and study additional courses with minimum of 24 credits.

Additional courses are categorized into 5 which are designed based on each expertise in the available field. However, Analytical Methodology courses which are necessary to research, and development of new knowledge must be credited with not less than 6 credits. The courses comprise the following topics.

- 1) Behavioral Science and Applied Social Science
- 2) Analytical Methodology
- 3) Social Work and Social Policy

- 4) Knowledge based on expertise of available courses
- 5) Context of problems of target group and operation promotion

Instruction of the Doctoral Program shall emphasize on participation of students to design learning pattern, self-control and knowledge synthesis aiming for learning achievement during the course of the program. The program shall make use of up-to-date information technology to search knowledge and focus on seminar and independent study and research to create researchers and academics with international standard. For Master and Doctoral Programs, Thammasat University started to offer Master of Social Work program in 1961 and began offer DSW (Social Administration) in 1998 and revised to Ph.D (Social Policy) in 2010. The programs remain operate until now..Under the National Higher Education Qualification Standards Framework, the curriculum has to be accredited/recognised by the following entities 1) Academic-related accreditation bodies; University Council and Office of Higher Education Commission 2) Profession-related accreditation bodies Social Work Professions Council of Thailand which established under Social Work Professions Act. of BE. 2013 to control standards and code of conduct, promote and develop social work profession and provide social assistance or services relating to social work profession.

Social Work become a “Professional”

Over the past sixty years, Thailand has become more industrialized and urbanized, bringing social changes that have affected individuals, families, and communities. As social problems become more complex, such as psycho-social issues, poverty and social wealth disparities, health, gender inequality, domestic violence, human trafficking, drugs, aging and disaster relief remain persistent challenges facing Thai society (Senanuch, 2017). Social worker play a crucial role in prevention and finding solutions to individuals, families, group of vulnerable people and communities in order to live happily in the society and to fulfillment of basic human need and well-being since 1940. However, social workers' status remains low recognition of the profession with low pay, limited career progression, the image of the profession to public perception remains that of charity workers and predominantly female gender (Sungkawan, 2015). The number of students who enrolled in undergrad social work degree program has a downward trend due to lack of interest among students in the field of study, approximately 40% of the graduates decided to work

in the field of social work, lack opportunity at access job market due to they do not having social work license and lack of motivation, better remuneration and professional compensation like other professions for them. (Kumhom, 2025)

In 2013, Thailand issued the Social Work Profession Act, The reason for the promulgation of this Act is that at present the duties of social worker its role has increased and covers many areas. In addition, there are many laws that specify the duties of social workers. In performing work related to preventing and solving problems for the people, especially those who encounter problems in living life to be able to perform social duties and live a normal, happy life. There should be a controlling organization practicing the social work profession in the form of a professional council to control the standards and ethics of conducting social work profession, including promoting and developing knowledge and standards for the social work profession to provide social work professionals with quality and standards and progress in the profession Therefore it is necessary enact this act.. Social Work Professions Council of Thailand (SWPCT) was established to control standards and code of conduct, promote and develop social work profession and provide social assistance or services relating to social work profession. It's a milestone, regally recognized and protected by law. The Social Work Profession Act of 2013 defined the "social work profession" as one requiring practitioners to have knowledge and skills in social work, who worked towards prevention and solutions for individuals, families, and groups of people or communities to promote their welfare in society. Meanwhile, the Social Welfare Promotion Act of 2003 defined "social welfare" as a social service system relating to the prevention, resolution, development and promotion of social security to fulfill such fundamental needs of people as education, health, accommodation, occupation and earning, leisure, justice and general social service with a view to enhance their quality of life based upon self-reliance. This act outlines baseline standards regarding human dignity and human rights.

Additionally it detailed social workers' involvement at all levels, including both individuals and groups who may be suffering from a hardship or are in need of assistance. This encompasses, but is not limited to children, youths, older persons, people with disabilities, the disadvantaged, and those who have been sexually harassed.. Under the Social Work Profession Act of 2013 defined Social work profession practitioner" means a person who conducts a profession which requires the knowledge and skill on social welfare in the performance of duty in relation to preventing and rectifying a problem of an individual, family, a group of persons or

community to perform their social duty and live their lives peacefully. Social workers are practice in various fields such as; child rights and welfare, women and family development, older persons and people with disabilities services, health and mental health, criminal justice and rehabilitation, disaster response and relief, local and community development as well as administration, policy and advocacy. Throughout the past 12 years, the SWPCT has develop the quality of the social work profession to a higher standard including, promoting collaboration to bring justice into society and improve the quality of life of the people, including controlling standards, ethics, promoting and developing the social work profession. and supporting activities that benefit society with support from all sectors, including the government, private sector, and communities and other professional federations. both domestically and internationally. It is considered to be a satisfactory level of success (Kumhom, 2025).

