



Received: 17-06-2024
Accepted: 27-07-2024

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

School Social Work in Vietnam Theories and Practice

Luong Manh ha
Tan Trao University Tuyen Quang, Vietnam

Corresponding Author: **Luong Manh ha**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2024.4.4.3098>

Abstract

School social work is a profession formed and developed from very early in many countries around the world. In Vietnam, this profession is quite new, although the school problems still occur daily at schools such as school violence, sexual abuse, drug abuse, prostitution, game addiction, alcoholism, gambling, truancy, etc. To solve the emerging problems, building a network of school social work to manage the school problems is required. In addition,

training of Social work in schools are rapidly developing in Vietnam and it is facing new challenges as it blends the historical, political and cultural influences. This article shows an overview of the theory and practice of school social work in general and training social work school in particular. Especially the challenges and development orientation of this sector in the process of international integration in the current period.

Keywords: School Social Work, School Violence, School Problems, Training Social Work

Introduction

School social work is an essential foundation of teaching and education in the school system. It is also a special school service that supports all those involved in school activities such as: Students, parents, teachers, educational administrators at all levels of education etc.

In Vietnam, the "school social work" model has been officially implemented since 1999. With this project, school social work was being piloted at 2 schools in District 1 and District 8 of Ho Chi Minh City from the school year 1999-2001, The project was implemented by Save the Children Sweden (SCS). By June 2014, the Hanoi Department of Education and Training, in collaboration with "Plan International", established a model of psychological counseling rooms in schools, was piloted at 20 secondary schools and high schools in the area, with this psychological counseling support model was the premise to rekindle the formation of school social work activities in the school system of Vietnam ^[1: p5-11].

In general, having school social workers working in schools is really a need, an urgent requirement in Vietnam. It can be seen that a series of serious problems arise in schools today such as: School violence, student suicide risk psychological disorders, learning pressure, problems related to students with disabilities and student relationships with teachers, and with parents. Especially other problems such as early sex, substance abuse, game addiction, truancy, etc...negatively affect the teaching and learning of teachers and students in schools in Vietnam today.

In that context, the state has not yet issued official titles and positions of school social workers, In addition, the school social work major is also less interested, few leading experts in this field, few programs and resources. On the other hand, school social work has not really received the attention of all levels and sectors and the general awareness of the importance of school social work among all classes of people is still not high.

Some concepts of school social work in Vietnam

According to social work expert Nguyen Oanh "School social work aims to: Support administrators and teachers in dealing with individual cases. In particular, create a connection between school, family and community" ^[2].

"School social work is a specialized practice area of Social Work. Social workers are people who bring well-trained knowledge and skills to the school system and social work service groups to students. Besides that, the school Social Work is set up to create further steps in educational goals: Building an environment of teaching, learning, the exercise of human rights as well as self-confidence for students. Schools are a family-school-society partnership that is key for schools to fulfill this mission." ^[3].

"Social work and schools are closely linked. It is education in schools and social work that share a common concern about the social problems facing students and families." ^[4].

From the above concepts, it can be generalized that social work in schools is a professional approach from which to understand, and provide support to students who are not able to use their learning to the fullest, or student problems such as special service requirements and access to better educational opportunities. An important aspect of these services is their emphasis on taking natural precautions.

History of school social work in Vietnam

The history of formation and development of social work in Vietnam was not outside the law of formation and development of social work in the world. Social work in Vietnam was formed on the basis of good feelings between people and people, friendship between neighbors, and Asian traditions. Especially the history of social work in schools in Vietnam, from the initial spontaneous activities, through a number of pilot projects at schools to now, the school social work has increased in quality and quantity.

Social work is considered a new science sector in Vietnam, so school social work was formed and develops gradually with the impact of this science on all areas of social life and with different objects. In Vietnam, school social work was first introduced and developed in the southern of Vietnam. Open University Ho Chi Minh City was the first university to train in social work in the country when it opened the code for training school social work. In the process of formation, to promote the development of school social work, this University has implemented a pilot project of school social work at two Chu Van An high school (District 1). and Hung Phu high school (District 8) from 1999-2001. At each of these high schools, there was a female social worker who worked regularly with students to solved problems related to learning, emotions, psychophysiology, teacher relationships, family problems. From the success of the pilot project up to now, the school social work model has been widely applied throughout the country. Especially in big cities like Hanoi, Hue, Da Nang and etc ^[12,p11 -16].

