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Improving the Effectiveness of Teaching Practical Social Psychology Courses for Bachelor's Degree in Psychology at the University of Labour and Social Affairs

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Abstract

Practice is one of the fundamental activities that play a crucial role in the training process in general, and specifically in psychology training. It is a mandatory activity in the training process, through practical courses that provide opportunities for students to experience and apply what they have learned in theory to real-life situations. This helps students to develop ethics, attitudes, and professional skills for their future careers in psychology. Both domestic and international universities that offer bachelor's degrees in psychology place great emphasis on practical training. Some institutions allocate more time for practical training than theory to produce students with strong practical skills, reducing difficulties when entering the workforce. This article addresses the objectives, content, forms, principles, and the organization process to ensure the quality of practical training in social psychology courses. It also proposes some solutions to enhance the quality of teaching practical social psychology courses for psychology students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs.

1. Problem Statement

Social psychology is a subfield of psychology, and its achievements are practically valuable, meeting the demands of life and being applied by many scientific fields. That's why social psychology courses have been incorporated into the curriculum of many universities worldwide, including in our country.

According to UNESCO, "learning to do" is one of the four pillars of education in the 21st century. Higher education in Vietnam is also transitioning towards integrating the spirit of transforming the educational process from primarily equipping knowledge to developing comprehensive skills and personal qualities. Learning goes hand in hand with practice; theory is linked to reality. This prepares students to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the job market, building a solid foundation of professional skills to meet the evolving requirements of the workforce.

2. Research Content
2.1 Overview of the practical course in social psychology

The practical course in social psychology, with a designed workload of 3 credits, is one of the essential courses in the professional skills training program for psychology majors. It brings benefits such as implementing the principle of learning through practice, integrating education with productive labor, linking theory with practice, socializing education, and connecting educational institutions with enterprises. It helps to develop knowledge, professional skills, personal qualities, ethics, and a sense of responsibility, nurturing students' love for their profession. It also aids the institution in self-assessing and evaluating the quality of its education.

- Conditions for students to register for the practical course in social psychology:

+ Being a third-year psychology major student.

+ Meeting the prerequisites of the "Social Psychology Practical" course.

+ Not being criminally liable or currently under suspension from studying according to the current training regulations of the institution.

+ Fulfilling the tuition fee obligations as per the institution's regulations.

- Registration procedure for the practical course in social psychology
+ The Training Management Department organizes registrations for eligible students to study in semesters or in various periods throughout the academic year.
+ Students register for the practical course in social psychology through the institution's training management software and choose the practice location at the Department/Division of the specialized field (Psychology Department/Social Work Faculty).

- In case students independently contact the practice location, they are responsible for the practice site. If they find the practice location unsuitable or unsafe, they have the right to refuse to practice there, and the training institution will suggest finding an alternative address.

- The Training Management Department and the Department/Division of the specialized field will assess whether students are eligible to study the practical course in social psychology.

2.2 How the social psychology practical course is organized
▪ Practical exercises in class through situational tasks, where students analyze, exchange, discuss, and role-play.
▪ Practical training at real facilities, with a focus on students' practical activities at the location. The facility is the most reflective of the production and business processes, regularly receiving and meeting the highest market and customer demands. Due to market and societal requirements, products must constantly innovate. The facility must listen to customer demands to survive in a competitive business environment, adhering to laws while being flexible in all operations. This environment is ideal for nurturing individuals who can overcome challenges and generate new ideas, stimulating creativity and entrepreneurial spirit among young students.

2.3 Objectives of the social psychology practical course
In terms of knowledge: Through practical activities, students reinforce and enrich their theoretical knowledge, develop professional skills, achieve the learning outcomes of the course and field of study, and gain a general understanding of practical activities in their specialized field at the practice location. It also enables students to generalize, synthesize, evaluate, and analyze the connection between social psychology theory and practice, applying learned theories and research methods to practical situations. Therefore, students need to analyze the principles of professional conduct, ethical standards, and the necessary competencies of psychologists; apply the knowledge and skills learned in practice at the facility; and apply philosophical and ethical principles and social theory to professional practice at the facility.

