



Research on the Structure of Adaptive Skills in the Profession of Social Work Students at the University of Labour and Social Affairs

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ABSTRACT

Vocational adaptive skills play a particularly crucial role in professional activities, enabling individuals to adapt their psychological, physiological, and personality traits to meet the demands of their work, achieve labor efficiency, and enhance productivity. To excel in vocational adaptation, each student needs to be trained, developed, and nurtured in vocational adaptive skills. For social work students, the process of vocational adaptation helps them quickly familiarize themselves with the learning, training, and development of professional qualities and capabilities during their university education. Therefore, researching the development of vocational adaptive skills for social work students is of great significance both theoretically and practically. In this article, we discuss some theoretical issues regarding the structure of vocational adaptive skills for social work students and propose a suitable structure for vocational adaptive skills tailored to social work students at the University of Labour and Social Affairs, meeting the standards of the social work profession in Vietnam today.

Keywords: Social work, skills, vocational adaptation, students

1. Problem Statement

Every profession in society has its own requirements for knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards work. The effectiveness and productivity of work are measures of the mastery of professional knowledge, skills, and professional ethics. Therefore, during their time at university, students need support in vocational adaptive skills to transition from the academic environment to the professional environment, aligning with the requirements of the job and future professional environments.

Social work is a profession, a professional activity aimed at assisting individuals, families, and communities in enhancing their capacity to meet needs and strengthening social functions while promoting social policy, resources, and services to help individuals, families, and communities address and prevent social issues, contributing to social welfare.

Supporting the development of vocational adaptive skills for social work students before they graduate is essential. The vocational adaptive skills of students are demonstrated in their understanding and integration into the working environment of social work, thereby grasping the requirements and demands of social work knowledge, skills, and professional ethics to behave appropriately according to the demands of the profession.

This article addresses some theoretical issues regarding the structure of vocational adaptive skills for social work students and proposes a structure for vocational adaptive skills suitable for social work students, meeting the standards of the social work profession in Vietnam today. This is also one of the reference bases for evaluating the training process, standards for students to cultivate and develop their own careers.

2. Research Results

2.1. Theoretical basis of vocational adaptive skills

- ✓ Concept of skills

To date, there have been many scientific studies on skills and various concepts of skills have been proposed. Through literature review, it is evident that skills can be understood in three basic ways:

Firstly, skills are seen as the technical aspect of action or activity. Representatives of this viewpoint include authors such as V.A Kruchetxki, A.G Còvaliop, Đặng Thành Hưng, etc. Most authors agree that "A skilled person is one who knows how to apply a system of techniques, tricks to perform actions correctly and achieve results" [1], [2], [3].

Secondly, skills are viewed as the capacity for action of the individual in activities. Representatives of this viewpoint include authors such as N.D. Levitov, K.K. Platonov, A.V. Petrôvski, Vũ Dũng, Nguyễn Quang Uân, Trần Quốc Thành, Phạm Tất Dong, etc. They argue that "Skills are the ability to perform actions effectively on a certain theoretical or practical task, or more specifically, the ability or capacity of the subject to perform a sequence of actions based on understanding (knowledge or experience) to achieve the expected results." [4].

Thirdly, skills are seen as the behavioral expression of the individual. Representatives of this viewpoint include authors such as S.A.Morales, W.Sheator, J.N. Richard, etc. They argue that "Skills are behaviors that manifest in outward actions and are influenced by an individual's perceptions and thoughts" [5].

In summary, there are many different approaches and expressions regarding skills, but scientists generally agree on some points:

- Skills are the method of performing actions appropriate to the purpose and conditions of the action.
- Skills involve applying existing knowledge, tricks to choose methods of action.
- Skills are developed through training, so skills can be developed..

✓ Concept of adaptation:

"Adaptation is a directed activity, the result of adapting to the environment and society to gradually achieve conformity with the changes in the environment and society."

From a psycho-social perspective, adaptation can be considered as the process of changing individuals' psychological life and behavioral systems to meet the demands of new living conditions and activities. Through adaptation, individuals form new psychological structures, and even under certain conditions, they can modify their living environment.

✓ Concept of vocational adaptation

Vocational adaptation is the process of applying knowledge, skills, professional expertise, and professional ethics accumulated through specialized training programs and social interactions to autonomously control, adjust, and modify behavior to fit the circumstances and the professional field. The result of vocational adaptation is expressed through the corresponding level between the requirements of the profession and the personal qualities in professional activities.

✓ Concept of adaptive skills

Adaptive skills are directed activities performed autonomously, based on the biological, psychological, and social conditions of the individual, using the knowledge, skills, and experiences accumulated through learning and training in specific situations to achieve desired outcomes.

