

Research on the Restructuring of Social Assistance Social Work Course Content in the Context of the Party Committee's Social Work Department

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of the establishment of the Social Work Department of the Party Committee and the “stratified and classified social assistance” policy, the social assistance social work curriculum has been given new responsibilities and missions. However, traditional social assistance courses face multiple dilemmas, including structural discontinuity with the “stratified and classified” assistance system, disconnection from the concept of developmental social assistance, and field failure. To respond to the new requirements for social work talents put forward by the establishment of the Social Work Department of the Party Committee, the curriculum reconstruction aims to cultivate three core competencies: political literacy and policy transmission ability, resource integration and collaborative service ability, and data empowerment and intelligent assistance ability. The curriculum content of the social assistance social work course is systematically reconstructed, a competency-oriented course module is constructed, a practical teaching system of “government-school collaboration” is created, and a multi-faceted process-based course evaluation system is established. This will effectively enhance students’ comprehensive practical ability to cope with complex assistance tasks in the new governance structure coordinated by the Social Work Department of the Party Committee.*

Keywords: Party Committee Social Work Department, Social Assistance and Social Work, Course Content, Reconstruction.

1. Introduction

In the journey of the new era, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee clearly stated that the overall goal of comprehensively deepening reform is to continuously improve and develop the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and strive to promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. This strategic deployment not only draws a grand blueprint for the future development of our country, but also points out the direction for the innovation and upgrading of the social governance system. Against this background, the release of the 2023 “Party and State Institutional Reform Plan”, especially the establishment of the Central Social Work Department and social work departments of party committees at all levels, has undoubtedly injected new vitality into social governance and further highlighted the core position of party building in promoting the modernization of grassroots governance. As the basic link of national governance, grassroots governance must adhere to being close to the people and serving the people’s livelihood, promote the downward shift of the focus of resources, services and management, and build a new pattern of grassroots governance with overall coordination and efficient operation [1]. The Social Work Department of the Party Committee is the hub design of this process. Its core function is to coordinate the governance forces that were scattered in multiple departments in the past, realize the transition from “dispersion” to “integration”, and strengthen the systematicness and precision of social assistance and other basic livelihood work. At the same time, the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed “improving the stratified and classified social assistance system,” calling for further strengthening the basic guarantee function of social assistance. The functional attributes of the Party Committee’s Social Work Department are highly consistent with the goals of social assistance and social work. Against this dual backdrop, social assistance and social work

have been given new responsibilities and missions. Therefore, the reconstruction of course content not only responds to the practical needs of the times, but also becomes an important path to promote the high-quality development of social work education and achieve connotation-oriented development.

2. The Multi-dimensional Dilemma of Traditional Social Assistance Courses

Social assistance policy is an important “safety net” to ensure social stability. Since the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 1978, China’s social assistance system has been continuously developed and improved. From the establishment of the minimum living security system for urban residents in 1997, the promotion of the minimum living security system for rural residents in 2004, to the implementation of special assistance policies such as education, medical care, and housing in 2008, and the improvement of the temporary assistance system in 2014 [2]. Social assistance involves subsistence allowances, extremely poor families, families on the edge of subsistence allowances, families with rigid expenditure difficulties, as well as special assistance and relatively independent temporary assistance and disaster assistance. The traditional social assistance curriculum system has long been rooted in a static and classified policy interpretation paradigm, and its teaching content is highly focused on the explanation of the system clauses item by item. This “policy compilation” teaching orientation has led to cumbersome course theories and slow knowledge updates, making it difficult to effectively respond to the current “stratified and classified” precise assistance strategy. At the same time, course teaching is deeply constrained by path dependence, which is manifested in the fact that the teacher group has a weak perception of cutting-edge concepts such as developmental assistance and empowerment intervention, and the teaching method is also limited to one-way theoretical indoctrination, lacking the

shaping of students' integrated practical capabilities. Therefore, the multidimensional dilemma of traditional social assistance courses is mainly reflected in the following two specific aspects.

