

Exploring Teaching Reform in Social Work Administration Courses in the New Era—From the Perspective of Cultivating Applied Talents

Jie Peng, Shihai Chen

Yibin University, Yibin 644000, Sichuan, China

Abstract: *The establishment of the Society Work Department of the CPC Central Committee has raised new requirements for the entry-level competencies of social work administration professionals. To address the existing deficiencies in the teaching of the Social Work Administration course in Chinese universities, this paper proposes a systematic pedagogical reform framework for the Social Work Administration course, grounded in the theory of applied talent development. This framework is conceptualized as a "five-dimensional linkage" system, with curriculum content reconstruction at its core, synergistically supported by innovations in teaching models, enhancements in practical training, faculty development, and the optimization of evaluation mechanisms. Using "Social Work Administration" (2nd Edition), edited by Shi Lirong, as an example, this paper elaborates on how to transform the core functions of the Party committee's Society Work Department into specific teaching modules and practical activities. The aim is to cultivate undergraduate graduates with preliminary policy comprehension, resource coordination, and administrative execution capabilities, providing a forward-looking and operable practical plan for the teaching reform of similar courses.*

Keywords: Social Work Administration; Curriculum Reform; Applied Talent Cultivation; Society Work Department of the CPC Central Committee.

1. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

As China enters a new era, the modernization of its social governance system and governance capacity has reached a critical stage. The Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasizes the need to "establish a social governance system featuring joint contribution, shared governance, and mutual benefits, and enhance the effectiveness of social governance" [1]. Against this macro background, the decision in the 2023 "Party and State Institutional Reform Plan" to establish Society Work Departments within the Central Committee and local Party committees at all levels is a major institutional innovation to deepen the reform of social governance and strengthen the Party's overall leadership over social work [2]. The Party committee's Social Work Department is endowed with multiple core functions such as coordinating social forces, leading grassroots governance, and guiding industry party building [3].

This profound change has placed new demands on the entry-level capabilities of social work administration professionals. Traditional training objectives focused on students mastering the internal management skills of non-profit organizations. However, under the new structure, a qualified undergraduate graduate, in addition to mastering professional knowledge, should also possess the following fundamental core competencies to have growth potential in future job positions:

- 1) Preliminary policy comprehension: The ability to understand basic principles and policies and their guiding significance for institutional operations.
- 2) Basic resource coordination awareness and ability: Understanding the different types of resources within a community and initially learning how to communicate and collaborate with multiple stakeholders.
- 3) Standardized administrative execution ability: The ability to skillfully use administrative tools to complete specific tasks such as writing project proposals, preparing financial budgets, and organizing meeting minutes.
- 4) Clear political consciousness and professional ethics: Understanding the importance of carrying out social work under the leadership of the Party and adhering to professional ethics.

However, a prominent contradiction is that the existing teaching content and methods of "Social Work Administration," as a core course for cultivating the above capabilities, are largely lagging and cannot effectively

cultivate these basic core competencies in students [4] [5]. Therefore, how to systematically reform the teaching of the "Social Work Administration" course is an urgent issue facing social work professional education today.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND OVERALL APPROACH TO CURRICULUM REFORM

The theoretical basis of this study is the theory of application-oriented talent cultivation. This theory emphasizes that higher education should be closely aligned with the needs of socio-economic and industrial development, with its core goal being the cultivation of "application-oriented talent" [6]. Applying this macro theory to the reform of the core course "Social Work Administration" means that we must shift the course objective from simple knowledge transmission to the achievement of students' entry-level core competencies.

However, a profound reform of a course cannot be limited to simple additions or deletions of content. To ensure that students can truly internalize the knowledge they have learned into the ability to solve practical problems, the entire teaching system that supports the course must be considered holistically. Therefore, this study proposes that an effective curriculum reform path should follow a holistic approach of "five-dimensional linkage," encompassing curriculum content, teaching model, practical training, faculty support, and evaluation mechanism. These five dimensions together form a micro, self-consistent "teaching and learning ecosystem." Among them, the reconstruction of course content is the soul of this curriculum reform, responsible for answering the question of "what to teach" to ensure the content is up-to-date. The "collaborative innovation" of teaching, practice, faculty, and evaluation is the support system that ensures the reform's intentions are effectively implemented in all teaching aspects, responsible for answering the questions of "how to teach" and "how to evaluate."