The role of social work in the Vietnamese school system

Formulate and implement cognitive-behavioral intervention plans. Find out information related to the subject's problem (students), use the tool to assess the emotions, improper behaviors that cause problems for the subjects. Identifying factors that lead to inappropriate behavior, school social workers and the group of collaborators develop a support plan to help subjects develop positive emotional awareness and development and help them change their behavior. In addition, support the student in implementing the intervention plan, and monitor and regularly monitor the progress of the intervention.

Manage and ensure subjects receive the best social work services, therapeutic and educational opportunities. Assess the situation, collect information through the application form received by the subject. Identify training programs and services available in schools and communities, develop support plans, access resources, possibly connect the subject to psychosocial support services and education or other financial support. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services that have been connected to the community.

Crisis intervention for people suffering from psychological crisis. Assess the situation, find out information about the

object, plan therapy to help the object overcome the crisis, connect the objects with resources in the school, home and community to support the objects through the crisis. Equip students with some simple relaxation techniques and specific plans for when they encounter a crisis again and have a plan to follow up the objects after the therapy.

Personal consultation. Collecting information and assessing audience needs; identify goals to help the subject overcome psychosocial difficulties; Develop a treatment plan with the object, gradually achieving individual goals. Monitor and support the subject to implement the treatment plan; Record the progress of the contact and consultation sessions with the objects. Evaluate the effectiveness of the support process and end the consultation for the subject when the object's problem has been resolved.

Prevention of suicide. Monitor and detect students who are depressed and at risk of suicide; assess the risk of suicide threat from the information obtained during follow-up; assess the object's level of risk of committing suicide... Contact the object's parents or guardians to jointly support the object. Always assign social workers to monitor to prevent the object from committing suicide alone. Support the object to return to daily activities and regain faith and hope in life.

Organize life skills training programs and propagate healthy living in classrooms for students. Assessment of the need to equip students with knowledge of life skills and healthy lifestyles. Training a core group of students, enhancing or equipping them with knowledge and presentation skills, guiding them to prepare presentations, and methods of implementation.

Organize activities to involve students in the learning process (prevent dropping out). Collecting information, assessing the current status of teaching and learning activities at school, thereby finding the causes leading to the phenomenon of dropping out; planning intervention programs: Improving teacher-student relationship; good teaching programs – learn well; cultural and artistic exchanges attract students' interest in school activities; look for resources to support student learning; co-implementation of intervention programs.

Resolve conflicts in the school (in both staff, teachers and among students). Approach conflicts, find information, analyze the situation, then identify the problem, the cause of the conflict. As the next step, choose a resolution to the conflict. Monitor, supervise, support solution implementation (including gathering internal and external efforts into solution implementation). Maintain a clean and healthy educational environment in both staff, teachers and students ^[5].

Assessment of the functional role of school social work, according to researcher Le Thi Mai said that "Vietnamese school social work plays a very important role in solving psychological problems, life and social relationships for students". She also affirmed that school social workers are the bridge between students, families and schools to help them get the best conditions and promote their learning ability in today's life. The necessity of developing school social work in the current social context In Vietnam. It needs a lot of attention from managers in relevant ministries and branches to include in the education development strategy, including school social work ^[6].

Difficulties and challenges in the development of school social work in Vietnam today

After four years of implementation, Circular No. 33/TT-BGDĐT/2018 of the Ministry of Education and Training on guiding social work in schools has shown positive results. Especially, the awareness of teachers and parents about the fight against school violence and child abuse has been enhanced. Students have been equipped with skills to deal with difficulties, stress, temporary psychological crises, and promote their own potential and learning capacity. In addition, they also understand children's rights, helping to avoid the risks of falling into special circumstances, being abused, experiencing violence, dropping out of school, breaking the law...Coordination between the education sector and local departments, agencies, the cooperation between schools and families is increasingly effective in educating students.

However, in the opinion of some experts, the Government's Circular 33 on the development of social work in the new period, although it has been implemented synchronously, has not really entered the depth of life. In particular, the application of this circular in school social work training activities in Vietnam. In many localities, there is still no payroll for social workers in schools, who are professionally trained. Therefore, social workers in schools are still mostly part-time. In addition, in some localities, the coordination to foster and improve knowledge and skills for teachers doing social work in schools has not really been effective. The cooperation between family, school and society has not been really interested in educating students^[7].

