



DOI: 10.1515/cpp-2016-0034

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### **FORMING OF STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL LEGAL COMPETENCY: FOREIGN EXPERIENCE**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*The article deals with analysis of future social workers' training in the context of forming students' professional legal competency in higher education institutions of European Union (EU), the USA and Ukraine. Based on the study of scientific and reference sources the peculiarities of the educational process in the most popular higher education institutions, particularly, in EU, offering Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Social Work have been defined: in France there is no distinct differentiation between social workers and social pedagogues; these professions successfully combine functions of education and assistance; future social workers are trained in centers and universities that follow instructions of French National Academy for Youth Protection and Juvenile Justice; at German universities social work curricula are based on threefold study load of future specialists: world societies and social development, social problems and human rights violation, international rights in social work; are interdisciplinary and can be realized in cooperation with other European universities; at British universities teachers have great practical experience in social work; student body is cosmopolitan, i.e. a mixture of mature and young students from different ethnic groups and nationalities; curricula also provide for a large volume of practical learning in working conditions corresponding to national requirements; in Spain future specialists are trained for three appropriate segments of labour market, namely, law, social work expert and Master in Social Work (such specializations as social mediation, leisure time activities, professional adaptation).*

**Key words:** social work, social worker, social mediation, law enforcement security, social work expert, social development, gender relations, legal competency.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Social work specialists have special status and knowledge that they use to assess a situation objectively. The basis of social workers' professional knowledge presupposes two functional conceptions: first of all, the very idea of professionalism and, second of all, attitude to human rights. At the same time, social work has certain peculiarities: the nature of problems it deals with does not allow offering simple methods of their effective solution; any flaws are extremely obvious. That is why problems in families and society are considered to be social workers' fault in many countries (Довідник ВНЗ, 2016). In the context of forming democratic legal society legal education is a leading component and cannot be passive as it should be powerful. These are both its main mission and role (Масленникова, 2013; Рижиков, 2010). Taking into account peculiarities and requirements to professional activity of a future social worker (Подберезський, 2003) has enabled us to reveal the content of structural components of his/her legal competency, namely, theoretical one that provides future specialists with legal knowledge promoting successful organization of



professional activity, establishes the basis for forming modern legal thinking, generates acts of legal consciousness, that is a system of attitudes towards moral and legal norms through the prism of studying law as a social phenomenon; practical one that is defined, first of all, by a range of professional abilities and skills that cause functional readiness of future social workers to solve legal tasks; personal one that forms such qualities as professional-and-worldview (interest and activity in professional legal training, etc.), professional-and-behavioural (insistence on adherence to norms and rules, etc.), personal-and-meaningful (humanistic personal trend, appropriate self-evaluation, etc.).

#### **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to define the peculiarities of future social workers' training in the context of forming students' professional legal competency in higher education institutions of European Union (EU), the USA and Ukraine.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

Peculiarities of social workers' professional training have been studied by L. Dunaieva, S. Hryshchenkova, H. Mychailyshyna, L. Tiuptia and others. Problems of legal activity realization in the context of globalization and transformation of national legal systems, Ukraine's integration into international and European legal space, philosophy and methodology of legal activity in higher legal education have been analyzed by T. Maslennikova, V. Ryzhykova and others. V. Hrynova, O. Ivaniy, M. Podberezskyi and others have investigated legal competency of specialists.

In our study we have used such research methods as analysis and generalization of empirical and theoretical statements found in professional and reference literature of different scientific directions (pedagogy, psychology, sociology, law, teaching methodology, social work, etc.) by domestic and foreign scholars.

#### **RESULTS**

In France social activity covers a group of "social career" professions: social service assistant, social and family economy adviser, specialized educator, tutor for children under the age of 6–7, youth social protection specialist, socio-cultural animator. Learning is realized through a principal of alternation of theoretical and practical lessons. Social workers are trained at universities, particularly, in Bordeaux (University of Bordeaux, 2016). University diploma of social career technology presupposes such specializations as social and socio-cultural animation, social security and social education. At universities there are three stages of training that result in obtaining certain state or university diploma of different specialization.

At Hamm University of Logistics and Economy (Hochschule für Logistik und Wirtschaft Hamm) full-time students can obtain a Bachelor's degree in Social Work in three years. Learning is realized in small groups to achieve optimal support for innovative research conception developed in the context of consultations with certain field partners as a perfect opportunity to combine theory and practice of research. Final assessment of the specialty is achieved via prolonged accreditation of previous courses (Hochschule für Logistik und Wirtschaft Hamm, 2016). Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin offers two-year (full time) Master program in Social Work and Human Rights. It should be mentioned that it is realized in cooperation with other European universities (Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, 2016). Heidelberg University offers two-year Research Master program in Social Work (full-time). There students can also obtain Master's degree in Legal and Social Work (full-time – 18–24 months). Main requirement is Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Social Pedagogy or Pedagogy of Childhood, etc. Development of social work in healthcare service (psychosocial consulting and legal support based on



biopsychosocial basic understanding of health disorders, disability and disease) is still a leading social direction (Heidelberg University, 2016).

