

Research On the Implementation Path of Social Work Talent Cultivation in Local Colleges and Universities Under the Background of New Liberal Arts

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Abstract: The core task of the NEW LIBERAL ARTS construction is to cultivate a NEW LIBERAL ARTS talent team that can master multidisciplinary professional knowledge with high professional quality, strong comprehensive ability, and strong practical ability. The NEW LIBERAL ARTS construction is both an opportunity and a challenge to the development of social work majors, and how to integrate social work majors better into the NEW LIBERAL ARTS construction has become an increasingly urgent issue of social work education. This paper summarizes the action strategies for the cultivation of social work professionals in the context of the NEW LIBERAL ARTS construction through research and analysis on the basis of the inner connection between the NEW LIBERAL ARTS construction and the cultivation of social work talents.

Keywords: Social work; New liberal arts; Talent development; Local colleges and universities

Online publication: October 26, 2022

1. Introduction

Since China's reform and globalization, its economy has developed rapidly, its national strength has grown, and people's living standards have risen continuously as well. However, with the development of economy and society, problems such as the division between the rich and the poor have become increasingly prominent, and the main social contradiction has been transformed into the contradiction between the people's growing need for a better life and the unbalanced and insufficient development^[1]. Social work is a discipline and profession that have been restored and rapidly developed to meet the needs of China's reform and opening up, and the development of socialist modernization, that play an important role in the cause of social governance and services. Because of this, China has been giving greater attention and importance to the development of social work, and has taken practical measures to promote it as well^[2].

At present, social workers in China are widely distributed in many fields such as social welfare, charity, social assistance, community construction, health, emergency response, anti-drug, and drug rehabilitation, etc. Through the comprehensive use of professional knowledge, skills and methods, they help individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities in need, integrate social resources, coordinate social relations, prevent and solve social problems, and restore and develop social functions^[3]. It has become an important professional force to serve and protect people's livelihood, strengthen grassroots governance,

and promote social harmony. It has played an important role in major tasks such as winning the battle against poverty, implementing the rural revitalization strategy, and fighting the new crown pneumonia epidemic.

However, compared with the requirements of building a moderately prosperous society, constructing a socialist harmonious society, promoting the socialist modernization, and the diversified needs of the people, there is still a huge gap in the development of social work^[4]. The development of social work is still facing various challenges, reflected in the quantity and quality of social work talents training which are still far from the requirements. Additionally, the institutional mechanism of social work is not perfect yet, the effectiveness of social work services needs to be enhanced, the problem of unbalanced development of social work is relatively prominent, and the environment for social work development needs to be optimized, etc.^[5] As the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new stage, among the various challenges faced by the development of social work is the imbalance and mismatch between social work talents training and social needs, an issue which should be focused and solved.

In 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) proposed an initiative to build a “NEW LIBERAL ARTS,” thereby introduced numbers of development measures. The “NEW LIBERAL ARTS” aims to cultivate new talents who transcend the limitations of existing majors and disciplines with high professionalism, academic competence, comprehensive strength, creative vision, sustainable development ability, and modern governance ability. With cross-fertilization, synergy and sharing as the main way, it promotes multidisciplinary crossover and deep integration from discipline orientation to demand orientation, and from adapting to service to supporting and leading^[6].

As an integral part on the construction of the “NEW LIBERAL ARTS,” the social work major can respond better to the cross-fertilization, demand-oriented, and practice-innovation characteristics of the “NEW LIBERAL ARTS,” and the social work major can become a product of the integration and development of society, science and technology, and education in the present era^[7]. Through establishing a student-centered education concept based on the present and focusing on the future, talent cultivation structure with intersection of multiple disciplines and specialties can be build, a diversified social work talent cultivation model with integration of industry and education can be explored, teaching and research, and cultivating professionals with family sentiment and professionalism who can effectively resolve social conflicts and solve social problems.

