



**Čo prinieslo sociálnej práci 100 rokov?  
Minulé a súčasné podoby sociálnej práce**

*8. ročník Košických dní sociálnej práce*

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Dostupné od: 28.02.2020

ISBN 978-80-8152-847-7 (e-publikácia)

## Obsah

Predhovor editoriek .....	6
<b>Pavla Kodymová (ČR)</b> Sociální práci dosud potřeboval každý režim .....	7
<b>Vita Hrytsaniuk (UA), Viktoriia Lohvynenko (UA)</b> The specifics of social workers training in Ukraine.....	10
<b>Matej Almáši (SK), Michaela Šavrnochová (SK)</b> Od klienta sociálnej práce k e-klientovi sociálnej práce: Výzva slovenskej sociálnej práce v digimodernizme .....	14
<b>Beáta Balogová (SK), Zuzana Poklembová (SK), Justin Jay Miller (USA)</b> Potreba starostlivosti o seba ako nevyhnutnej súčasti Etického kódexu sociálnych pracovníkov a pracovníčok .....	25
<b>Mária Vašutová (ČR)</b> Sociálně-patologické chování v období dětství a dospívání. Výzkumné studie tradiční a kybernetické šikany .....	29
<b>Beáta Balogová (SK), Anna Jašková (SK), Antónia Sabolová Fabianová (SK)</b> Analýza životného príbehu človeka bez domova ako klienta sociálnej práce .....	47
<b>Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová (SR), Daniela Ivanová (SR)</b> Súčasný stav realizácie supervízie v oblasti sociálnych služieb v Banskobystrickom samosprávnom kraji .....	52
<b>Tereza Grosse (CZ), Peter Brnula (SK), Jitka Laštovková (CZ), Jan Vašat (CZ), Alexandra Petřů (CZ)</b> Zeď v Matiční po 20 letech .....	57
<b>Anna Hudecová (SK)</b> Rodinná starostlivosť o seniorov ako novodobý problém a výzva pre spoločnosť .....	64
<b>Martin Hamadej (SK) a Beáta Balogová (SK)</b> Morálna zodpovednosť klienta s mentálnym postihnutím.....	71
<b>Magdaléna Hovanová (SR), Eva Žiaková (SR)</b> Novodobá výzva pre sociálnu prácu – kyberšikanovanie.....	80
<b>Andriy Lozynskiy (UA), Emiliya Kostyshyn (UA), Svitlana Lozynska (UA)</b> Leading experience in social work in Ukraine during the First World War.....	85

## **The specifics of social workers training in Ukraine**

*Špecifická odbornéj prípravy sociálnych pracovníkov na Ukrajine*

*Vita Hrytsaniuk (UA), Viktoriia Lohvynenko (UA)*

### **Abstract**

The article defines the stages of the formation of the specialty "Social Work" in Ukraine. The following basic issues are considered in the article: the current state and trends of professional training of specialists in the field of social support; the positive trends in the training of a highly qualified social work specialist which are determined by the focus on the competency-based approach and the improvement of the state standard of higher education in specialty 231 "Social Work"; important professional competencies of a social worker and a number of disciplines which ensure competency formation during training at a university; the problems facing the universities of Ukraine in the preparation of social work specialists and ways to overcome them.

**Keywords:** Professional training of social workers. Professional skills. Professional and personal development of a social support specialist. Trends in training specialists in the sphere of social support.

### **Abstrakt**

Článok definuje etapy formovania špecializácie „Sociálna práca“ na Ukrajine. V článku sa zaoberáme nasledujúcimi základnými otázkami: súčasný stav a trendy odbornej prípravy odborníkov v oblasti sociálnej podpory; pozitívne trendy vo vzdelávaní vysokokvalifikovaného špecialistu na sociálnu prácu, ktoré sú určené zameraním na kompetenčný prístup a zvyšovaním štátnej úrovne vysokoškolského vzdelávania v špecializácii 231 „Sociálna práca“; dôležité profesijné kompetencie sociálneho pracovníka a množstvo disciplín, ktoré zabezpečujú formovanie kompetencií počas odbornej prípravy na univerzite; problémy, ktorým čelia ukrajinské univerzity pri príprave odborníkov na sociálnu prácu, a spôsoby, ako ich prekonať.