In terms of skills: Practical activities help students apply and develop.

In terms of self-reliance and responsibility: Through practical activities, students gain real-life experience and understand the importance of the course in relation to their future profession. They develop professional ethics, civic responsibility, social responsibility, and responsibility to the organization. They also need to be physically fit, dynamic, resilient, and ready to work under high-pressure conditions, with a spirit of unity, progress, and a thirst for learning during practical training to fulfill their academic duties and contribute to their professional development.

Expected outcomes of the practical course:
After completing the course, students should be able to:
▪ Provide an overview of the functions, tasks, and organizational structure of the practice facility they participated in.
▪ Analyze activities related to the course content and future career orientation.
▪ Apply learned knowledge to analyze and evaluate professional activities in a specific position (research, business management, psychological counseling, education, etc.) as well as activities at the practice facility.
▪ Develop personal, professional, and social skills.
▪ Maintain appropriate attitudes in their relationship with the practice facility, collaborate and assist other students in their practical training, show dedication to their profession, and prepare themselves with the necessary knowledge and professional skills to meet the course requirements and graduate competencies.

2.4 Principles for ensuring the quality of practical activities:
▪ Ensure that practical experience meets the knowledge and skills standards of the training program, helping students become familiar with the real working environment.
▪ Help students adapt to social structures and various organizations, recognize social relationships within a working unit, behave and communicate appropriately, and develop life and work skills in a multicultural competitive environment.
▪ Foster students' autonomy, creativity, and dynamism, enhancing their ability to adapt to their profession through specialized practical training.
▪ Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their capabilities, analyze and evaluate specific tasks, build confidence, set personal directions, establish social relationships, and handle unexpected situations.
▪ Innovate teaching activities, and connect training between the university and businesses to increase employment opportunities and students' adaptability after graduation.

2.5 Content of the Social Psychology practical course
▪ Research and understand (through observation, reading documents, materials; listening to specialized reports; exchanging learning experiences; etc.) the activities of the practice facility and the professional activities in the practice facility.
▪ Describe the professional activities of one or more job positions, or professional fields that students have chosen to research and understand.
▪ Apply basic theoretical knowledge of social psychology, including (social relationships and social influences; social perception, social identity; Group psychology; Social attitudes and behaviors, etc.)

- Develop professional skills according to the course's learning outcomes (Activity planning skills; Organizing and implementing planning skills; Communication skills; Teamwork skills; Information collection and processing skills; Problem-solving skills; Report writing and presentation skills; other personal skills...)
- Foster a professional attitude and work style (Develop a serious attitude towards practical activities, hone professional skills; Ability to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses in character and knowledge; flexibility, creativity, adaptability to professional requirements and environment; Sense of responsibility, passion for the profession; respect and fair treatment in work; healthy, honest, progressive lifestyle; scientific, professional, proactive, self-motivated work style; career development awareness.
- Solve practical situations (Ability to identify problems to form solutions in practice; Develop a practice plan for the group, and individuals; Develop plans to organize activities at the practice facility;..)

The results of the practical activities are reflected in the practice diary, individual reports, and group synthesis reports as required by the instructor.

2.6 Process of organizing the practical part at the facility
2.6.1 Process of organizing students for the practical part at the facility

The Department/Division acts as a bridge between students and the practice facility, demonstrated through the selection of suitable agencies, businesses, factories, social and political organizations, centers, schools, research institutes... to introduce students to practice, prepare necessary documents for students to contact, provide pre-instructions for students about what they need to know when participating in actual work and the plan, outline the content of the practical part.

The process consists of 7 steps:

Step 1: *Determine the facilities that will receive students for practice*
- Understand the potential facilities to send students for practice.
- Coordinate closely with the facilities to determine their ability to meet the practice requirements of the students, the expected work arrangements for students in practice, and the regulations and policies (if any). At the same time, it is necessary to ensure the alignment of expectations of both parties regarding the practice period for the course.
- Sign the agreement to support the practical training between the training institution and the practical facility (if necessary).
- Based on the program content, training schedule of the school, and the number of students registered for practical training, the relevant department (faculty/department) determines the list of units to receive students for practical training according to the school's plan.