✓ Concept of vocational adaptive skills:

According to author Dương Thị Nga (2012), vocational adaptive skills are the individual's ability to actively apply knowledge, skills in the process of self-improvement, change, transformation, and creativity of oneself and the environment to meet the requirements of learning and vocational training activities in different conditions and circumstances. [6].

✓ Concept of vocational adaptive skills for social work students:

The vocational adaptive skills of social work students are the ability of students to actively study, cultivate qualities, develop skills, prepare professional attitudes to meet the requirements of professional qualities, vocational capabilities, engage with the profession, and work effectively after graduation.

The vocational adaptive skills of social work students involve actively learning about the profession, caring about the profession, being able to control and be confident in the profession, actively integrating into professional activities and content, autonomously training professional skills, and nurturing a love for the profession to meet the requirements of the profession.

2.2. Basis for determining the structure of vocational adaptive skills of social work students

2.2.1. Professional standards for social work sector officials

a. Standards of professional ethics for specialized social work sector officials [7]:

- Possess good political qualities and ethics; comply with the Party's guidelines, the State's laws.
- Place the interests of the beneficiaries as the most important goal in professional activities, consciously protect the long-term and continuous interests of the beneficiaries; respect the privacy, self-determination, and confidentiality of the beneficiaries; encourage and support the beneficiaries in achieving appropriate goals.
- Do not exploit professional relationships for personal gain that may affect the assistance work for the beneficiaries.
- Respectful, open-minded, solidarity, empathetic, and sharing with colleagues in professional activities.

- Fulfill the duties of civil servants in professional activities accurately and fully.
- Regularly study to improve professional expertise in social work.

b. Standards for training and development:

- Graduation from university or higher education in social work, sociology, psychology, special education, or other social science majors suitable for social work tasks.
- In cases of having degrees in other majors, must have certificates or training certificates in social work profession issued by authorized training institutions or organizations according to the program issued by the Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs or have diplomas in vocational social work, intermediate level, or basic certificates in social work;
- Have a certificate of training according to the standard professional title of social work sector officials.

c. Standards for professional competence and expertise:

- Have the ability to independently and proficiently perform social work skills and tasks;
- Have the ability to grasp theories and practical methods in the implementation of social work tasks appropriately;
- Have the ability to lead, coordinate with organizations, individuals in the process of implementing social work tasks; take personal responsibility for the results of assigned tasks;
- Have the ability to guide professional tasks, disseminate experiences, and participate in scientific research in the field of social work;
- Identify the needs for assistance of the beneficiaries and determine solutions.
- Have basic information technology skills, be able to use foreign languages or languages of ethnic minorities for officials working in ethnic minority areas as required by the job position.

2.2.2. Program Outcomes Standards for Undergraduate Social work Education

The undergraduate social work education program aims to provide society with high-quality social work personnel equipped with comprehensive qualities and competencies to assume positions related to social work professions at various levels and in different environments. [8]

a. Knowledge outcomes standards:

- Learners can apply basic knowledge of social sciences, political science, and Vietnamese law to address socio-economic issues in practice.
- Learners can apply basic knowledge of mathematics, research methods, and natural sciences to analyze and resolve issues arising in practical work and life.
- Learners can apply foundational knowledge of sociology, psychology, and social sciences to analyze and explain social phenomena.
- Learners can analyze and apply knowledge of sociology, social welfare, and policy formulation to form foundational knowledge and develop areas related to the social work profession.
- Learners can organize supervision and evaluation of in-depth knowledge blocks in the field of social work to collaborate or coordinate in social work activities for intervention support for beneficiaries.
- Learners can design and manage interventions in social work when providing services to meet the needs and ensure social welfare for individuals, groups, and communities in need of support.

b. Skills outcomes standards:

- Learners can fully perform independent thinking skills, systematic thinking, and critical thinking, flexibility in implementing professional activities in the field of social work.
- Learners can practice life skills, soft skills, hard skills in social education activities, communication, and communication in various contexts such as entrepreneurship and job creation.
- Learners can proficiently perform in-depth skills to address complex issues in the field of social work when intervening, supporting, and working with individuals, families.
- Learners can adapt proficiently and evaluate the quality when performing skills to promote interaction, encourage and handle conflicts when supporting and working with groups in need.
- Learners can proficiently perform skills and evaluate the quality when working with communities, organizational bodies, and social organizations in providing services to beneficiaries.

- Learners have skills in designing interventions providing social work services in support facilities as well as skills in implementing research in the field of social work.

c. Ethical outcomes standards:

- Learners demonstrate the ability to work independently or in teams, a sense of responsibility to society and the profession, dynamism, and courage, always ready to work under high-pressure work environment conditions as well as the ability to supervise others to complete tasks.

- Learners have the ability to draw professional conclusions and defend viewpoints when supporting clients. Actively comply with professional ethics principles with clients, colleagues, and the profession they serve.