Ethics of Social Work Profession

The social work code of ethics is guided by the Thailand Social Workers Association (TASW), which founded in 1957, as a National Association for Social Workers. The aim is to promote and advocate for the social work profession by providing standards of practice, develop a body of knowledge on best practices, and provide social networking support and welfare among members and related organizations, both at the national and international levels. The administrative team is elected every two years. TASW has been providing capacity building for social workers through trainings needed for continuing capacity development and especially training for social workers working under the Criminal Procedure Code (No. 20), BE 2542 (1999) as assigned by Thailand Social Work Professions Council and also developed collaboration with international organization, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Thailand on the free online course for justice professionals dealing with child victims, and OXFAM on strengthening of Muslim Women Networks in deep south of Thailand on basic counseling and community case management knowledge and skills. Currently, there are approximately 2,700 persons who are members of the association, (Thailand Association of Social Workers, 2024).

In the 2019, The Social Work Professions Council of Thailand announced the Rules of the Social Work Professions Council on the Ethics of Social Work Profession, It has been developed to provide guidance for every social work profession practitioner, especially the licensed social work profession practitioners

according to the Social Work Profession Act 2013, aims to be the guidelines on the performance of duties of social work profession practitioners and guidance for the consideration of solutions for problems that may arise in diverse situations, to be the guarantee of quality standard for the practices of social work, which brings about confidence in the social welfare service system, to protect the equitable right of all people to access social welfare services and specify the professional conducts that are appropriate for social work profession practitioners (SWPCT, 2019). Ethics of the Social Work Profession comprise 6 aspects of ethical practices as follows, 1) Ethical practices towards oneself 2) Ethical practices towards the social work profession 3) Ethical practices towards the person, group of persons or community using their services 4) Ethical practices towards other social work profession practitioners and colleagues from different professional backgrounds 5) Ethical practices towards employing organizations and 6) Ethical practices towards society

Social Worker become a license social worker (LSW)

Due to the significant role social workers play in a myriad of social issues, it is vital that the Social Work Profession Act of 2013 be enforced. Many laws outline social workers' duties in relation to the prevention and resolution of individuals' problems, especially regarding those with impaired or diminished living standards. It is appropriate to have an organization regulating the profession of social work in the form of a professional council to control standards and ethics of social work practice. This includes, but is not limited to, the promotion of knowledge and standards of practice, which help to insure that social work professionals are qualified and informed on contemporary practices. Section 3 of the Act articulates that "authorized social worker profession" are those who are registered and granted a license from the Social Work Professions Council of Thailand.. The definition of "social worker" in the legislation is further articulated as one whose profession is to use knowledge and skills on social welfare, while working on prevention and finding solutions to persons, families, group of people or communities in order to live happily in society. "Authorized social worker" refers to one who is registered and granted a license from the Social Work Professions Council of Thailand. The license social worker must be a member of Social Wok Professions Council of Thailand and graduated with no less than a bachelor in the field of social work from accredited programs or other fields as certified by the Social Work Professions Council of Thailand and passing a training with a working experience in relation to protection, provision of consultation and advice, promotion and support of children,

youth, women, the elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged under the standard as prescribed by the council. The most importance is the license social work need to pass the national social work licensing examination in two subjects; social work principles and theories subject and social work practice subject. After pass the examination, the applicants can take the oral interview exam. Once pass all the exams, they can register as “a licensee social worker”. The national social work licensing examination is conduct twice a year. To date, there are 3,427 social workers who have passed the national licensing exams, and become a license social workers (SWPCT, 2024).