Step 2: *Develop a plan to implement the practical part of the course*
After the department/department determines the list of units to receive students for the practical part of the course, the head of the department instructs the specialized department to develop a plan for the practical part of the course. As

soon as possible, the department/instructor assigned to teach the course will proceed to develop a plan to implement the practical part of the course and compile a list of students registered for the practical part of the social psychology course.

Step 3: *Approval of the plan for the practical part of the course*
After the department/instructor assigned to teach the course has completed the plan for the practical part, the leadership of the department/Head of the Social Work Department will review it. If the plan does not meet the requirements, feedback will be sent back to the department responsible for teaching the course, clearly stating which content does not meet the requirements for adjustment, supplementation, and discussion. If the plan meets the requirements, the head of the department will sign and submit it to the Board of Directors for approval and issuance of the plan to the relevant units.

Step 4: *Implementing the plan for the practical part of the course*
(a) Preparing the student file for practical training: At least 7 days before the practical training, the Head of the Psychology Department and the instructors involved in teaching must disseminate the practical training plan, including the following contents:
- Contact letter/email/phone
- The approved plan for organizing the practical part of the course for students, lecturers, and inspection officers at the facility.
- Introduction letter for students
- Practical training log at the facility
- Instructions for the form and content of the course's practical training report.
- Evaluation form for the facility's practical results
- Evaluation form for the instructor's comments
- Evaluation form for the student's practical learning process
(b) Disseminating the objectives and contents of the practical part of the course
- The regulations of the facility that receives students for practical training.
- Methods for evaluating the practical learning process: Pre-practical evaluation (during guidance sessions) accounts for 20%; Evaluation during the practical training at the facility accounts for 20%; grading the practical training report accounts for 60%.

Step 5: *Monitoring the practical training process at the facility*
(a) For students: Adhere to the schedule and time of the practical training course at the facility (as required by each practical facility); Strictly comply with the regulations, rules, and culture at the practical facility (time, dress code, protective gear, etc.); Follow the guidance of the instructor or inspector at the practical facility; Report any unexpected issues to the instructor.
(b) For instructors assigned to guide: Regularly coordinate with the practical facility to monitor and understand the student's practical training situation. Arrange regular meetings with the person in charge or the instructor at the facility to understand the situation and solve any problems that arise during the student's practical training; Meet with students weekly to promptly resolve any issues that arise;

Regularly guide, encourage, remind, and urge students throughout the practical training process; Instruct students to write practical training reports according to regulations; Report any issues outside the instructor's ability to solve to the management level (Head of the Psychology Department/department leader) for timely processing and resolution.

(c) For the student management department (faculty /department): Develop a detailed outline of the social psychology practical training course that is suitable for the school's training requirements and the facility that receives students for practical training; Inform students

(d) For related functional units (Training management, Quality management, Organization - administration - synthesis): Control the process of disseminating the practical training plan; Control the practical training process at the facility, including Monitoring the students' practical training process, including Compliance with the practical training schedule at the facility; the regulations and rules of the practical facility; coordinating with the Department/Department managing students to resolve any arising issues; Monitoring the tasks of the guiding instructors, including the following contents: Understanding the students' practical training situation; the instructor's guidance process.

Step 6: *Evaluating the results of the practical part of the course*

(a) For guiding instructors: After students complete the practical training part of the course, the guiding instructors evaluate the students' practical training process. The instructor's comments are based on the criteria specified in the detailed course outline.

(b) For students: After completing the practical training period at the facility, students must complete the following tasks: Submit the evaluation sheet of the facility's practical training with the facility's confirmation stamp to the guiding instructor; Submit the practical training log to the guiding officer at the practical facility for confirmation and submission to the guiding instructor; Submit the practical training report to the guiding instructor according to the instructions on the form and content of the report.

Based on the evaluation results of the facility's practical training process, the guiding instructor, the learners, and the Department of Social Work/Psychology Department organize the evaluation of the practical training phase and submit the practical training results report to the relevant functional units, including Minutes of the evaluation meeting, list of students in practical training; Students' scores; Evaluation sheets of the student's practical training process.

