

Research on the Construction of Interdisciplinary Culturally Responsive Social Work Talent Training Model in the Digital Age

Wenjing Fu, Min Su

School of law and public administration, Yibin University, Yibin, Sichuan, China

Abstract: *Driven by both the digital wave and discipline construction, social work talent cultivation faces the dual demands of "technological integration" and "disciplinary crossover". First, discipline construction emphasizes "multidisciplinary crossover and digital transformation", requiring social work education to break through traditional disciplinary barriers and cultivate compound talents with both interdisciplinary thinking and digital literacy. Second, in the context of the times, the digital wave reshapes the industry ecology, and artificial intelligence has evolved from "tool assistance" to "collaborative partner". For example, AI-assisted case management can improve the efficiency of document processing, but it also faces ethical risks such as the digital divide and algorithmic bias. It is urgent to build a balanced mechanism of "technical tools + humanistic care". Social work talent cultivation faces the dual demands of "technological integration" and "disciplinary crossover". In the context of the digital age, building an interdisciplinary and culturally responsive social work talent cultivation model aims to cope with the growing complexity and diversity needs in the field of social work [1]. Exploring the social work talent cultivation model will further integrate multiple fields such as social work, sociology and information technology, with the goal of cultivating professional talents with cross-cultural communication, critical thinking and digital literacy.*

Keywords: Social Work; Digital Age; Interdisciplinary and Cultural Responsiveness; Talent Cultivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The three core pain points of traditional social work education in colleges and universities are technological disconnection, cultural suspension, and disciplinary fragmentation. First, it is reflected in the separation of technical courses and humanities courses. Traditional social work education has significant deficiencies in integrating information and communication technology. The application of information technology in social work practice is becoming increasingly widespread. At the same time, information courses are also taught in schools, but the integration with social work courses is not sufficient. For example, some studies have pointed out that in social work education, although network-based teaching strategies and interactive television teaching strategies have been adopted, there are still limitations in technology integration [2], resulting in students' lack of digital literacy and skills. Improperly connected teaching methods may lead to graduates often lacking the necessary digital capabilities when facing increasingly digital social work practice, unable to effectively use digital tools to provide support to service objects, and even exacerbating the digital divide problem among vulnerable groups. Secondly, it is reflected in the lack of refinement of local practice models and cultural theory models. At present, various parts of China are carrying out social work practice based on regional development and regional needs, and gradually finding practical development directions in different fields. However, in the social work system education in colleges and universities, there may be an over-reliance on Western theories and models, and neglect of social problems and solutions in the context of Chinese local culture. China is a multiethnic country, and the social worker education system needs to increase cultural sensitivity training and training to understand the needs of diverse cultures and ethnic groups. However, the education system is weak in cultivating students' cross-cultural communication and collaboration skills. Cultural competence development is insufficient, and local culture is not deeply explored. This can make it difficult for graduates to effectively apply their knowledge to localized interventions when faced with localization challenges. Finally, interdisciplinary integration is a key issue. Traditional social work education suffers from disciplinary barriers in its curriculum and knowledge system. Although social work education encompasses multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and social affairs, it often focuses on a single applied discipline and lacks interdisciplinary curriculum design. This makes it difficult for students to develop a comprehensive and systematic perspective on social work and effectively address multidimensional social issues. Disciplinary fragmentation can also hinder the development of students' critical thinking and innovative abilities. Therefore, this study aims to construct a social work talent development system that integrates "technology empowerment, cultural immersion, and interdisciplinary approaches" to cultivate new-age social work professionals with digital service capabilities, interdisciplinary

thinking, and cultural responsiveness.

