



Development of Social Work Education in Vietnam: Pathway to form its own identity

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OUTLINE

- History of social work education in Vietnam
- Recent international support and collaboration
- Pathway to form its own identity for the social work profession



The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

- Where is [Vietnam](#)?
- Quick [facts](#) about Vietnam



History of Social Work Education in Vietnam

- Before 1975:
 - The South: had professional social work and influenced by French and American models
 - Had social work graduates from Caritas school of social work
 - The North: did not have social work profession
- (Oanh, 2002)



1975-1985

1975 – 1985: “close the door” policy period

- The North and South were reunified
- Northern perspectives applied nationally
- Government subsidized everything: everyone were the same; no socio-economic inequality (everyone got the same); no rich vs. poor; no social problems, etc.
- Government believed that there were no social problems under socialism
- Southern professional social workers became unemployed

(Nguyen Huu Tan, 2005; UNICEF Vietnam, 2014)



1985-2005

1985 – 2005: the “open door” policy period

- The country went through a reform and adopted market economy
- Social problems reappeared faster than expected:
 - ✓ Rural migration to urban areas: urban slums and poverty, street children, migrant workers
 - ✓ Prostitution
 - ✓ HIV/AIDS
 - ✓ Family violence
 - ✓ Child abuse and neglect

(Nguyen Huu Tan, 2005; UNICEF Vietnam, 2014)



1985 – 2005 (cont.)

- Late 1980s: Social work was taught again under Women Studies at the Open University in HCM
- INGOs and UN agencies supported social work training as in-service trainings for Women Union and Youth Union staff during 1990s
- Social work short courses were provided at COLISA
- MOET approved core curriculum for BSW in 2004



2005 – 2010

- The Social Work Profession was recognized by the government in 2010
- The Government issued Decision 32/2010/QD-TTg and National Plan 32 to develop the SW profession in 2010
- BSW programs have grown very fast since 2004 and now is taught in 23 universities and 17 colleges (UNICEF Vietnam, 2014)



2010- present

- Increased international support (UNICEF, USAID) to strengthen capacity for SW lecturers; practitioners; develop teaching materials, curriculum
- Collaboration with international universities (US, Canada, Australia, Philippine, Sweden)



Challenges

Despite rapid expansion of SW education programs, there are limitations in the universities' ability to provide SW education:

- Lack of social workers with advanced degree to teach in higher education
- Most SW faculty come from other disciplines
- Under-developed curriculum addressing core SW content and practice
- Lack of Vietnamese language texts and training materials
- Very few field training opportunities with experienced supervisors



Social Work Education Enhancement Program (SWEET) (2012 – 2016)

SWEET = an international consortium

- USAID
- SJSU
- Vietnam Universities
- Government Agencies
- Private Sector Partner: Cisco Systems, Inc.
- Community Stakeholders

GOAL: strengthen capacity of Vietnam's higher education social work programs to deliver quality education and prepare trained, job ready social workers



Objectives of SWEEP

1. Develop undergraduate social work management and administration locally and regionally
2. Improve undergraduate social work faculty professional capabilities
3. Implement competency-based undergraduate social work curriculum
4. Create network linking five partner universities with each other and with SJSU



2012-2016

- A SW Leadership Consortium was formed to develop and implement national strategies for SW development.
- A national set of competencies was developed and agreed upon from all partner universities
- Beginning discussion on standardization, field education issues
- Strategies to develop social work program was established at each partner university
- Policies for faculty development (research capacity) was developed



2012-2016

- Faculty capacities were enhanced
 - Teaching methodologies
 - Skills in developing and implementing competencies based syllabi
 - Research skills
 - Ability to train other trainers (TOTs)



2012-2016

- Social work curriculum development
 - Universities adopted and developed competencies based curriculum
 - Competencies based syllabi were developed
 - Curriculum was developed to respond to regional needs
 - Field placement supervision training was provided



Pathway to form its own identity

- Keep an open-mind and welcome international support
- Elegantly utilise its own strengths and unique characteristics (Youth Union, Women Union; Trade Union)
- Build on the curriculum the current social situation and needs (e.g.: community development component; working with people with disabilities; public health)



Pathway to form its own identity

- Each university tailors their curriculum to meet the regional needs
- Quickly adopt new technologies (Webex, Zoom, Open Education Resource)
- Quickly adopt new approach (competency based education; standardization)
- Eager to develop research capacity and faculty development strategies



References

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THANK YOU!