Step 7: *Summarize and draw lessons from the practical part of the course at the facility.*

2.6.2 Process of receiving students for practical training at the facility

The unit receiving students for practical training includes the following steps:

Step 1: Receiving the student's file for practical training at the unit, including:
- Introduction letter from the school
- Training plan

- Detailed outline of the practical part of the social psychology course

Step 2: Guiding students to sign a commitment to fulfill the requirements when practicing at the facility.

Step 3: The leadership of the practical facility agrees to receive students for practical training at the unit.

Step 4: The administrative personnel receive the students for practical training and arrange guiding officers for the students.

Step 5: Implementing according to the plan, guiding officers accompany and supervise the students' practical training process.

Step 6: Coordinating to evaluate and comment on the student's practical training results.

2.7 Requirements for facilities receiving students for the practical part of the course

- The facilities where the school coordinates to bring students for practical training are enterprises, factories, workshops, corporations, social-political organizations, schools, research institutes, etc., and must have a written agreement from the leadership of the facility to accept students for practical training.
- The practical training facility must ensure legal compliance (business registration, registered address for business operations for enterprises, organizations, or educational institutions) to ensure the physical, mental, and spiritual safety of the students.
- The practical facility must meet the requirements of professional training content, knowledge, and skill development necessary for students to complete the learning outcomes of the course and the training program.
- The practical facility should have qualified instructors and suitable facilities to serve the students' practical activities; support and provide the best conditions possible for lecturers and students to participate in learning and practical activities.
- The practical facility may share scientific and technological databases, library information, teaching materials, etc. related to the content of students' practical activities under permissible conditions.
- The practical facility collaborates in developing and implementing practical and effective training cooperation programs with the training unit (faculty/department of specialization).

Suggested locations for practical training in Social Psychology courses:

+ Educational institutions: primary schools, secondary schools, high schools; continuing education centers; vocational education institutions: universities; vocational schools and training centers;...

+ Research institutions in the field of psychology and education: research institutes (Institute of Pedagogical Research, Institute of Educational Research, etc.); research centers (Center for Research and Application of Psychology, Center for Social Opinion Research, etc.);...

+ Psychological counseling facilities: counseling centers, psychological counseling; psychiatric hospitals; mental health institutes; psychiatric clinics;

+ Other facilities related to the field of psychology and education: consulting and training companies; event organizing companies; human resources recruitment departments; customer psychology research departments for companies;...

2.8 Data and results of students' practical training at the facility

The data and information on the practical results of students and the data of the practical training facility used during the training period are confidential and should not be disclosed to third parties without written consent from the relevant parties.

The practical results of students are used to evaluate the completion of the course's learning outcomes in the training program.

3. Some solutions to improve the quality of teaching the practical course of social psychology for psychology students at the University of Labour and Social Affairs.

The instructors of the training facility, the practice supervisors, and the students are the core factors that directly impact the quality of the practical results.

3.1 For instructors

The instructors who directly teach the practical course have the greatest and most direct influence on the effectiveness of teaching hours, so the proposed solutions are specific and close to the individual teacher:

Teaching practical vocational skills should start with "spending more time teaching students about methods, skills, self-study methods, teaching how to use and utilize equipment, and teaching them to be adaptable to different situations, and to have lifelong learning skills." Therefore, the teaching approach should be shifted from "memorization" to learning for "understanding" and learning for "application."

Determining the training content, thoroughly preparing the content and designing the lesson plans, and detailed outlines before the practical session: Creating detailed lesson plans for each practical session, clearly stating the tasks for each lesson, the objectives to be achieved, and the form of assessing the students' practical results. With a diverse student body with different levels of absorption, it is necessary to design appropriate lesson plans to enhance the students' initiative. Remind students of the theory to apply and guide them to the essence of the profession, remembering the process.

Monitoring training activities, harmoniously coordinating with practice supervisors/training coaches to support students throughout the practical training at the facility; assisting students in determining the goals to be achieved during the practical training; providing additional methods for training; providing guidance and necessary information, supporting students in applying social psychology theory during the practical.