In Great Britain University of Kent offers Bachelor's degree in Social Work (full-time). Methods of learning include lectures, large and small group discussions on work experience, seminars and pedagogical placement. Students are assessed via written tasks, tests, presentations and video projects. Successful completion of the first theoretical stage provides for positive evaluation of the examining board and allows proceeding to practical component of the second and third stages and after their successful completion – readiness to direct practice. At the university there is a three-year Bachelor's degree in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (full-time). The programme corresponds to requirements of the social provision commission: leaders of services for people with problematic behaviour should be fully qualified. In addition, the university offers a two-year Master's degree in Social Work. Students are to study two modules, write a dissertation in certain field under the supervision of the scientific supervisor that should be presented at the end of the second year of study. Seminars are dedicated to special topics. The number of students in a group, as a rule, is small and tutorials are led by experienced instructors (University of Kent, 2016).

College of the Valleys (Coleg y Cymoedd) offers a preparatory programme for those interested in social provision and work with youth (a one-year full-time study). The aim of the course is to provide favourable and friendly atmosphere so that future students may develop their potential and prepare themselves for university studies (Coleg y Cymoedd, 2016).

University of Salamanca (Universidad Pontificia De Salamanca) in Spain offers a one-year Master's degree in Consulting and Family Mediation (full-time). The programme presupposes two specializations according to methodology, content and practice, specific for each of them. The programmes "Family Consultant" and "Family Mediator" train specialists with individual methods to resolve conflicts and this directs the process of mediation into agreement among family members. Also, there is Master's degree in Prevention of Gender Violence (full-time and part-time). The programme is aimed at developing a new complex model against gender violence based on violence prevention. Students can study online anytime and anywhere. The educational process takes place in a virtual campus developed on modern teaching principles and stipulates for effective collaboration between students, instructors and administrators (Universidad Pontificia De Salamanca, 2016).

Northern Arizona University offers Bachelor's degree in Social work (full-time, part-time, distance modes of study). The programme is accredited by Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and is focused on practice of rural population and native Americans; prevention of poverty, structural racism and depression; provision of a leading role in promoting human rights, economic and social justice; providing vulnerable population groups with services needed (Northern Arizona University, 2016). West Virginia State University offers a Bachelor's degree in Social Work on the college's basis (full-time and part-time). The syllabus comprises 48 hours of necessary courses of social work; 16 hours of the courses being fundamental for researches on social work; 9 hours of researches on special topics connected with social work; 51 hours of general researches on education; 48 hours of field surveys (West Virginia State University, 2016). Liberty University Online offers a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, too. Thus, future specialists will be able to provide consultations on rights of certain persons, family, group, organization and community (Liberty University Online, 2016).

On April, 29, 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine by its Decree No 266 approved the List of fields of study and program subject areas in higher education for Bachelor's and Master's degrees. According to the codes of the list, social work belongs to the field of study No 23 and such specializations as social work and social provision have



numbers 231 and 232 respectively. In Ukraine Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Social Work can be obtained at 60 state and private higher education institutions (Рижиков, 2010).

At the Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National University of Cherkasy the peculiarities of future social workers' training are double degree programmes, less emphasis on legal component in Master programmes, although Bachelor programmes include "The Right to Social Security"; identical qualifications, namely, Bachelor's/Master's degree in Social Work (Рижиков, 2010). Having analyzed primary positions of social pedagogues laid in syllabi and programme specifications we can conclude that at Khmelnytskyi National University much attention is paid to legal component of future social workers' activity that corresponds to international trend in the field of social work (Рижиков, 2010). The programme specification of Social Work at Uzhhorod National University includes subjects approved by European and American universities. However, these subjects are divided into parts and it is recommended to unite them according to the trends in modern higher education, particularly, in the field of social work (Довідник ВНЗ, 2016; Рижиков, 2010). At V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University main attention is paid to social component of future social workers' activity. At the same time students undertake practical placements (the third year of study – introductory practice and the fourth year of study – manufacturing practice) at penitentiary services. It should be mentioned that according to international trends in higher education, in social work, in particular, (Довідник ВНЗ, 2016) only Bachelor's degree in Teacher Education provides graduates with the right to obtain teacher specialization through Master's degree (Рижиков, 2010). Analysis of programme specifications for Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Lviv Polytechnic National University, namely, knowledge (optimization of social processes, their regulation and management), abilities (to perform professional duties based on ethical principles and aimed at promoting social justice, observance of human rights, contribution to social changes, resolving relationship problems, enhancement of people's well-being), skills (to contribute to forming of a network of social services in community) and activity of social work sections (Social Work Program) suggests the presence of legal component in forming professional competency of future social workers. However, main attention is paid to forming of future specialists' social competency (Рижиков, 2010).

#### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study of scientific and reference sources we have defined peculiarities of the educational process in higher education institutions offering Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Social Work in the context of forming students' professional legal competency: in France Master programmes in social work cover such specializations as cultural and social animation; development and realization of cultural projects; social information and communication; music and animation; sanitary and social sciences; social development; social politics of community development; differentiated didactics in working with disabled persons, etc. Training of social workers is realized in the third university cycle that is the most selective and prestigious. It presupposes two types of diploma – Diploma of Profound Studies and State Diploma of Specialist Educator in such specializations as administration of cultural establishments, social psychology and psychology of labour, social activity management, social economy at the enterprise; in Germany Master programmes are based on normative reference to human rights in the view of recognizing significance of global and transnational dimension of social work; in Great Britain preference is given to those applicants collaborating with Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as they develop



their knowledge and skills needed in professional activity; in Spain applicants should be good at social, legal and medical sciences; in the USA accredited degrees in Social Work enable graduates to become certified social workers in many countries; in Ukraine knowledge of legislature is included into the content of all subjects.

Rather perspective we consider further study of peculiarities of future social workers' training in the context of forming students' professional legal competency in higher education institutions of European Union (EU), the USA and Ukraine.

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