Social Work Practice Required in the Legislations

Since the early 2000s, social work practices in Thailand have gained further legislative supports, which define the social workers' role in relation to solving, protection and prevention of social problems for the people. The additional legislation is detailed as follows:

1. The Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003 and the Social Welfare Promotion Act (Amendment 2007): Encourages all sectors to participate in social welfare services including; individuals, families, communities, local authority organizations, religious as well as business sector.
2. The Child Protection Act 2003: Aims to define procedures and amend methods in dealing with the child to enable the child to be taken care of, nurtured and develop properly. This in turn will promote the stability of the family institution and prevent the child from being abused, exploited or discriminated against. It is also detailed expedient ways to improve and foster collaboration between government agencies and private organizations to provide child protective services.
3. The Older Persons Act of 2003: Thailand is moving into an aging society. In 2024, it was estimated that 20.70 % of total population was over 60 years old. The act aims to protect, promote and support the rights and benefits of older persons.
4. Promotion and Development of the Quality of Life of Persons with Disability Act of 2007: Social welfare provision for people with disability began by providing social assistance since the 1950's, progressing towards

an emphasis on rehabilitation, (Senanuch, 2011). This Act focuses on the legal rights and protections from discrimination, and enhanced access for disabled individuals to help promote independent living concepts and the improvement of vital social services.

5. Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act of 2007: This Act delineates the complexities of domestic violence problems including their intimate nature. Therefore, these cases cannot be dealt with perfectly in a criminal capacity under the auspices of the Criminal Code, which is intended to penalize offenders, rather than reform them or protect domestic violence victims. For these reasons, the establishment of a law the protection of domestic violence victims would be more appropriate than the sole enforcement of the criminal measures.
6. Mental Health Act of 2008: There is still a significant stigma and lack of education surrounding mental illness. This Act provides a strategy for treatment, care and rehabilitation as well as protections for the rights of those with the mental disorders.
7. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008 (Amendment 2015 and 2017): Thailand is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Human trafficking is a complicated problem, which continues to increase across the region. This Act aims to combat human trafficking, focusing on protection, welfare services for victims, severe punishment for traffickers and those who use trafficked persons (TIP), while also as well as providing measures to fight TIP.
8. The Destitute Protection Act of 2015: Aims to provide for care, rehabilitation and protection for destitute persons who lack of stability to maintain a normal life, housing, and have an inability to find a sustainable income. These people are unable to help themselves and cannot rely on others. Their standards of living are often far lower than minimum standards. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has established shelters and welfare homes for those who are living in destitution and provides social services to support them in order to help them perform social functions gain independence.
9. The Gender Equality Act of 2015: Aims to promote gender equality and prevent unfair discrimination among the sexes. Those found guilty of

gender discrimination face a jail term of up to six months, or a fine of up to 20,000 baht or both.

10. The Beggars Control Act of 2016: Repeals the 1941 Act on Control of Begging, which makes begging in the street an offence. All offenses are punishable with imprisonment not exceeding one month and/or a ten thousand baht fine. Penalties for traffickers and those seeking to benefit from begging are more severe: prison sentences of up to three years and fines as high as 30,000 baht. Government officials found complicit face more extreme punishments with up to five years in jail and/or up to 50,000 Baht in fines.

These legislative acts facilitate social work, by providing legal grounds for action across a diverse spectrum of scenarios and individuals. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has established at least five social resource funds to support the practice and delivery of social services. In addition, it promotes the involvement of organizations, businesses and local authorities in social welfare through cooperate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

Social Worker Employment

In 2022, more than 2,100 social workers are employed largely by public welfare agencies. These agencies are committed to providing direct social welfare benefits and assistance to the individuals, families, group of the people in needed and advocating for the better provision of community-based services including; Ministry of Public Health which 644 licensed social workers work with interdisciplinary team in the General Hospital and Psychiatric Hospital. There are 167 social workers work in the hospitals under School of Medicine, Ministry of Higher Education, Innovation and Research. There are 301 licensed social workers work with Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (a special local government organization) in Department of Health and Social Development. Ministry of Justice (MOJ) employed 260 licensed social workers, Ministry of Interior (MOI) including provincial, municipalities and sub-district local government organizations employed over 204 licensed social worker in local government organizations across the country. There are 244 licensed social workers are hired by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in promoting human rights and child protection, combating domestic violence and trafficking as well as supporting the poor and homeless. as

Holt-Sahathai Foundation, Women Foundation, and The Center for the Protection of Children's Rights among others (SWPCT, 2022a).