2. Problem elaboration

At present, China has entered the stage of building a comprehensive socialist modernization country, and given an attention on improving people’s livelihood, social development, perfecting social governance, and social construction, which has put forward new requirements for talent cultivation in social work. Talent cultivation is the central work and fundamental task of higher education, as well as the goal and focus of higher education reform. Among them, talent cultivation mode is the key to social work talents cultivation and influenced the future development of social work, and social work talents cultivation mode in local higher education institutions has become an important issue that needs to be explored in depth. Currently, the social work talents cultivated in local colleges and universities could not meet the demand of applied talents for modern social development, and there are still problems that need to be solved at both theoretical and practical levels.

At the theoretical level; Firstly, under the construction of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS,” the research on the cultivation of compound and application-oriented talents oriented to meet the demand for high-quality application-oriented talents in the development of modern service industry is relatively lagging behind, and there is a lack of high-level research results, especially the research on the cultivation of social work talents in local colleges and universities; Secondly, the cultivation mode of social work talents in local colleges

and universities lacks in theoretical knowledge. There is a lack in-depth theoretical discussion of the cultivation model of social work talents in local colleges and universities. After the release of the national initiative for the construction of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS,” there is a lack of research on the connotation of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS” and also lack in-depth exploration of social work talents cultivation mode [8].

At practical level, although the cultivation of social work talents in China has made great progress in the past 20 years, objectively speaking, the current social work talents could not meet the demands of economic and social development in terms of quantity, structure, and quality, and the real problems are shortage of quantity, unreasonable structure, and low quality of social work professionals exist in local colleges and universities [9].

3. Study definition and research methodology

The social work talents cultivated by local colleges and universities could no longer meet the needs of social development. Under the construction of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS,” it is important to thoroughly study the training objectives, contents, and methods of social work talents, and propose an optimum path of social work talents cultivation mode in local colleges and universities based on three key elements of talent, which; (1) The cultivation of the objectives, contents, and methods, including dynamic setting of talent cultivation objectives based on demand; (2) Optimization of talent cultivation contents based on professional knowledge, serviceability, and value concept; And (3) improving talent cultivation methods supported by school-enterprise cooperation system, etc.

In this paper, three representative local higher education institutions in China were selected for in-depth research and analysis, and the information required for the paper was collected through questionnaires and interviews (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Survey methodology and sample

Survey Method	Quantity	Respondent Identity
Questionnaire	480	Social Work Students
Interviews	2	Social Work Teachers
Focus Groups	5	Social Work Students
Interviews	2	Representatives of social organizations
Interviews	2	Representatives of government departments

4. Conclusion

4.1. Cultivation of general talents as the foundation and base, while cultivation of complex talents as the goal of education

The goal of talent cultivation is a specific cultivation requirement based on the national educational purpose and the nature and tasks of schools at all levels, which is an important basis for talent cultivation [10]. All the university should clarify their talent cultivation program and target orientation. The goal of training applied talents in social work is determined by the specific service fields of social work majors and the national demand for social work professionals. The training objectives of social work directly affect the effectiveness of social work graduates. The social work major, implements the education policy of comprehensive development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor, implements the general requirement of establishing moral education based on the construction needs of Dongguan-Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area by focusing on cultivating students’ innovative spirit and application ability, cultivates students with systematic mastery of social work professional theories and methods, solid social, psychological and legal basic knowledge, professional social service and project management, and other

practical abilities, including humanistic literacy, reflective consciousness, scientific spirit and integrity ^[11]. After graduation, they should be able to work as social workers, community managers, and related personnel in government departments, institutions, and social organizations. It can be seen that the training objectives of social work talents focus on the basic knowledge of social work, related knowledge and skills, and the cultivation of basic social work qualities, and expand the knowledge of psychology and law, which can respond to the requirements of composite talents for the construction of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS” ^[12].