Due to the influence of the policy of opening the country to international integration and the multi-dimensional impacts of the 4.0 technology revolution. In addition, to the favorable opportunities for school social work to develop, this young science also has to face many new difficulties and challenges. Especially after the covid 19 pandemic, it has directly affected all areas of Vietnamese social life, including the training of school social work, specifically as follows.

There are too many shortcomings in the training program and content of social work training in schools. Firstly, each university and training institution has built a separate training program, without synchronization. Many schools import foreign social work training programs into their training, but they are not adjusted and applied in the actual situation of Vietnam. Therefore, graduates do not have enough knowledge and skills to solve specific problems at school system. Secondly, in the curriculum framework of the university, which only focuses on teaching theory, there is a lack of time and practical content. Many post-training students often confuse the role of school counselor and social worker.

In addition, when conducting training in the field of school social work, it is very difficult to bring students to practice facilities. The model of the School Social Work Department has been deployed in a number of high schools from different localities. However, it was only established in a relatively spontaneous way, without any guiding documents from the Ministry of Education and Training, the Departments of Education and Training of provinces on conditions for establishing school social work models in localities^[8].

Development of the school social work staff: School social workers in the school field are still lacking in number and

weak in professional expertise. Social workers working in schools in Vietnam currently mostly only schools in big cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai Phong city, etc.. In contrast, schools in small provinces have almost no school social workers. In addition, training activities have only just formed at the stage of training social work practitioners in some universities. Although there is a subject of social work in schools, the training is still not specialized, graduates cannot work in schools due to lack of experience in intervening with problems of the school. Therefore, many schools, when sharing about the challenges of building social work networks in schools, said that it is extremely difficult to find people with expertise and experience in this field.

Regarding funding sources: Most schools have difficulty in mobilizing funds to build a school social work system; the payment of income for the staff - school social workers still face many difficulties, some schools are considering the option of mobilizing funds from non-governmental organizations, from the parents' own contributions, in order to build and maintain school social work activities, help overcome outstanding problems in schools, and improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, funding plays a fundamental role together with human resources to form, build and develop a school social work network.

On the legal basis: Up to now, most social work activities, including school social work, have largely relied on the orientation of Project No. 32 approved by the Prime Minister on social work development in Vietnam (2010). As for the field of school social work, there is still no specific guideline and policy to guide the implementation so that the implementation is more intensive and methodical. The lack of specialized legal documents is a difficulty, and major legal restrictions on bringing social work to school systematically and effectively.

Regarding the limitation in awareness of a part of the people, management levels: Currently, school social work is being viewed quite positively in big cities in Vietnam, due to a team of school social work staff who have professional expertise in solving problems such as deviant behaviors are complicatedly happening in schools. However, in addition, there are still a part of students' parents, education administrators, and teachers who are still not well aware of the role and importance of teachers, and the function of School Social Work, so they are passive and helpless in the face of common deviant problems in schools, there is no policy - plan when there is an external agency requesting to coordinate in implementing social work activities in the school field^[9].

Orientation and development goals of Vietnamese school social work in the period of international integration and professionalization of this science

In order for school social work in Vietnam to be formed and popularized in the school system, school social work should be included in the overall development of the social work profession and is considered a professional profession in Vietnam. Following the steps of Project No. 32 on the development of social work in Vietnam approved by the Prime Minister in 2010. In order to create a foundation for the school social work system to develop extensively, it is necessary to focus on implementing the following orientations:

Capacity building for staff, social workers currently working in schools; systematically and intensively equipping future social workers with basic knowledge and concepts in working with school problems (students of social work in universities). Regularly organize training, and retraining to equip the concept of intervention - help for the old staff, and create conditions for new social workers to approach and familiarize themselves with social work activities in schools. To promote education in the direction of approaching learner capacity, taking learners as the center; designing specialized training programs on social work in the school field, to effectively intervene and solve school problems such as: School violence, drug abuse - prostitution, game addiction, alcoholism, gambling, truancy, etc., in order to form students with a solid general capacity of knowledge - concepts and have an attitude positive lifestyle. To do this, it is necessary to coordinate the roles of school administrators, teachers, parents, students and staff, school social work, to improve the quality of education in schools.