**Kľúčové slová:** Odborné vzdelávanie sociálnych pracovníkov. Profesionálne zručnosti. Profesionálny a osobný rozvoj špecialistu na sociálnu podporu. Trendy vo vzdelávaní odborníkov v oblasti sociálnej podpory.

Nowadays higher educational institutions of Ukraine are faced with the task of preparing highly qualified social work specialists who are able to solve complex applied problems of the social sphere and effectively manage social processes. Social work education in Ukraine is aimed at training such a specialist who would be able to change, eliminate and correct negative social aspects in society.

The training of social educators and social workers as a separate area of professional education and professional activity began to develop in Ukraine in the early 1990s. In April 1991, the professions "social work specialist", "social educator" and "social worker" were put into practice. These positions became the equivalent of the "social worker" position which is practiced in the world. Obtaining the status of professional activity by social work contributed to the formation of an extensive system of social services and organizations. Most of the employees of these institutions did not have the appropriate education, and therefore in many educational institutions of Ukraine specialties "Social Pedagogy" and "Social Work" were opened. The official introduction of Social Work as an academic discipline is in the spring of 1991. Such periods of "Social Work" specialty formation are determined:

- I period (1991–2000) – the launching of a new specialty “Social Work” for Ukraine in the field of “Sociology” and the creation of organizational conditions for the provision of training for social workers.

- II period (2001–2010) – the formation of the "Social Work" specialty in the field of “Social Support” and the creation of organizational and methodological conditions in accordance with the European level of social workers training and simultaneously maintaining the structure of the domestic system of professional education “Junior Specialist - Bachelor - Specialist – Master”.

- III period (2011 – till the present day) – the final formation of the specialty “Social Work” in the field of knowledge “Social Work” and the creation of organizational and methodological conditions for updating the training of social workers in accordance with the problems of social work, methodological studies of social work as a science; innovative training of social workers is being formed. (Polischuk 2010)

Today, the social sphere in Ukraine continues to actively develop and transform, trying to meet the modern trends of highly developed and socially protected countries of the world. Evidence of this is the adoption of new laws and standards in the social sphere. In this context, the level of society’s requirements for the professionalism of specialists in the field of social security and support is also growing. The concept of professional competence is the subject of scientific research by many Ukrainian scientists, such as O. Ihnatieva, E. Tsarkova, N. Briukhanova, O. Derkach, N. Poviakel, I. Zymnia, V. Dudariov, V. Polischuk, N. Horishna, T. Matviichuk, N Kopylova, V. Hrytsaniuk, V. Lohvynenko and others. The competence of a social worker is manifested in his/her practical activity, when interacting with clients, employees, as the ability to adequately respond to needs, solve dilemmas that arise in the process of work, using his/her skills and knowledge. Social work assumes that the quality of interaction with the client and its result primarily depends on the specialist, his/her professionalism and personal qualities, and therefore he/she must possess a set of both special and general competencies. From the first of September of the academic year 2019-2020, the Order No. 557 of April 24, 2019 “On the approval of the standard of higher education in specialty 231 “Social Work” for the first (bachelor's) level of higher education” was enacted in Ukraine. Actually, this order determines the content of theoretical and practical training of a social work specialist in Ukraine. Let us enlarge upon that point.