4.2. Strengthen the construction of vocational demand-oriented social work professional curriculum

Only by organically combining professional education, curriculum construction, and professional requirements, we can achieve sustainable development of social work, and truly can integrate social workers in the society. The core qualities of professional social workers include value concept, theoretical knowledge, and practical skills. Curriculum construction is the core of professional talent training and a key factor to achieve the goal of talent training ^[13]. The vocational teaching of social work requires social work majors in colleges and universities to take this as the guide, conduct useful exploration and research on curriculum construction, and provide students with scientific and distinctive curriculum categories with efficient curriculum effects. At the same time, the curriculum should reflect the characteristics of multidisciplinary cross-fertilization. The multidisciplinary intersectionality of social work requires full consideration in its professional curriculum, and the number of courses offered by related disciplines should be kept in a certain proportion. Under the background of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS” construction, the multidisciplinary crossover in social work curriculum construction is not simply the opening of multidisciplinary courses, but should be combined with the real needs of social work profession, scientifically design the number of courses of related disciplines, the opening ratio, and course knowledge system, which not only reflects the crossover and integration of multiple disciplines, but also ensures the cultivation of high-quality composite talents.

4.3. Construct a practical teaching system with the goal of enhancing vocational ability

Under the “NEW LIBERAL ARTS” construction, more attention is given to the cultivation of students’ practical ability, while practical teaching is the core of cultivating applied talents, and an important carrier for the effective operation of the applied talents cultivation mode. Practical learning not only can test the degree of students’ professional knowledge and skills acquisition, but also can transfer the resources of learning and enhance students’ learning ability, therefore social work education should also take practice as the core element of professional education ^[14]. The practical teaching system is an important way to cultivate the professional ability of applied talents in social work. The cultivation of social work applied talents should realize three combinations in the practical teaching link, namely, combining theoretical knowledge, learning, and professional practice knowledge expansion, combining in-class learning and extra-curricular experiment, and combining in-school learning and off-campus practice. These require the selection of basic and professional theory courses in the theoretical teaching system to highlight the relevance and practicality, and emphasize the cultivation of practical ability while learning the theory; In the practical teaching system, the main purpose is to consolidate theoretical knowledge learning, enhance practical application ability, emphasize the combination of industry-university-research, realize the effective integration of colleges and industries, and cultivate high-level applied talents that match with the needs of industries ^[15]. The author believes ^[15] that we should rely on the advantages of local colleges and universities to develop a practical teaching system with the goal of improving professional ability in the process of teaching social work majors, including building a “basic platform” based on professional laboratories, a “reinforcement platform” based on professional internship bases, a “strengthening platform” based on professional internship bases, a “practical platform” based on professional institutions, and a

practical teaching platform based on “experimental, project-based, peer-to-peer teaching, project-based, and peer-organized practical teaching mode”^[16].

4.4. Improve the cooperation mechanism between schools and enterprises, and strengthen the collaborative talent cultivation mode of school, society, and government

The construction of “NEW LIBERAL ARTS” proposes to link multiple subjects and give full play to their respective strengths to cultivate high quality applied talents^[17]. The organic combination of industry, university and research has proved to be a useful practical teaching experience and a win-win process. In the teaching process, the teachers of the course combine theory and practice by linking with resources from outside the practical world, teaching theoretical knowledge, integrating relevant practical cases and classroom simulations, and setting corresponding practical hours of the course to lead students to participate in social work projects in the field, emphasizing the integration of practical and theoretical courses, examining the effectiveness of cultivating students’ professionalism and sense of social responsibility, following the policy guidance and meeting the needs of society^[18]. The course emphasizes the integration of practice and theoretical courses, examines the effectiveness of cultivating students’ professionalism and social responsibility, follows the policy guidance and meets the needs of the society. Through the participation of external resources in the application and development construction of practical teaching and case teaching, on the one hand, it increases the cultivation of students’ application ability and vocational ability and improves the quality of talent cultivation, on the other hand, teachers obtain the latest research progress and relevant project results of social work profession or industry and organically integrate them into the teaching process, which not only enhances the timeliness of teaching contents of social work profession, but also improves the school This not only enhances the timeliness of the teaching contents of the social work profession, but also improves the school’s own research quality and teaching level^[19]. Social work majors should increase the synergy with local government, strengthen strategic cooperation with local government departments, link government policies, funds and other resources, and better cultivate excellent social work professionals^[20].

Funding

Guangdong Higher Education Society “14th Five-Year Plan” 2022 Higher Education Research Project “Research on the Innovation of Cultivation Mode and Mechanism of Composite Health Education Management Talents Under the Background of NEW LIBERAL ARTS Construction” (Project Number: 22GYB169).

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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