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# FORMATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCE OF FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS

## **Abstract**

The article addresses the problem of professional competence of future social workers. It has been proved that formation of psychological competence of future social workers is an important condition for further effective professional activity. The definition of concepts "competence", "professional competence", "psychological competence" has been given. The analysis of the curriculum of higher education graduates of the specialty "Social Work" has been conducted and the training courses that contribute to the formation of the psychological competence of future social workers have been defined.

**Keywords:** higher education student, professional competence, psychological competence, social work, social worker

## Introduction

At present, Ukraine is undergoing a reform of the social services system, social order mechanisms are being developed, and the role of state social services and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of social work in newly formed communities is re-thought. A modern social worker faces new social problems that need to be addressed, and the scope of social work is expanding. Given this, the issue of training of highly skilled social workers who are ready to work in new conditions, respond to new social challenges, provide social services professionally, and know the psychology of other people is urgent.

The profession of social worker refers to the type of "person-person", which involves constant direct interaction and constant communication with a large number of people. Thus it is important for the future social worker to acquire psychological competence in the process of professional training.

**The purpose of the article:** justification of the importance of forming psychological competence of future social workers in the process of studying in higher educational establishments.

To achieve the goal, the method of theoretical analysis of scientific sources, synthesis and data generalization has been applied.

## Research results

The problem of effective professionalization of specialists in the social sphere concerns both social workers themselves and those who trust them and awaits qualified assistance. The notion of “professionalism”, “professional competence” is presented in various aspects: psychological (B. Ananiev, O. Bodalev, V. Davydov, V. Zinchenko, B. Lomov, S. Rubinstein, etc.); socio-psychological (K. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, G. Andrieieva, T. Bazarov, Yu. Zhukov, B. Paryhin, L. Petrovskaya, etc.). The process of professional training of a social worker and the peculiarities of forming a professional competence of a specialist in the system of higher education have been considered in the scientific works of V. Baranyuk, Yu. Berezkina, V. Bocharova, N. Volkova, O. Gomoniuk, I. Zvierieva, I. Ivanova, A. Kapska, O. Karpenko, M. Konyhina, H. Laktionova, N. Maistruk, V. Maslenikova, V. Polischuk, H. Popovych, V. Slastenina, L. Tiupti, M. Cherkasova and others.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the competence approach has become one of the leading areas for the training of future specialists, a strategic orientation of the international community. This is confirmed by the most active participation of international educational organizations in the study of problems of competence-oriented education [Ovcharuk, 2004].

In Ukraine, the process of reforming the system of higher education is also associated with the development and implementation of a competent approach to the system of professional training of specialists. The qualitative indicator of the functioning of the system of higher professional education is the formation of professional competence of a future specialist. The purpose and result of the educational process of higher education is the formation of the competence, which reflects the results of learning, the motivation to a certain type of activity, communication, values, social and moral norms, personal characteristics of a specialist and his/her interaction with the social environment [Tovshchuk, 2013, p. 96].

The proof of this is the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” (2014), in which the ultimate goal of studying in a higher education establishment is the formation of competences – a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills and practical skills, ways of thinking, professional, ideological and social qualities, moral and ethical values, which determine the ability of a person to successfully carry out professional and further training activities [Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, 2014].

The concept of competence is based on the idea of educating a competent person and employee who has not only the knowledge, professionalism, high moral qualities necessary for further professional activity, but also is able to act adequately in appropriate situations, applying this knowledge and assuming responsibility for certain activities [Hutorsky, 2003, p. 38].

Professional competence – is a cumulative, holistic characteristic (quality, property) of the individual that integrates separate partial components (components, competencies) in itself. Professional competence – the desire and ability (willingness) to realize their potential (knowledge, skills, experience, personal qualities) for successful productive activities in the professional field, awareness of social significance and personal responsibility for the results of this activity, the need for its continuous improvement [Dudarov, 2015, p. 28].