The general competencies defined by the Standard of higher education for the specialty "Social Work" provide for the graduate to have an active life position and a fully formed personality and to have not only deep knowledge in history, law, ethics, culture, etc., but also the corresponding value orientations. (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2019). It is values that determine the attitude to reality and activities in all areas. The implementation of these requirements involves solving complex educational problems, the solution of which is possible within the framework of such courses as “Institutional Foundations of the State”, “Ukrainian Language and Culture”, “Legal Principles of Social Protection”, “Ethics and Etiquette of Social Work”, “Personality in the System of Social Changes”.

In addition, with the development of the latest technology, social life is rapidly being updated. This causes the uprise of atypical situations, and then the need to quickly solve extraordinary problems, make the right decisions in the conditions of limited time or existing obstacles and the like. Therefore, today the graduate is required to have such competencies that include flexible thinking, the ability to find and analyze the necessary information, the ability to quickly respond and solve problems, make informed decisions, develop new ideas, creativity in work, etc. This requires the introduction to the bachelor’s training programme of new subjects or modification of existing ones. For this purpose, such

disciplines as “Fundamentals of scientific knowledge and heuristics”, “Time management”, “Information technologies in the social sphere”, “Team work and presentation skills” are introduced into the bachelor’s curriculum.

Given that social work is carried out on the basis of respect for the dignity of each person and everyone equally pretends to the protection of his/her social rights and equal opportunities in obtaining social services, specialists should have the competence of “providing assistance and support to clients, taking into account their individual needs, age differences, gender, ethnic and other characteristics” (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2019). Therefore, for a better understanding of the problems, needs, characteristics, differences of clients, such courses as “Fundamentals of Social Inclusion”, “Social Gerontology”, “Ethnicities and Interethnic Tolerance”, “Gender Aspects of Social Work” are proposed as separate disciplines or as meaningful modules or blocks for studying.

Today in Ukraine there is a tendency to expand the field of activity of social work specialists, reaching the international level; the innovative technologies, approaches, trends appear in social work. In view of this, it is necessary to constantly adjust or update the curriculum of existing subjects by adding appropriate content modules. The basic disciplines such as “Theory of Social Work”, “Social Work with various groups of clients”, “Social Policy” etc. should be combined with the study of such disciplines as “Technologies for Preparing Social Projects”, “State and International Standards of Social Work”, “Migration Processes and Intercultural Communication”, “Social Work in State and Non-State Institutions”, “International Social Work”, “Social Work Management”, “HR and Personnel Policy in Social Work”, “Volunteering”, “Social Animation and Art Therapy”. All this contributes to modern high-quality training and the acquisition by the graduate of the relevant competencies. (Lohvynenko, Hrytsaniuk 2019)

A number of problems arose in front of Ukrainian higher educational institutions in the course of social work specialist’s training. One of them is that in Ukraine the academic community, which is concentrated in the field of social work, is still in the process of formation, so most scientific and pedagogical workers do not have a basic education in social work. Having a certain freedom in the formation of the content of curricula and programs, higher institution’s departments can introduce in the educational program disciplines that correspond to the basic education of the teaching staff or its scientific interests, which are different from the sphere of social work and are very indirectly related to it. Another threat to the quality training of social work specialists is that many training programs are developed as part of partnership projects, and as a result, they reflect the standards for training specialists in educational institutions of partner countries, and do not always correspond to the realities of Ukrainian society.

So, having analyzed the features of the social workers training in Ukraine, we can conclude that at this stage we need a more practical orientation of professional training, which can be achieved by extending for students the duration of internships in social institutions and organizations. There, the student will be able to consolidate the theoretical material in the real world and gain such important professional competencies as the ability to manage the activities of social workers and volunteers; to learn how to effectively use methods of social diagnostics in the process of assessing problems, needs, specific features and resources of clients; to apply prevention methods to prevent possible behavioural disorders; to resolve conflicts, prevent social risks and difficult life circumstances. Teachers (educators) who train social workers more often than once every 5 years should undergo internships and advanced training in social institutions working with various categories of clients. This will allow them to combine the theoretical presentation of the material with examples of real life as well as it will contribute to a better understanding of the discipline by students.

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