Table 2: Shows the employment of licensed social workers in Thailand

Organizations	No. of licensed social workers
Ministry of Public Health (MPH),	644
Bangkok Metropolitan Administration	301
Ministry of Justice	260
Non-Government Organizations	244
Ministry of Interior (Local Government Organizations)	204
Ministry of Higher Education, Innovation and Research	167
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS)	101
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	4
Ministry of Defense (MOD)	9
Ministry of Cultural	2
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives	1
Thai Red Cross	49
Non-Government Organizations	244
Independent licensed Social Workers	114
	2,100

Source: SWPCT, 2022

The rest include those who work in related practices but not as social workers, such as community development workers, social development workers, and probation officers. Most of them are employed by in the private business sector or having their own enterprises. The Social Service Workforce in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Multi-Country Review by UNICEF and Global Service Workforce Alliance (SWPCT, 2022b) indicated that social work profession is considered as a key profession in the social work force, operating in more than 100 countries. In practice, social work practitioners work together with those who have completed their studies in other fields, who have been trained in social work, volunteers, and also work with other related professions. The proportion of social worker to number of client are insufficient. The results of analysis workforce of child and family social workers found that Thailand has 4.36 social workers per 100,000 people, which is the lowest

ratio of social workers to the number of service users among 11 countries. The UNICEF estimates that Thailand should have 7,000 social workers working with children and families to protect children in every sub-district across the country. Therefore, the opening of social work teaching in various institutes should be accelerated to increase the production of social work graduates, including in the short and medium term. The volunteer social workers with other bachelor's degrees and have experiences need to be encouraged to receive training, develop their knowledge and capacity to practice the social work profession by organizing a curriculum that is comparable to social work profession and accredit by SWPCT.

The Challenges and Future directions of Social Work Education and Profession in Thailand

It's find that social work education have advanced significantly from the origins since 1942, with qualification framework for social work degrees to direct and control learning outcome and professional standards of practice. However, there are many social issues that challenge social work profession roles such as; poverty and inequality, gender equality, human trafficking especially aged society, mental health and disaster. Even, the TASWE has been developed Thailand Qualification Framework in social work since 2015, but the number of students who enroll in undergrad social work degree programs has decreased. The educational institutions do not prioritize interest by offering social work degrees, though there is a continued demand for social work professionals by job market especially in the local government organizations. Revise social work curriculum need to respond the digital transformation Era, focus on; human rights, social justice and environment, local and global perspectives, action research and transdisciplinary are needed, as well as emphasis on gerontology, mental health and disaster management issues. Furthermore, the number of qualified training agencies and supervisors in the field instruction of social work should be promote to advancing learning outcome of the social work study.

The major issues and challenges facing social work profession in Thailand are lack of social recognition of the profession's importance. The overarching perception of social workers is related to emergency scenarios in which food, clothes or money distribution is needed to victims of a disaster. For many, the perception of the profession remains one of charity workers primarily for women. However, the social perception of social work is gradually improving. The number of licensed social

workers is increasing and with that has come improved welfare for individuals, families, groups and communities. This includes creating a social dialogue and awareness in Thai surrounding human rights, dignity and equality among citizens. The SWPCT has started to develop competency standards for all social workers and maintain those standards in social work and welfare. The Social Work Profession Act of 2013, affects society to realize that every human being has dignity, right to freedom of life especially vulnerable groups. It's also create social security for social workers and target group in developing the quality of life and reduce economic inequality and social gaps. This law should be revised according to the changing context. The social work profession law should be treated equally with other professional such as health professional who receive professional compensation in order to motivate social workers to enter the licensed social worker system, including enhance the rights and benefits of disadvantage. Currently, the social work career path and trajectory for professional development remain unclear. The Social Worker Profession Act should aims to resolve these issues. The social work profession should also bridging with transdisciplinary to develop technology or digital platforms to advancing social services and welfare for all people including, creating awareness and greater collaborative among all sectors for sustainable social development.

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Chapter 16: Conclusion

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Introduction

This research project aims to produce a report on the current status and issues of social work professional education in the Asia-Pacific region, with the participation of 14 countries in the Pacific Rim. The countries participating in this research project are Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Suri Orchid, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States (Hawaii), and Vietnam. In this project, the project secretariat has provided the following framework for the countries participating in the study to report on the status of social work professional training in their countries.

- ① Historical, social, political and cultural background
- ② The current status of training curriculum, qualification and registration systems, and related legislation
- ③ Current status and issues of practical training in training education
- ④ Securing employment and employment situation
- ⑤ Current issues and future challenges/prospects

1. Developments in social welfare systems and policies in each country related to the training of social work professionals

In preparing the reports for the countries participating in this project, the author reviewed the data sent by each country regarding the development of the social work profession and professional education in respective country, and added her observations from the following four perspectives:

- Conditions and theories for the establishment of social welfare systems (Tominaga, 2013)
- Policy intent that requires a professional system (Kyogoku, 1998)
- Securing financial resources
- Changes in socio-environmental factors and changes in living arrangements(Tominaga, 2013).