2. PROMOTING THE QUALITY OF TALENT CULTIVATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The rapid development of digital technology has profoundly changed the content and form of social work practice. The traditional social work model is facing challenges and needs to cultivate social workers who can adapt to the digital environment, master digital tools, and understand the impact of the digital society on individuals and society [3]. Therefore, it can be improved from two aspects: digital literacy and innovation of work service models. In the talent training program, digital literacy and skills training should be enhanced. The digital intelligence capabilities in the social work professional talent training model can be enhanced from the following three aspects. First, the social work curriculum setting and content update, incorporating information technology, SPSS data analysis, network ethics, artificial intelligence (AI) auxiliary tool application and other contents into the social work professional curriculum system. For example, developing a special digital social work practice module, such as the current "AI + New Media Operation" course, teaches students how to use AI for data analysis, while emphasizing ethical decision-making and data science literacy. Second, the innovation of teaching methods, such as innovative case teaching and simulation practice, allows students to learn the application of digital tools and social work skills in the digital environment in practice. For example, the eight-week "Social Work Virtual" simulation learning experience project developed by Heinsch et al. aims to enhance the digital capabilities of social work students. Third, we will enhance the digital capabilities of the teaching staff. Social work teachers are encouraged to master digital technologies and regularly participate in relevant training to foster the development of professional digital competencies in their students. When promoting professional digital competencies, teacher educators should look beyond general and pedagogical digital skills and focus on professional orientation and transformation. Regarding the reform of social work service models, innovation and adaptation can be pursued in the following three areas. First, with the evolving times, remote services and online interventions enabled by the internet can help teachers and students explore how to leverage digital platforms to provide remote social work services, including online counseling, group work, and community organizing. Second, we will explore the potential of big data applications in identifying at-risk populations, evaluating intervention effectiveness, and optimizing resource allocation, while emphasizing the importance of privacy protection and ethical considerations during its use. Third, we will address the digital divide and inclusive services, examining how digital tools and strategies can bridge the digital divide between different groups and ensure accessibility and equity in services.

3. INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN INTERDISCIPLINARY TALENT TRAINING

Currently, the design of social work courses and textbooks in China mostly follows Western ones, and the social work curriculum system also directly borrows from Western ones. The curriculum system has remained unchanged for many years and urgently needs to be restructured and integrated. The curriculum system design should adapt to the development of the times and meet the industry's demand for high-quality social work talents. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the training of interdisciplinary social workers. Universities can improve from the following aspects: First, strengthen the integration of multidisciplinary knowledge, develop comprehensive courses that can integrate multiple disciplines in social work professional education, and incorporate knowledge from disciplines such as economics, psychology, communication, and computer science into the curriculum [4] to cope with the complex social problems faced in the digital age. Second, try interdisciplinary project-based learning, learn from the project-based interdisciplinary talent training model of foreign universities [5], encourage students to use multidisciplinary research methods and theoretical frameworks to analyze social problems, improve research capabilities and cultivate the ability to solve complex problems. For example, social work students can form interdisciplinary teams to participate in the Challenge Cup to achieve interdisciplinary talent training. Third, form interdisciplinary teaching teams, attract experts with different disciplinary backgrounds to participate in social work talent training, form multi-perspective teaching and research teams, and improve teachers' interdisciplinary teaching capabilities and practical guidance capabilities. 4. Build an interdisciplinary practice base to achieve the cross-integration of teaching and practice, cooperate with technology companies, social organizations, data analysis institutions, etc., and provide students with interdisciplinary practice opportunities, such as internships in digital charities.