3. THE "FIVE-DIMENSIONAL LINKAGE" REFORM PATH OF THE SOCIAL WORK ADMINISTRATION COURSE

3.1 Core link - Reconstruction of Course Content Based on Textbooks and the Functions of the Party Committee Society Work Department

Curriculum content is the cornerstone of the entire reform process. Our reform exploration closely revolves around the chapter system of the core textbook *Social Work Administration (Second Edition)* edited by Shi Lirong [7]. By deepening and expanding the content of specific chapters, we precisely integrate the cultivation of these basic core competencies into the teaching process.

3.1.1 Cultivating Political Consciousness and Professional Ethics

Building on Chapter 4 "Organization" and Chapter 5 "Organizational Leadership" to cultivate students' political Consciousness, we plan to introduce Party-building case studies, such as "Red Social Workers," during the "Organizational Culture" course, guiding students to explore how social service organizations can deeply integrate Party-building work with their missions and values. When teaching "Leadership," we will invite community Party organization secretaries as guest lecturers to share their grassroots work experiences. The goal is not to require students to achieve a high level of leadership, but rather to ensure that they develop a basic awareness and professional identity in working under the Party's leadership before graduation.

3.1.2 Develop a preliminary understanding of policy

Expanding on Chapter 3 "Decision-Making and Planning" to cultivate students' sensitivity and understanding of policy, we plan to expand this chapter's scope beyond internal organizational boundaries to encompass the broader policy landscape, adding a unit titled "Policy Interpretation and Application." Students will be guided through the process of selecting a specific national, local, or departmental social policy, learning how to read and analyze the policy text. In the form of a group report, they will analyze the specific impact of the policy on a grassroots community service center. The goal is to cultivate students' fundamental ability to "think with policy in mind."

3.1.3 Cultivate basic resource coordination skills

Focusing on Chapter 6 "Project Management" and Chapter 9 "Fundraising and Financial Management" we plan to design a comprehensive PBL project called "Community Resource Mapping and Project Design" to cultivate

students' awareness of resource coordination. Working in groups, students will select a real community and, through interviews and online research, create a resource map of that community, encompassing government, businesses, social organizations, and community figures. Based on this map, they will then complete a plan for a small community event involving the integration of at least three different resources and develop a simple financial budget. The goal is to enable students to "see" resources and "think" about how to connect them, laying the foundation for future work on more complex resource integration.

3.1.4 Cultivate standardized administrative execution capabilities

In response to Chapter 11 "Challenges, Change, and Digital Development" and to enhance students' practical administrative skills, we plan to add a dedicated "Administrative Office Skills" workshop. This workshop will integrate the content of Chapter 8, "Human Resource Management," and Chapter 10, "Social Service Evaluation." It will specifically train students to master the use of Office software, collaborative office platforms (such as Feishu and DingTalk), online questionnaire tools, and other basic training, including document writing and meeting minutes compilation. The goal is to ensure that upon graduation, students can quickly master various basic administrative tasks as qualified "clerks" or "project assistants" [8].

3.2 Support System: synergistic Linkage of Teaching, Practice, Faculty and Evaluation

On the basis of the core link of reconstructing the course content, the innovation of teaching models, the deepening of practical teaching, the construction of teaching staff and the optimization of evaluation mechanism together constitute the four pillars supporting the effective operation of this reform path.

3.2.1 Innovation in teaching models

To activate the reconstructed course content, the teaching model must shift from traditional one-way indoctrination to interactive generation. We advocate the comprehensive introduction of project-based learning (PBL) and case teaching. Research shows that PBL can effectively reverse the traditional "teaching first, then application" model, allowing students to actively construct knowledge in the process of solving real, complex problems, thereby effectively improving their ability to learn independently and solve complex problems [9]. At the same time, we deeply integrate online and offline hybrid teaching, creating micro-lessons on basic and theoretical knowledge points for students to learn before class; and focusing precious offline classroom time on more advanced case studies, role-playing, mock hearings, and project roadshows, thereby greatly stimulating students' learning momentum and participation.