And the background to the creation of social welfare systems and social worker response mechanisms in various countries may be explored in the Japanese case study to find commonalities.

2. Expansion of the social welfare system in Japan and its factors

1) Development of the social welfare system in Japan

The livelihood problems facing Japan after defeated in World War II, were measures to support the impoverished and the protection and relief of citizens who had become disabled in the war or war damage, and children who had lost their caregivers. Throughout the 1960s, Japan achieved astonishing economic growth and emulated the UK and Scandinavian countries as a welfare state. This was made possible by the increase in tax revenues brought about by economic growth, which secured a certain amount of the national budget as welfare funds, and the development of social security systems and welfare systems for the intellectually disabled, the elderly, and single-parent families, as well as the enhancement of all systems. However, due to the strain on national finances caused by the oil shock in the 1970s, the development of social welfare systems temporarily stagnated, but in the 1980s, further industrialization led to population concentration in cities and population outflow from rural areas, and the number of nuclear families increased, making it difficult to provide elderly care, which had been the responsibility of families, and the expansion of elderly welfare became a major policy issue. Therefore, the government, modeled on the German nursing care insurance system, enacted the Long-Term Care Insurance Act in 1997, which is based on the social insurance system.

Welfare for the disabled was gradually developed starting with the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, and the Act on Services and Supports for Persons with Disabilities was enacted in 2005 to provide common welfare services for the mentally disabled in addition to the existing physical and intellectual disabilities. Then, measures to combat the declining birthrate became a major policy issue, and various policies were implemented from 1994, and welfare systems for children and families were established, such as the Child and Child-rearing Support Act in 2012.

2) Factors behind the development of Japan's social welfare system

Several factors can be pointed out for the development of Japan's social welfare system. First, Japan's industrialization made it possible to make the necessary fiscal expenditures to develop a social welfare system. Second, population

projections predicted rapid aging and a serious decline in the birthrate. And third, the increase in nuclear families and women's participation in the workforce made caring for the elderly difficult and created a need for economic and social support for the upbringing of children.

Due to these factors, the traditional provision of welfare services by families reached its limits, and it became necessary for welfare services to be provided by the state, i.e., socialization of welfare services. However, in order to realize socialization of welfare services, further costs would have to be borne through social insurance premiums and taxes, which would require standardization of the quality of welfare services and human resources to manage the necessary welfare services. At the same time, rather than the state providing welfare services directly, it was thought that it would be effective for local governments, which are close to the people, to provide welfare services that are tailored to the local conditions, and for the state to support local governments through its finances.

3. Japan's social welfare professional system

As a prerequisite for the establishment of a new elderly care system, professionals with a certain level of knowledge and skills are essential, and since training them takes time, the Social Welfare and Care Worker Law was enacted in 1987, and training for care workers (care workers) and social workers was started at four-year universities. Both qualifications were made national qualifications, and examination and registration systems were also established. The social worker system was later followed by the creation of a separate system for mental health and welfare workers in 1997, and the two-track system continues to this day. As a result, the long-term care insurance system was introduced in 1997, and it was made into a social insurance system in which citizens over the age of 40 pay social insurance premiums, and a system was established to provide long-term care services to all elderly people over the age of 65 who require some kind of care. This long-term care insurance is a more comprehensive system that includes not only elderly people, but also young people with dementia and people with disabilities who require long-term care.

Incidentally, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the social welfare service system, which includes not only elderly care but also welfare services for the disabled and child and family welfare services, it is essential to link and coordinate various services, including those provided by local governments, as well as to have care management that links local social and human resources. This is why the training of social welfare professionals has become an urgent task.

4. Current status and issues facing social welfare professionals

1) Current state of social welfare professionals in Japan

As of 2025, the national examinations for care workers and generic social workers have been held 37 times since the system was launched, and the national examination for mental health social workers has been held 27 times. However, there are not enough domestic care workers, who are mainly responsible for elderly care, and we have to rely on foreign human resources every year, and social workers are not necessarily required to be employed at welfare service sites. This shows that there is an imbalance between the amount of services required in social welfare sites and the human resources. The reason for this is thought to be not only attributed to the general labor shortage in Japan due to the declining birthrate and aging population, but also the low wages. In this sense, it seems necessary to ensure wages that are commensurate with the work in order to improve social welfare services in each field.