- Learners have the ability to plan self-study as well as coordinate, manage resources to accumulate additional knowledge, experience, professional qualifications through higher education or professional certification courses in Vietnam and internationally..

2.3. Proposal for the structure of adaptation skills model for social work students

Based on the current professional standards of social work officials and the program outcomes standards for undergraduate social work education, we propose the structure of adaptation skills for social work students in the bachelor's degree program.

a. Adaptation to the requirements of social work knowledge

Knowledge is acquired through experience or education. University graduates have a comprehensive, advanced, and in-depth knowledge system in their specialized field; they possess independent and creative research thinking. One of the requirements of the profession is professional knowledge; therefore, when considering the professional adaptation of students after graduation, it is necessary to assess the level of adaptation in terms of professional knowledge. The professional adaptation of social work students after graduation can be summarized in three aspects:

General knowledge of economics, social politics, and human beings. Sufficient knowledge provides a foundation for creative thinking, enabling adaptation to the constantly changing labor market. Students also understand and implement the Party's policies and directions in life and professional activities. Regarding social policies and services, social welfare, communication, and relationships between individuals and society, and between individuals, they actively participate in community activities. They respect and acknowledge the differences among people in career choices, living conditions, and cultural diversity. They respect the rights and legitimate interests of everyone and fight against any actions that infringe upon the rights and legitimate interests of organizations and individuals.

Foundation knowledge of the social work profession: Students understand, analyze, and apply the foundational knowledge of social work such as psychology, sociology, and have a career orientation in social work; they have knowledge of related subjects in the social work profession; they understand various social services; they understand human development in terms of physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects through different developmental stages; they also explain the close relationship between human behavior and the social environment.

Specialized knowledge: Learners have knowledge of fundamental social work theories and general social work practice methods, applying this knowledge to support various client systems such as individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. They have knowledge of basic principles, values, and ethical standards of social work; theories of psychology, assessment methods, diagnosis, and psychosocial intervention; and theories and techniques in social work with clients and client groups in need of support.

They explain the foundational knowledge of the laws, principles of nature, society, and human beings relevant to the social work profession. They analyze the role, function, and structure of the social welfare system and social services within the social welfare system. They explain the relationship between human behavior and the social environment. They explain and evaluate the legal system, social policies in addressing social issues. They analyze the relationship between policies to enhance human rights and social justice..

b. Adaptation to the requirements of social work skills

Skills are the proper application of knowledge, values, attitudes related to practical activities or actions in specific conditions to achieve results. For students, skills are the ability to perform specific tasks after completing a course or acquiring knowledge content.

Every profession requires practical skills, and individuals with good skills demonstrate a solid professional knowledge foundation. Proficient skills are demonstrated by individuals who demonstrate professionalism in their job roles. Adaptation to the requirements of social work skills is manifested in the adaptation of both professional and soft skills of the profession.

After graduation, students can perform skills in the three main methods of social work: *individual social work, group social work, and community development*. Students also develop other basic skills such as practice based on research and research based on practice; communication and policy advocacy skills; project management skills in social work. Listening, empathy, self-adjustment, and personal communication skills to effectively engage diverse stakeholders; Leadership and project management skills in social work; Communication and presentation skills, negotiation skills, teamwork and creative thinking, innovation in work. Skills in identifying social issues; Handling real-life situations at grassroots levels; Organizing work and managing time effectively; Conflict resolution skills; Self-learning skills, independent thinking...

Ability to use specialized language in social work to support and enhance the effectiveness of learning, research, exploration, retrieval, use, and management of resources and information.

Ability to use information technology and communication based on the professional ethics standards of social work to collect and analyze social work data, design social work communication products: ideas, content, scripts, organization, implementation. Use communication tools, forms, and methods to implement social work communication products..

c. Adaptation to the ethics of social work profession

The common characteristics of ethical standards in the social work profession are presented in the codes of ethics as the specific embodiment of principles and values. They are divided according to the social relationships of social workers, including: ethical responsibilities to clients, ethical responsibilities to colleagues, ethical responsibilities to the employing organization, ethical responsibilities as a professional social worker, ethical responsibilities to the profession, and ethical responsibilities to society. In Vietnam, the Code of Ethics for Social Work has been stipulated in Circular No. 01/2017/TT-BLĐTBXH "Regulations on ethical standards for social workers" which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of individuals and organizations engaged in social work. This provides clear guidance for new social work graduates to effectively fulfill their roles when working with clients, social service providers, social centers, international NGOs, etc.

After graduation, students practice the profession adhering to the principles of professional ethics, not violating the rules of the profession, having a high sense of responsibility for the profession, loving the profession, possessing good moral and professional ethics, and exemplifying the lifestyle and demeanor of social workers.