4. PROMOTING THE EXPLORATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL TALENT TRAINING

The process of globalization and the increase in international migration have made social work face increasingly complex cross-cultural situations [6]. This requires social workers to have the ability to communicate and work across cultures, including cultural competence and sensitivity, global awareness and cross-cultural communication skills, anti-oppression and social justice perspectives, the combination of localization and internationalization, and cross-cultural collaboration. Cultural competence and sensitivity are mainly reflected in the in-depth understanding of the values, belief systems, and behavioral patterns in a multicultural context. In this process, it is not only necessary to understand different cultures, but also to be able to reflect on oneself, keenly identify and overcome cultural prejudices, and try to prevent cultural prejudices from causing harm. Social workers need to have global awareness and cross-cultural communication skills, understand international social issues and global governance mechanisms, cultivate effective cross-cultural communication skills, be able to establish trusting relationships and conduct effective dialogues in different cultural contexts, recognize the power structures and inequalities behind cultural differences, keenly identify the oppression caused by cultural centrism, and fight for the rights and interests of vulnerable groups from the perspective of anti-oppression and social justice. In terms of localization and internationalization, we should not only learn from advanced international experience, but also focus on the exploration and utilization of local cultural resources, and develop social work models that conform to local national conditions and cultural characteristics. Cross-cultural collaboration skills: learning to collaborate effectively with colleagues, partners, and service recipients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, as a talent development strategy for enhancing students' cross-cultural competence, culturally responsive courses can be designed. These include strengthening students' learning of multicultural theory, cultivating critical awareness, and conducting in-depth studies of social work practices with specific cultural groups, such as service strategies for different ethnic groups, religious groups, and sexual minorities. Role-playing and scenario simulations can also be used to enhance students' communication and intervention skills in multicultural contexts. To enhance teachers' cross-cultural competence, teachers are encouraged to lead students in cross-cultural exchange programs. Through field trips and volunteer services, students can firsthand experience different cultural environments and jointly cultivate cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Regular cross-cultural competence training should be provided to social work educators to enhance their multicultural sensitivity and teaching abilities. Teachers with diverse cultural backgrounds or cross-cultural work experience can also be encouraged to be hired to enrich teaching perspectives and experience.

5. DEVELOPMENT TREND OF SOCIAL WORK TALENT TRAINING

The process of building a cross-disciplinary and culturally responsive social work talent training model presents numerous challenges. To address these challenges and meet development requirements, social work talent training is showing the following development trends. First, there is the continuous development of deep technological integration and innovation. Educational institutions should deeply and flexibly integrate digital technologies into their curricula and teaching methods. This requires not only proficiency in using online platforms, virtual simulations, artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual reality (VR) to simulate practical scenarios, but also mastering the use of digital platforms for digital processing and quantitative analysis. Second, there is interdisciplinary integration and collaborative development, breaking down traditional disciplinary barriers and promoting mutual learning between social work and other disciplines. This aims to resolve conflicts such as the disconnect between practical teaching and social work practice, integrate socialist core values into the systematic design of digital implementation scenarios for civil affairs policies, and cultivate students' policy implementation capabilities and social responsibility in grassroots governance. Third, there is a strengthening of cross-cultural and global perspectives. In the context of globalization, emphasis should be placed on cultivating students' global citizenship awareness and cross-cultural communication skills, thereby cultivating students with cultural competence. Fourth, there is a deepening of ethics and values education. Against the backdrop of the increasing complexity of digital and cross-cultural ethics, social work education will strengthen the education of professional ethics and values, guiding students to uphold professional integrity in practice. At the same time, given the rapid changes in the social environment and technological development, we must strengthen the cultivation of students' lifelong learning ability and their ability to adapt to new knowledge and new skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Project: Yibin University School of Law and Public Administration Teaching Reform Project - Project No. FGJG202502.

REFERENCES

- [1] Azzopardi C. Cross-Cultural Social Work: A Critical Approach to Teaching and Learning to Work Effectively across Intersectional Identities [J]. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 2020, 50(2): 464–482.
- [2] Wretman C J, Macy R J. Technology in Social Work Education: A Systematic Review [J]. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 2016, 52(4): 409–421
- [3] Babaeva A, Samerkhanova E, Guseva L, et al. Social work in the digital age [J]. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 2023, 381: 01023.
- [4] Babaeva A, Samerkhanova E, Guseva L, et al. Social work in the digital age [J]. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 2023, 381: 01023.
- [5] Hu X, Liu F, Yuan Y. Research on Talent Training Mode of Interdisciplinary Integration in Colleges and Universities [J]. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 2021, 1(1): 28–35.
- [6] Volckmar-Eeg M G, Enoksen E. Navigating the multifaceted landscape of culture and social work [J]. *Journal of Comparative Social Work*, 2020, 15(2): 101–126.