3.2.2 Deepening of practical teaching

In order to truly transform theoretical learning into practical ability, the deepening of practical teaching plays a bridging role. Based on the principle of "school-local collaboration and hierarchical progression", we have built a practical platform for multi-faceted cooperation between "government, society and academia". This "government, society and academia" collaborative education mechanism is an effective way to deepen the integration of industry and education and improve the quality of talent training [10]. Specifically, "government" refers to establishing close cooperation with grassroots governance units such as the street party committee and the community party and mass service center, giving students the opportunity to deeply participate in community governance projects under the leadership of party building; "society" refers to cooperating with leading social organizations and foundations to allow students to experience standardized project administration; "academic" refers to the linkage between on-campus teaching and off-campus practice. We will also strictly implement the "dual mentor system", with on-campus mentors responsible for theoretical guidance and reflection, and off-campus practical mentors responsible for practical skills and career guidance, and through the "monthly tripartite meeting" mechanism to ensure the quality of internships.

3.2.3 Faculty Team Building

Any profound educational reform cannot be achieved without teachers, the driving force behind it. To this end, we are leveraging a strategy of "both attracting and nurturing talent" and integrating internal and external resources to build a team of "dual-qualified" teachers who are both theoretically proficient and practically savvy. Firstly, by establishing positions such as "Industry Distinguished Professors" and "Practical Mentors," we regularly invite experts holding management positions within Party committees' social work departments, other government

departments, and large and medium- sized social organizations. Through various channels, such as lectures, case studies, and student project guidance, we bring fresh frontline experience and real-world challenges to the classroom. Secondly, we actively encourage and support professional teachers to proactively "go global." By participating in industry conferences, undertaking cross-disciplinary projects from local governments and social organizations, and serving as institutional consultants, we cultivate close and sustained connections with the practical world, ensuring that teachers' knowledge structures are in sync with industry developments. Furthermore, we are breaking down traditional departmental silos and establishing a cross-disciplinary "Teaching Innovation Community." This community regularly conducts collective lesson preparation, collaborative teaching and research, and the development of a comprehensive teaching case library.

3.2.4 Optimization of evaluation mechanism

To ensure the accuracy of training objectives and a closed-loop system, optimizing the evaluation mechanism is essential. We advocate a shift from summative assessments that prioritize knowledge retention to a multifaceted evaluation system that combines process-based and summative assessments, emphasizing competency development. Regarding process-based assessments, we will significantly increase the weight of regular grades. This will no longer be limited to attendance and homework, but will instead focus on students' contributions to the PBL project, the quality of their case analysis reports, their involvement in class discussions, and their teamwork. Teachers will create a "project progress profile" for each group, documenting their progress from topic selection, research, solution design, to presentation. For summative assessments, we will replace traditional closed-book exams with comprehensive "course assignments" or "open-book case studies." For example, we could set up a complex, realistic social work administrative scenario, such as "A public health emergency occurs in a community. As the director of a community service center, how would you activate an emergency plan and coordinate resources?" Students will be required to apply their knowledge learned throughout the semester within a specified timeframe and submit a solution that combines theoretical depth with practical application. The evaluation subjects will also be diversified. During the final report or defense of the course project, we will try our best to invite off-campus practical instructors or representatives of cooperative institutions to participate in the audit and scoring, so that their evaluation is closer to real workplace requirements.

4. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

This study, grounded in the new era of the Party Committee's Society Work Department, focuses on the teaching reform of the core course "Social Work Administration," systematically exploring a reform path centered on "five-dimensional linkage." The study's core innovation lies in its proposal to transform the core functions of the Party Committee's Social Work Department into a teachable, learnable, and practiceable entry-level competency development module for undergraduates. Through detailed demonstration using classic textbooks as examples, the study provides a clear and pragmatic reform path to address the current challenges of talent development.

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