The increase of the importance of social education, the quality of training of social workers at the present stage of development of our country is associated with the emergence of a large group of people who need highly skilled social and psychological assistance professionals. According to the Law of Ukraine “On Social Services” of June 19, 2003 (with amendments and changes dated January 26, 2016), which defines the basic organizational and legal framework for the provision of social services to people who are in difficult living conditions and in need of third-party assistance, a social worker can provide certain types of social services. Also, a social worker, having mastered psychological training disciplines, is able to provide psychological services – counseling on mental health issues and improving the relationship with the surrounding social environment, the application of psychodiagnosis, aimed at studying the socio-psychological characteristics of the individual, for the purpose of his/her psychological correction or psychological rehabilitation, providing methodological advice [Law of Ukraine “On Social Services”, 2003, p. 99].

Formation of the personality model of a specialist in social work is realized within the framework of professional training. To achieve professionalism in the practice of social work, we consider professional competence as the main component. The central component of the professional competence of a specialist in social work, from our point of view, is psychological competence. Its role in dealing with clients in crisis situations is particularly important, since crises are characterized by various acute psychological manifestations: reduced confidence, increased conflicts, predominance of negative emotional states, uncertainty, reduced labor motivation, etc [Gitun, 2012; Savchenko, 2015].

In the domestic theory and practice of social work, the idea of the synthesis, both psychological and social, is traced at all levels – in formulating the goals and objectives of social assistance to various groups of clients, in qualification requirements and responsibilities of social workers, in the legal documents on the activities of social services, in state educational standards for training specialists in the social sphere.

The psychological competence of a social worker is a structured system of knowledge of a person as a personality, individual, subject of labor and personality, included in an individual or joint activity. As a system, psychological competence includes several relatively independent but interrelated components. Depending on the amount of use of psychological knowledge, the psychological competence of a social worker consists of two components: socio-psychological and psychosocial competence. Socio-psychological component of psychological competence is the basis for building an effective interaction

of a social service specialist with different groups of clients. The psychosocial component contributes to the implementation of assistance to clients in overcoming the crisis states of their psyche, generated by negative living conditions [Pechenkina, 2013, p. 136].

The researcher L. Romanovska notes that psychological competence involves emotional stability, empathy of a social worker, as well as the ability to effectively interact with others in the system of interpersonal relationships, the ability to navigate social situations, identify personal characteristics and emotional states of other people correctly, demonstrating a high level of emotional intelligence, choose the right ways to interact with clients and colleagues and implement these ways in the process of professional activity [Romanovskaya, 2017, p. 43].

According to the scientists A. Derkach and V. Zazykin, psychological competence is the core component of professional competence. It has been established that psychological competence includes several types of competences, namely (according to M. Ihelnik): social-perceptual, socio-psychological, autopsychological, communicative competence, psychological and pedagogical competence. Thus, the basis of social-perceptual competence lies in such integrative properties and abilities as insight and observation. In the procedural aspect, the perception includes interpersonal evaluation, stereotyping, classification, comparison, analysis, reflection. As a result, the image of another person is formed, there is an understanding of the main determinants of behavior and relationships. The substructure of socio-psychological competence includes knowledge which reflects the changes in group processes and functions under the influence of extreme factors characteristic of crises and the crisis phenomena themselves, the intellectual ability to receive and analyze psychological information, the ability to navigate social situations accurately, allocate their determinants, anticipate their consequences, high level of intellectual abilities, reflection, empathy. Autopsychological competence is crucial for the progressive development of the personality and professional development of a social worker, since the quality of self-examination, adequacy of self-esteem, self-regulation, self-efficacy and other critical properties of a social worker depend on its level. The communicative competence includes: the ability to cooperate, interact; psychological compatibility, as the ability to adapt to different temperaments and characters; possession of multifunctional skills; ability to use different means of communication; the ability to resolve conflicts effectively; sincere respect for the work of others; the ability to establish long-term horizontal and vertical connections, etc. The substructure of psycho-pedagogical competence includes knowledge and ability to stabilize mood and relationships, build trust, confidence, favorable moral and psychological climate [Zakharchenko, 2006, p. 204-208].

