

SOME ASPECTS OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CANADA

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Introduction. *The modern system of continuing professional education of social workers in Canada is well developed. However, this concept in its new perspective is not fully and universally operationalized yet and it is still in the process of evolution. The social work as a distinct profession is recognized in Ukraine. However, the national educational standards still need to be revised, approved and used more effectively and the concept of continuing professional education should be specified in the ongoing development of educational programs for the profession.*

Purpose. *The purpose of this article is to introduce the Canadian experience in the area of continuing professional education of social workers as one of the best practices that should be explored and adapted in the area of professional education in Ukraine.*

Results. *The majority of scientific works in the area of continuing professional education in the area of social work are found to be those published in English by foreign scholars; at the same time it should be noted that some Ukrainian scholars have proved their academic interest in this concept. The continuing professional education is defined as a process of ongoing education and development of professionals, from the initial qualifying education and for the duration of professional life, and is aimed at maintaining the competence of practice and increasing the professional efficiency and expertise. A commitment to continuing professional education is grounded in an ethical principle articulated in the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics that serves as the foundation of the Standards of Practice. It is focused on the learning through the experience, reflective learning and review and includes both the formal and informal learning. It is often the self-directed process driven by a professional, not by an employer.*

Originality. *The article provides an insight into the definition of the notion of continuing professional education as a part of lifelong learning, which helps to direct career development, uncover gaps in knowledge and skills, and opens up further development needs.*

Conclusions. *Following the above, the conclusion is made that Canadian experience on the continuing professional education helps the social workers to strive for personal and professional growth, enhance knowledge, base and obtain new skills.*

Keywords: *the continuing professional development, the lifelong learning, the social work, an educational system, Canadian Association of Social Workers, Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, Canadian Association for Social Work Education.*

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ДЕЯКІ АСПЕКТИ НЕПЕРЕРВНОЇ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ В КАНАДІ

У статті описано хронологічні аспекти розвитку неперервної професійної освіти в Канаді. Зроблено спробу схарактеризувати канадську систему вищої освіти, зокрема у галузі соціальної роботи. Представлено Канадський досвід неперервної професійної освіти соціальних працівників, який може слугувати прикладом до наслідування в Україні.

Ключові слова: *неперервна професійна підготовка, навчання протягом життя, соціальна робота, освітня система, Канадська асоціація соціальних працівників, Кодекс професійної діяльності соціальних працівників, Канадська освітня асоціація у галузі соціальної роботи.*

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НЕКОТОРЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ НЕПРЕРЫВНОГО ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ РАБОТНИКОВ В КАНАДЕ

В статье описаны хронологические аспекты развития непрерывного профессионального образования в Канаде. Сделана попытка охарактеризовать канадскую систему высшего образования в области социальной работы. Представлено Канадский опыт непрерывного профессионального образования социальных работников, который может служить примером для подражания в Украине.

Ключевые слова: непрерывная профессиональная подготовка, обучение в течении жизни, социальная работа, образовательная система, Канадская ассоциация социальных работников, Кодекс профессиональной деятельности социальных работников, канадская образовательная ассоциация в области социальной работы.

The analysis of recent scientific research and publications. The majority of publications concerning the continuing professional education in the area of Social work are English language sources.

A. Alsop [5], C. Madden, and V. Mitchel [8] and other foreign scholars worked out the definitions of continuing professional education as a process of ongoing development of professionals. It should be mentioned that many scholars in Ukraine, such as N. Nychkalo [3], V. Andrushchenko [4], I. Bekh [1], I. Zyazyun [2] and others made a deep analysis of this problem.

Defining previously unconsidered aspects of the problem. The limited number of publications dedicated to the issues of continuing professional education in the area of social work stimulates the addressing this issue in Ukraine. The available publications are fragmentary and do not reflect the systemic nature of this pedagogic phenomenon.

The purpose of the article is to describe the key features of continuing professional education which have become a defining concept of the professional development in the twenty-first-century in the whole world and particularly, in Canada. The continuing professional education is an important activity aimed at ensuring the quality of professional performance in all professional areas, including the social work.

Presenting the main study material. The idea of lifelong learning is indeed a very old one. Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Confucius, Seneca introduced it as a permanent source of human growth and spiritual perfection.