Graduates continue to learn, strive, and improve their moral qualities, knowledge, professional skills, dedication to relationships with clients and work to fulfill their professional roles and responsibilities. They are always ready to apply the ethical rules and principles of the social work profession appropriately in social work activities

They respect and uphold the rights of choice and decision-making without discrimination based on values, beliefs, thoughts, and life of clients and without affecting the legal rights and interests of others.

They promote the full participation of clients by helping them make decisions and solve issues affecting their lives. They focus on strengths, utilize available resources of clients to empower them. They are responsible for social work activities, ensuring that clients are provided with appropriate and quality social work services. They promote social justice, ensure equitable and transparent allocation of resources according to clients' needs. They respect diversity, treat clients equally regardless of abilities, age, gender, marital status, socio-economic status, skin color, race, nationality, political views, religious beliefs, and health characteristics.

They comply with professional ethical qualities: honesty, frugality, integrity, and not exploiting relationships with clients for personal gain; defining clear boundaries between personal life and profession. They are passionate, responsible, proactive, and creative in providing professional social work services to clients. They are patient, empathetic, share, and care for clients. They prioritize the interests of clients in the process of professional social work activities. They are responsible for their professional activities as regulated by law. They maintain solidarity with colleagues; do not exploit or divide relationships between colleagues. They take care of themselves and build a suitable image to ensure professional and effective provision of social work services.

They adhere to the discipline of the social work profession: comply with laws, regulations, and rules of the organization. They carry out professional social work within the scope of assigned tasks and do not refuse requests for appropriate social work services from clients. They maintain confidentiality of information related to clients. In cases of sharing information, they must comply with legal regulations or obtain consent from clients and professional supervisors. They respect, share, empathize, and assist colleagues in work and social relationships. They are willing to collaborate with partners, experts in the field of social work and related fields. They use precise, standard language and style in communication activities with colleagues and clients. They only cease providing social work services when clients no longer need them. In unavoidable circumstances, they must have appropriate solutions to ensure continuous provision of social work services without affecting the interests of clients. They regularly learn, improve knowledge, skills, and awareness of social work professionalism, meet the requirements of social work professional standards as stipulated by law. They are responsible in the process of working in interdisciplinary groups. They contribute, share their experiences, knowledge to ensure effective operation of interdisciplinary groups. They are willing to consult colleagues and clients' opinions to improve the quality and efficiency of providing social work services. They conscientiously establish social relationships, credibility, connectivity, and introduce the best qualified experts, organizations to meet clients' needs. They always love and protect the professional reputation of the profession.

d. Adaptation to the work environment of the social work profession

In addition to adapting to job requirements in terms of knowledge, skills, and professional ethics, students in the social work field need to adapt to the social environment, which is an important aspect to consider. The adaptation of workers to the work environment is a crucial indicator of professional adaptation, demonstrating satisfaction with the profession and maximizing individual capacity to contribute to the development of the profession.

Demonstrating adaptation to the requirements of managers and leaders: Willingness to undertake any tasks assigned by leadership; Ready to advise leaders on ideas and tasks that are strengths of oneself; Having an open-minded attitude towards feedback from colleagues and leaders. Accepting evaluation results from the organization and seeking ways to improve and progress. Always satisfied with the organization, assignment, and arrangement

of work by leadership. Understanding that leadership serves society justly and professionally. Recognizing and empathizing with the thoughts, emotions, and attitudes of others. Identifying the needs and abilities of others to attract, persuade, lead, and organize work effectively.

After graduation, students understand the function and tasks of the workplace; understand the strategy and mission of the unit, workplace; ready to work overtime if needed, without encountering any obstacles; Adapting to discipline in work; having the ability to withstand work pressure. Adaptation to colleagues: building relationships, fostering a cohesive and friendly atmosphere for common goals. Students accept the differences among members in the work environment, have a curious spirit, eager to learn, observe, and accumulate knowledge from those around them. They develop work plans, schedules, and arrange work appropriately to easily adapt and respond in any situation. They demonstrate cooperation, sincerity, and solidarity with colleagues and are appreciated by colleagues.

The Social work profession deals with individuals facing various complex social issues, coming from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, graduates must have the ability to handle high pressure in the working environment with specific clients. The outcome of assistance should result in the satisfaction of clients during the work process.

3. Conclusion

Adapting to the profession is an important issue that helps students enhance their understanding of the profession, its requirements, and develop and strengthen beliefs, emotions, and attitudes ready to participate in practical professional activities, thereby developing qualities and capacities to meet professional requirements. The adaptation of students to the profession after graduation is reflected in their adaptation to the professional requirements in terms of specialized knowledge, mastery of skills, and professional ethics, as well as adaptation to the work environment. To achieve adaptation, students need to have a long-term preparation process of themselves and the university during their undergraduate studies. Good adaptation to the profession's requirements contributes to enhancing adaptation to the work environment and vice versa.

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