2) Training social welfare professionals

We have already mentioned the training of social welfare professionals in Japan. Social welfare professionals, especially social workers, are practical occupations, so there are issues with the practical training and the advancement of skills, but there is a shortage of personnel to handle the practical training, and as mentioned above, there is always the issue of an imbalance between the number of personnel required in the field and the amount of services required. Social work professionals, including those in the countries that participated in this project, are trained at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and the general trend is that qualifications for more advanced interpersonal support skills are awarded in several stages, with training and years of practical experience at the postgraduate level, followed by examinations and certification.

Here, "advanced" does not necessarily mean advanced degrees. The level of training varies from country to country, but creative interpersonal skills are required. Therefore, it is necessary to use more advanced science and technology to streamline services, and there are many examples, such as Canada, where the state is exploring the adoption of information provision and responses using Internet technology.

5 . Globalization and the versatility and challenges of social work

A special feature in the International Social Work Journal (Palattiyil, Sidhva, et al., 2019) touches on the possibility of social workers broadening the scope of their activities in the global society in the future, taking into account globalization and the current situation in which social workers have not been widely involved in international humanitarian NGOs to date. According to this, the current challenges in social worker training are stated as follows: First, the professional system of social workers is constrained by the framework of each country's legal system (Nikku, 2017). The author also mentioned the framework of the welfare state, and stated that the professional training system is financially determined by the system design based on each country's policy trends and finances, and that professional training develops together with the education system.

Regarding the reports of each country in this project, it is stated that India has a graduate school for training social workers in the country, but there is a high possibility that graduates will find employment not only in the country but also abroad after graduation (Mathew MP, 2025, India section of the report of 14 countries). The International Social Work Journal has already mentioned the international versatility and suitability of social work professions, but currently, it is inferred that not only administrative officials, educators, and training schools who are drafting legal systems in many countries, but also most educational institutions in the field of practice, are assuming domestic institutions, and international internship destinations are optional and are not included in the internship education linked to obtaining regular qualifications. In addition, while a labor shortage of social work personnel has been pointed out in various countries, in order to draw out the appeal of social work and encourage students to perceive this profession as attractive and enter social work , it is necessary to consider the flexibility of the regulations for internships and the subjects as learning requirements for obtaining social work qualifications.

Conclusion

The framework established by the project secretariat does not consider the establishment of a welfare state framework and the relationship between welfare finances and the costs of social work personnel included therein and the development of the system. Kimura believes that it is necessary to consider a registration system for social work, assuming the system, policy, and personnel training included in the financial resources as a requirement for the establishment

of social welfare services in each country. At the same time, it cannot be said that all of the countries participating in the project have the conditions to cover welfare services with their own finances as a welfare state, and there is a wide range of systems, policies, and the scope of the state's responsibility from country to country. Furthermore, a wide variety of concepts of support are mixed together, such as the roles of the state and the private sector, support by foreign NGOs, and the role of the family.

However, the significance of this project lies in the fact that it sets a limited framework for examining the social worker system and provides data covering the role and training system of social workers as positioned in national policies, the education and training system as positioned in university education, and the qualification system. It is expected that each country will continue to evolve socially and economically in the future, and we would like to observe the changes in the system with hopes for future development.

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Across the vast and diverse Asia Pacific region, social work education and professional registration systems are evolving to meet the complex realities of our time. *Professional Social Work Education: Development of Registration Systems* brings together voices from fourteen countries and territories, each contributing a unique perspective on the shared journey toward professionalisation, ethical practice, and social justice.

Edited by Machiko Ohara, Viktor Virág, and Mariko Kimura, this volume provides a rich comparative exploration of professional frameworks, educational models, and evolving policy directions across the Asia-Pacific region. It embodies a shared commitment to solidarity, intercultural understanding, and co-creating sustainable futures.

With contributions from educators, practitioners, and researchers, this publication serves as a key reference for those engaged in strengthening social work education, registration, and professional standards. It highlights not only achievements but also the pressing challenges of our time, from migration and inequality to climate-related crises, and calls for regional cooperation grounded in ethics, compassion, and community.

This book stands as a milestone in the collective effort to advance social work professionalism in Asia and the Pacific, celebrating the spirit of partnership and the belief that stronger education means stronger societies.