3.2 For Practice supervisors

Practice supervisors play a crucial role in helping students adapt to the profession from the school environment to the real world.

They provide the foundational knowledge, guide students through detailed job positions, and help them apply theoretical knowledge to practical work.

They need to have professional expertise, soft skills, and a passion for guiding students.

They should also closely coordinate with the training unit's instructors, support students in developing their skills, and assist in problem-solving.

Additionally, they need to monitor students' practical activities, report any information or shortcomings to the instructors and unit leaders, and make timely adjustments to ensure students achieve the best results.

3.3 Coordination between instructors and practical supervisors at the facility

To ensure the effectiveness of practical training at the facility, there needs to be alignment between the instructors and practical supervisors right from the preparation stage for the practical content. The instructors need to discuss specific objectives that the students need to achieve during the practical training period with the practical supervisors at the facility.

Secondly, there should be specific assignments for both types of guidance: Instructors guide, monitor, and support students in setting practical goals and maximizing learning opportunities from real practical experiences. Practical supervisors at the facility are responsible for imparting practical content, and tasks, and handling potential situations that may arise during the practical training. Both types of guidance need to provide regular feedback to the students during the training period.

Thirdly, practical supervisors and instructors need to regularly update and exchange information about their specialized fields and training activities, maintain close contact to address any difficulties or questions for the students during the practical training, and effectively carry out the socialization of educational work.

Fourthly, the school and the practical training facility need to have specific coordination and alignment in evaluating and grading students at the end of the practical training period.

3.4 For students during practical training at the facility

For students, practical training is an initial real-life experience in the chosen profession. This real-life experience helps students understand how they will carry out this work after graduating and whether they are truly suitable for that field of work. Applying theoretical knowledge learned in school to practical work helps students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and identify what additional knowledge, skills, or attitudes they need to meet future job requirements. During the practical training period, students can establish relationships related to their studies and career opportunities, which is very beneficial for them upon graduation.

Therefore, students need to:

▪ Adhere to the training regulations and plans of the school and the department/subject regarding the content, time, and progress of practical training.

▪ Strictly adhere to the regulations and rules of the organization, the facility where the student is undergoing practical training.

▪ Follow the requirements, instructions, and work plans of the guiding instructors, and comply with the

guidance of the practical supervisors at the assigned training facility.

▪ Explore the working environment and integrate with the organization of the practical training facility.
▪ Actively carry out practical tasks at the facility.
▪ Develop independence, autonomy, and responsibility in their work.
▪ Maintain a modest, friendly, diligent, and professional attitude.
▪ Communicate and behave appropriately, and dress according to the working environment.

3.5 Enhancing coordination and connection between educational institutions and businesses, applied psychology practice centers

***Regarding the university*:** As the place providing human resources to meet the demands of the labor market, the training activities of the school must always be linked and meet the needs of society.

***Regarding businesses*:** To have a team with the necessary qualifications and skills to meet job requirements, it is necessary to promote career orientation and seek trained human resources from universities.

This is an effective solution to help students absorb knowledge and experience from practice through practical activities, internships at businesses, at centers, and implement learning through practice, theory linked to practice.

4. Conclusion
Due to the specific nature related to the study of the spiritual life, and the inner world of people, working in psychology means working directly with people, specifically their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. If we make mistakes, we can easily harm them. To help them change and solve problems is not an easy task, and to help them effectively, practical training is necessary. The psychology training model will be similar to the medical training model. That is, training will require teachers who are not only good at research and have academic teaching abilities, but also practitioners who daily interact with real clients. The content of the psychology training program has increased the practical time, allowing students to access more real-life cases. However, there is a lack of qualified supervisors at the practical training facility and it is also dependent on the school's investment policy. Therefore, there are still many limitations in access, and the results are not clear. Improving the quality of training for psychology graduates to meet new requirements is essential. This includes issues of raising awareness, innovating teaching methods towards competency-based approaches, building professional skills training processes, and enhancing cooperation with businesses, ensuring that the conditions for teaching and learning activities are given adequate attention and implemented in a coordinated and effective manner.

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