In the 17th century John Amos Komensky (Comenius), a Czech educational reformer and religious leader, remembered mainly for his innovations in methods of teaching, emphasized the importance of lifelong learning. He had an ambitious dream to reform human society through education.

During recent years, the notion of lifelong learning has attained a new significance and wider acceptance at the conscious and conceptual level. In 1965 this

educational tendency was presented at the UNESCO forum by a prominent theorist P. Lenhrand and caused a considerable theoretical and practical resonance. He emphasized its humanistic essence and put a human being in the center of a whole educational system, which should have created conditions for the development of his/her full potential throughout life.

These ideas were further developed by Ukrainian academician N. Nychkalo. The scholar supported the concept of "the unity of the world" which served as a stimulus for the lifelong learning theory development, according to which all human structural parts of civilization were interconnected and interdependent [3].

The modern concepts of continuing professional education started to evolve in the 1950 – 1960-th as an adult education aimed at compensating for deficiencies of prior training [8]. However, the limitations of this approach were realized. The continuing professional education became a combination of adult education with general education. From 1970-th to 1990-th it was a period when the idea of lifelong learning became a global dimension.

Nowadays the construct of continuing professional education is viewed as a solution to meet the growing demands of the modern world. It is also perceived as a potent instrument to keep up and accelerate all-sided development by the creative participation of individuals in a changing society. Above all, it is viewed as a means of attaining the highest form of self-realization [7, 12].

Alsop defines the continuing professional education as a process of ongoing education and development of professionals, "from initial qualifying education and for the duration of professional life, in order to maintain competence to practice and increase professional efficiency and expertise" [5, 2].

Madden and Mitchel worked out the most popular definition of continuing professional development, which is "the maintenance and enhancement of the knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers according the plan formulated

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with regard to the needs of the professional, the employer, the profession and society” [8]. This definition applies to social work.

It should be noted that the concept of the continuing professional education in its new perspective is not fully and operationalised yet universally and appears to be in the process of evolution. To illustrate this fact lets address the Ukrainian experience in this area. Not so long ago, namely in 1995 the UN Committee expressed concern about the absence of social work programs in the country, including the social work education. The first university degree program was launched at Kyiv Mohyla Academy in the city of Kyiv in 1995, and social work programs are now found in many universities throughout the country.

Bridge mentioned that three university-based programs played a leadership role in the development of social work as a profession in Ukraine [6]. The first program at Kyiv Mohyla Academy was developed through a partnership between universities in England and Portugal, and funded through the European community. This program began with a Master of Social Work (MSW) Program, and developed an undergraduate program several years later. A second program at Uzhhorod was also funded through the European community. The third program, initiated in Lviv in 1999, was funded through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Initially it focused on the development of an undergraduate degree, although it added a one year Specialist program in 2003 and an eighteen month MSW program in 2004 (recently the doctoral program has been set up). A fourth program was developed in the Odesa region with assistance from the University of Regina; however this was not a university-based program.

A significant growth in the recognition of social work has been as a distinct profession in Ukraine since 1995. However, the national educational standards still need to be revised, approved and used more effectively to guide the ongoing development of educational programs for the profession. That is why the concept of continuing professional education in the area of social work is on the agenda and again, Canadian expertise as having already proved their effectiveness, should be examined and adopted as an indicator of sustainability.

In order to realize the logics of continuing professional education in Canada one should understand the general educational system of this country. There is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education in Canada. Within the federal system of shared powers, Canada’s Constitution Act of 1867 provides that in and for each province, the legislature may exclusively

make Laws in relation to Education. In the 13 jurisdictions – 10 provinces and 3 territories, departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels, for technical and vocational education, and for postsecondary education. Some jurisdictions have separate departments or ministries, one having responsibility for elementary-secondary education and another for postsecondary education and skills training. This means that unlike other developed countries, education in Canada is totally decentralized.

While there are many similarities in the provincial and territorial education systems across Canada, there are significant differences in curriculum, assessment and accountability policies among the jurisdictions that express the geography, history, language, culture, and corresponding specialized needs of the populations served.