An important link of social work is the crisis intervention – psychological assistance (counseling, support, rehabilitation, diagnosis, correction, psychotherapy); provision of information on social protection of the population; assistance in the organization of interaction with other specialists, services; representa-

tion of interests; correction of family relationships; assistance in obtaining free legal aid; the organization of emergency medical care; asylum organization. Thus, counseling — help in analyzing the situation of life, identifying the main problems, ways of their solution, drawing up a plan for the exit from a difficult life situation; psychological counseling; assistance in obtaining legal aid [Law of Ukraine “On Social Services”, 2003, p. 99]. Through social work, psychology helps a person make life meaningful, optimize living space, and develop vital forces. Among various theoretical schools existing in modern psychology, humanistic tendencies are beginning to predominate, based on the belief in a person as the supreme value created on the Earth, in his/her possibilities of self-development, self-improvement, is laid. Currently, paradigms of the theory and practice of social work, which are closely linked to psychological paradigms, are formed. Thus mastering the main categories of social work involves significant psychological competence and preparedness [Tymoshenko, 2014].

Psychological means allow forming people's trust in the system of social work. Social relations are of great importance, in which the psychological components (interests, needs, feelings, settings, ideals, etc.) play a pivotal role. It is also worth noting that psychological methods are actively used in social work. Being psychological in content, they are aimed at solving the problems of socialization, improvement of society [Martynova, 2010, p. 183].

The foregoing shows that for effective work, future social workers need a thorough psychological training, which should be taken into account when approving the curricula of universities that prepare specialists in the specialty “Social Work”. Thus, for example, the curriculum of the educational level “Bachelor” of specialty 231 “Social Work” of the field of knowledge 23 “Social work” of Poltava Institute of Economics and Law of Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine” contains the following psychological disciplines: “Psychology” (120 hours), “Psychology of personality” (150 h.), “Social psychology” (120 h.), “Psychology of health and healthy lifestyle” (120 h.), “Psychology of social work” (180 h.), “Theory and practice of psychological training” (120 hours), “Counseling” (150 hours), “Art therapy in social work” (90 hours), “Pathopsychology” (120 hours), “Penitentiary pedagogy and psychology” (120 hours), “Special pedagogy and special psychology” (120 hours). The curriculum of the educational level “Master” of the specialty 231 “Social Work” of the field of knowledge 23 “Social Work” of Poltava Institute of Economics and Law of Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine” contains the following psychological teaching disciplines: “Pedagogy and Psychology of Higher Education” (150 h.), “Ethnopsychology” (120 hours), “Psychology and technologies of mediation in conflicts” (180 hours), “Psychology and sociology of disability” (120 hours), “Pathopsychology” (120 hours).

The effect of training in the field of psychological subjects is the ability and knowledge of the future social worker, that is: understanding of mental processes and phenomena that govern the behavior of people; differentiation of types and functions of individual differences of people and elements of the structure of a person; understanding disorders and mental illness; use of psychological

knowledge in formulating and solving social problems. As a result of theoretical and practical training, students of the specialty “Social Work” must acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of the profession of a social worker, which will allow: to identify the situations of persons and families who use social assistance correctly, to determine the goals of assistance, to plan forms of assistance and to apply effective in this case, methods and techniques in social work; to monitor the actions taken; design your skills in work; improve the organization of work; to cooperate with specialists effectively; to promote goals of assistance and social work; to counteract professional “burning out” [Zakharchenko, 2006; Savchenko, 2015].

## Conclusions

The psychological support of social work is one of the most important factors for effective solution of the client’s problems. Professional competence – the desire and ability to realize their potential (knowledge, skills, experience, personal qualities) for successful productive activities in the professional field, awareness of social significance and personal responsibility for the results of this activity, the need for its continuous improvement. Professional training in high educational establishments of future specialists in social work should include socio-psychological and psychosocial components that contribute to the formation of psychological competence in higher professional education in the chosen professional field.

Further directions of scientific research are seen in the study and synthesis of foreign experience in shaping the psychological competence of future social workers in the process of studying in higher educational establishments.

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