Policies and Projects of the Government and the Ministry of Education and Training on the development of social work in Vietnam in the period of 2021 – 2030.

In order to develop social work in education for the period 2021-2025, policy makers and experts believe that it is necessary to implement synchronous solutions, the most important is to develop and complete legal documents on social work in the education sector. In addition, it is necessary to develop a network of social work service providers, review and assign social work officers, employees and collaborators in educational institutions.

1. Improve knowledge and skills for learners to deal with difficulties, stress, temporary psychological crisis, develop the potential and learning capacity of students. Especially, protect students against the risk of abuse, violence, prevent social evils, limit students dropping out of school, breaking the law.
2. Raising awareness, skills of parents or guardians of students in understanding, sharing and accompanying learners. Support administrators, teachers and staffs in educational institutions to improve their knowledge and skills about school social work.
3. Connecting community resources to participate, coordinate with educational institutions to promote social work activities in schools ^[10].

The period 2021 to 2025.	The vision for period 2026 - 2030.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Government strives to reach 60% of agencies, social support establishments, drug addiction treatment establishments, prisons and reformatory schools for children who violate the law, the school and hospital systems have at least 01 to 02 social workers directly working in these systems. - In addition, the Government strives to reach 30% of the number of civil servants, employees and social work collaborators working in communes, townships and establishments providing social work services such as: The system of schools, reformatory schools for law-breaking children, prisons, health... are trained and fostered to improve their professional knowledge and skills in social work. - Striving to achieve at least 50% of social assistance establishments, health facilities, educational systems, and schools that provide social work services ^[11]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The government's goal will be to perfect the system of legal documents on management and development of social work, ensure synchronization, unification, meet the actual needs of development and focus on international integration. - The Government sets a target of 90% of agencies, organizations, social assistance establishments, school systems, health camps, and reformatories breaking the law have trained social workers with professional qualifications and skills in social work. - Continuing to train and re-train school social workers. Especially improve professional qualifications synchronously. - Achieving the goal that all school social workers receive annual training in skills in solving school social work problems ^[11].

Table of specific short-term and long-term social work development goals of the Vietnamese government ^[11].

Conclusion

It can be said that an overview of the formation and development of school social work in general and training activities on school social work in Vietnam are facing many challenges and difficulties in the current period such as: The policy system and legal documents are not clear; negative effects of the COVID 19 pandemic; the society's awareness of school social work is quite low; training programs of universities are still heavy on training in theory, lack of practice and application, etc. The government and relevant ministries are well aware of the importance of this science. However, in order to develop according to the set goals, it is necessary to identify breakthroughs such as the legal corridor, apply international experience and improve the quality of training highly qualified human resources to meet current needs. In particular, there must be synchronous and coordinated solutions among relevant ministries and branches such as education and training, health care, the Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and the whole political system.

References

1. Nguyen Van Dong. Education reform should aim to build a comprehensive education. Journal of Teaching and Learning Today, Hanoi. 2016; (136):35-37.

2. Nguyen Thi Oanh. General Social Work, Textbook University. Publisher: Education, Hanoi, 2002.

3. School Social Work Association of America. The State of School Social Work: Findings from the National School Social Work Survey, 2005.

4. Introduction to social work-ten edition, O.William Farly, Larry Lorenzo Smith, Scott W.Boyle, University of Utah, 2006.

5. Nguyen Hai Huu. Introduction to social work in schools. References, Publisher: Vietnam National University, Hanoi, 2018.

6. Le Thi Mai. Vietnam needs to develop school work. Papers of international conferences. Ton Duc Thang university, 2020.

7. Hai Nguyen. Finding directions for developing social work in schools. Vietnam.net newspaper online, 2021.

8. Hieu Nguyen. The challenge of building a school social work model. Publisher: Vietnam era education, 2016.

9. Nguyen Van Dong. School social work in Vietnam: Prospects and challenges. Education Journal No. 421 (Part I), 2018, 60-63.

10. Circular No. 33/2018/TT -BGDDT. Ministry of Education and Training Guidelines for social work in schools. Hanoi, 2018.

11. Regulation 112/QĐ - TTg. Prime Minister on promulgating the program on development of social work in Vietnam for the period of 2021 - 2025.
12. Nguyen Hiep Thuong. Introduction School Social Work. University textbook. Vietnam Educational Publisher, 2020, 11-16.