

International Network for School Social Work

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Electronic Newsletter March 2021

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Social Work and School Social Work in Vietnam: A Brief View

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Early Stages of Social Work in Vietnam

The first school of social work was established in Saigon in 1949 under sponsorship of the Red Cross France and the French Embassy named Caritas School of Social Work. Run by the Catholic congregation St.Vincent de Paul, it developed a 3-year training program on social work and medicine. In 1969, with the assistance of UNICEF and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the National School of Social Work (NSSW) was established, also in Saigon. This school was under the Ministry of Social Affairs, and provided different training programs/degrees for supervisor and social worker (one and two-year training). In 1970, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) recognized the Saigon Professional Society of Social Workers as a member. Both Caritas School of Social Work and NSSW are members of Asia-Pacific Association of Social Work Education (APASWE). The School of Youth for Social Services (SYSS), a Buddhist organization founded by Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh, established in 1965 in Saigon, was the first school to train community workers. After 1975, the social work education and training temporarily stopped.

Revival of Social Work in the 1990's

The late Mme. Nguyen Thi Oanh established the Department for Social Work Training and Research within the HoChiMinh City Psychology Association in order to conduct social work training, research and translation of social work textbooks. Mme. Oanh also initiated "The World Social Work Day in Vietnam" held annually in November. The socio-economic situation in Vietnam was rapidly changing with many emerging social issues. Since 1990 with support from the United Nations (UNICEF), international social organizations such as Radda Barnen (Save the Children Sweden), World Vision, World Church Services, Ford Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropy, Irish Embassy and CIDA (Canada), social work in Vietnam was gradually developed. Social work was firstly reintroduced into the Open University HoChiMinh City in the school-year 1992-1993. Between 2004 and 2017, the Government issued key documents regarding the development of the profession of social work like the "Plan of Social Work Development as a Profession period 2010-2020", title and ethics for social workers. HCM City Club of Social Workers was also established in 2010 with over 100 members, who worked in several areas, GO, INGOs, and local NGOs.

Beginnings of School Social Work

Before 2010, in HoChiMinh City, the Open University had conducted a 2-year-pilot project “School Social Work” at 2 high schools. With support from Save the Children and UNICEF the City’s Department of Education recruited psychological counselors to help students with their troubles in 15 other high schools.

Decision No. 327/QĐ-BGDĐT and Circular 133

The “Plan of Social Work Development as a Profession period 2010-2020” mentioned that school social work is one of the social work areas that need to be developed. Workshops on school social work were conducted throughout the country. The Minister of Education and Training issued the “Plan of Development of social work profession in education and training sector for 2016 – 2020 period” in Decision No. 327/QĐ-BGDĐT, dated January 25th, 2017 with general objectives for professional training. In 2018 the Ministry of Education and Training issued Circular No.133 to guide the development of school social work. According to Circular 133, each school will have a position with the title “Teacher, staff who were delegated as a responsible liaison person for guiding the implementation school social work”. He/she has the following tasks:

- Identifying risks inside and outside schools with negative influence on students; students having special circumstances, such as violence, abused, drop out, law violation.
- Conducting preventive activities, reducing the number of students having special circumstances, violence, abused, drop out, law violation.
- Developing the process of intervention, supporting students having special circumstances, such as violence, abused, drop out, law violation.
- Coordinating with families, local authorities and social work services provider in the community for developing the intervention process and to support students in crisis.
- Developing growth and social integration activities for students after intervention or for students, teachers and parents needing such assistance.

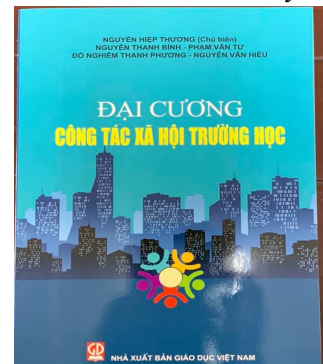
Before this Circular came out, several activities related to school social work had been conducted such as seminars, conferences, training, textbooks, experimental projects, mostly implemented by universities with support from UNICEF and Save Children International but with the government playing key roles in training for staffs and teachers.

Prospects for school social work

On January 22, 2021 the Prime Minister signed Decision No. 112/QĐ-TTg to issue the Plan of Social Work Development for the period 2021- 2030 in which the government focuses on social work in schools, hospitals, prisons, rehabilitation centers for drug abusers and in the justice system. The universities and colleges have already designed their curricula for School Social Work at the BSW and MSW levels. So far, there are approximately 70 institutions offering social work education in Vietnam and the evolution of school social work is progressing.



Training course on school social work for teachers in 2020



Introduction to Social Work in Schools
Hanoi University of Education