An education in the area of social work, as a part of general system of education in Canada started with the first schools of social work which were founded in 1914 at the University of Toronto and 1918 at McGill University in Montreal. It was a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization and high levels of immigration in Canada [9]. There was a firm belief that social problems like inadequate housing, poverty, and child protection could be best addressed by people with well-developed social work practice skills and knowledge of applied social science. At that time many social workers were motivated by Christian values, either Protestant or Catholic. However, the grounding of social work education in the social sciences has contributed to the secularization of the profession, which involved people motivated to support those with economic, personal or mental health issues.

The above provides the background of the modern structure of social work education. It makes it easier to understand its particular features. It is worth mentioning that social work education is offered as a generalist degree, meaning that, upon completion, students are prepared to work with client groups in various settings. The undergraduate degree ranges from two to four years of full-time study, and specialization can be achieved through post-graduate study. In Canada, both undergraduate and postgraduate social work degrees can lead to registration with the regulators of the profession, which is a provincial matter.

The Canadian Association for Social Work Education determines the Standards of Accreditation, to which all social work education programs must adhere. In Canada, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education’s Standards of Accreditation states that each school of social work in the country must

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clearly state the academic and professional entrance requirements in admission documentation, including any provisional requirements in keeping with the mission and mandate of the particular school. Membership may be institutional – schools of social work offering a BSW/ BSS or MSW/MSS degree – or individual. All Schools now offering university level degrees in social work are its members.

Community colleges or Colleges of General and Vocational Education in Quebec offer diplomas for social service workers and more specialized diplomas in areas like gerontology or child and youth services.

Universities offer degrees at three levels: the Bachelor of Social Work/Social Services (BSW or BSS), the Master of Social Work/Social Services (MSW or MSS) and the PhD. They may also offer post-degree diplomas in specialized areas like administration or evaluation research.

There are now approximately 50 social work programs across Canada in community colleges or Colleges of General and Vocational Education, and 34 university programs that graduate people with either a BSW, MSW or PhD [10].

Until 1987, there was only one school in English Canada in Toronto and one in French Canada in Laval that offered a doctoral degree in social work. The PhD in social work is now a requirement of most schools of social work in order to prepare graduates to carry out a research. Some programs also teach courses on educational theory, courses design, and teaching methodology.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers, which was founded in 1926, promotes activities aimed at strengthening and unifying the social work profession across Canada. The Canadian Association of Social Workers has developed a Code of Ethics that serves as the foundation to the Standards of Practice developed in each province. They ensure that all the clients are protected from unethical or incompetent services provision.

Belief in the client's right to have knowledgeable and skillful assistance provides the basis for the social worker's participation in continuing professional development. A commitment to continuing professional education is grounded in an ethical principle articulated in the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics: "Social workers respect a client's right to competent social worker services. Social workers analyze the nature of social needs and problems, and encourage innovative, effective strategies and techniques to meet both new and existing needs and, where possible, contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. Social workers have a responsibility to maintain professional proficiency, to continually strive to increase their

professional knowledge and skills, and to apply new knowledge in practice commensurate with their level of professional education, skill and competency, seeking consultation and supervision as appropriate..." [11, 8].

In other words, the continuing professional education is viewed as an essential activity for ensuring quality social work services. It is considered to be a self-directed process, which requires social workers to assume responsibility for the growth of their own professional knowledge base. Regardless of a career stage, social workers are ethically required to keep informed of current research, theory, and techniques that guide social work practice to better serve clients.

Continuing professional education further provides the social worker with the opportunity to acquire new and necessary information; demonstrate a conscious self-directed and continuous effort toward personal and professional development; strengthen qualifications for professional licensure, certification, or registration; meet changing career demands; and explore new careers in social work.

Conclusions. The public and professional concern about the quality of social services provision, their safety and efficiency is growing. The continuing professional development, knowledge translation, client safety and quality improvement have made concerted efforts to address these issues. This is the reason that along with other professionals, the social workers are seen today as the fundamental shift from old model of professional qualification followed by a lifetime of professional practice, to a new model of qualification which is followed by a continuing professional education throughout the practitioner's career. The goal of this educational concept is improving the social services outcomes and client care by improving professional competence and performance.

It is important that social work in Ukraine is adapted to change new situations and their attendant problems. As a result, the continuing professional education has become a requirement for professionals of social work and should be coherent, integrated and progressive.

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“Головною метою освіти є створення людини, здатної робити нове, а не повторювати те, що вже зроблено прийдешніми поколіннями”.

Жан Піаже
швейцарський психолог і філософ