2.1 Structural Fault: the Mismatch Between Curriculum Content and the “tiered and classified” Assistance System

The report of the 20th CPC National Congress emphasized “improving the social assistance system with stratification and classification”, and the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee once again emphasized “improving the social assistance system”, which shows the scientific attitude and responsibility of the CPC Central Committee in safeguarding and improving people's livelihood. The so-called stratification and classification is to distinguish different assistance objects, give them different content, different methods and different levels of assistance benefits, and realize comprehensive, stratified, classified, comprehensive and efficient assistance work [3]. However, the existing social assistance courses are still at the superficial level of “policy classification explanation” in terms of content design and teaching methods, forming a structural dislocation with the above-mentioned national strategy. Although the teaching can enable students to recognize the policy provisions of different assistance projects, they generally lack the ability to accurately identify the disadvantaged groups, assess their needs and match them with services. This “knowing what it is, but not why it is” teaching model makes it difficult for students to effectively transform from policy texts to practical services in actual work, and cannot support the precise and humane governance goals required by the stratification and classification system.

The core function of higher education is to cultivate specialized talent capable of addressing real-world challenges. However, the adaptability gap between the current social assistance curriculum and national policy guidelines of the new era reveals that the talent training model is insufficiently responsive to the demands of modern governance. This lag directly impacts the competency structure of graduates, making it difficult for them to fully meet the multifaceted skills required by Party committee social work departments for roles such as resource coordination, refined policy implementation, and service system integration.

2.2 Conceptual Lag: the Tension Between Course Content and the Modern Governance Concept of the Party Committee Social Work Department

Traditional social assistance aims to meet the material needs of recipients, which can easily lead to “welfare dependency” and foster a passive mindset. With the establishment of the Party Committee's Social Work Department, the social governance landscape has undergone a systematic transformation. The development-oriented social assistance system it oversees marks a historic shift in the concept of assistance, from survival-focused support to development - focused empowerment. The core goal of the new system is to transcend the limitations of traditional assistance through comprehensive interventions such as capacity building, social integration, and human resource development, promoting a fundamental shift from “external transfusions” to

“self-sustaining self-sustaining” for recipients. This will stimulate endogenous motivation at the individual level and strengthen the human resources foundation for common prosperity at the national level.

The internal logic of traditional social assistance courses remains deeply rooted in the traditional assistance paradigm. The mechanical categorization and one-sided interpretation of policy provisions in teaching implicitly imparts a cognitive framework to students centered around “survival,” creating a profound tension with the “empowering development” governance philosophy advocated by the Party Committee's Social Work Department. More crucially, teachers are slow to respond to the theoretical and practical advances in development-oriented social assistance, resulting in students' understanding of assistance work being confined to a narrow focus on material benefits, making it difficult to develop systematic and strategic thinking adapted to the requirements of modern governance.

2.3 Field Failure: The Disconnection Between Teaching Practice and the “Party Building-led” Governance Field

Social assistance social work involves social workers using professional methods to help recipients identify the content and corresponding service levels of their needs, thereby enhancing their capabilities and improving their circumstances. Achieving this goal relies heavily on the professional practical ability to integrate diverse resources and build collaborative networks within real-world governance scenarios. Therefore, practical teaching is not only an essential component of the curriculum but also a core mechanism for implementing the principle of “stratification and classification” and the concept of developmental assistance.

However, the practical component of the existing curriculum suffers from significant flaws, creating a structural disconnect from the Party-building-led governance landscape constructed by the Party Committee's Social Work Department. Current teaching still overly relies on one-way classroom lectures, failing to establish a practical teaching system aligned with modern governance. The fundamental dilemma lies in the fact that students are unable to engage in practical training within real-world rescue scenarios coordinated by the Party Committee's Social Work Department and operated by multiple departments. This prevents them from developing the necessary collaborative governance thinking and cross-departmental operational capabilities. This disconnect between the teaching landscape and the real-world governance landscape directly creates a “last mile” obstacle in talent development, making it difficult for graduates to quickly adapt to the holistic governance model guided by Party building, thereby weakening the effectiveness of professional education in responding to the demands of modern social governance.

3. Reshaping the Core Competencies of the Curriculum under the Background of the Party Committee and Social Work Department

Traditional social assistance courses face multi-dimensional dilemmas. Against the backdrop of the establishment of the Social Work Department of the Party Committee, social assistance and social work courses urgently need to cultivate students with three core competencies in order to meet the needs of modern social governance.

3.1 Political Literacy and Policy Transmission Capabilities

Since the 2014 “Interim Measures for Social Assistance” established its institutional status as an administrative regulation, the integration of social assistance and social work has progressed from theoretical exploration to practical application. This curriculum encompasses both professional social work theories and intervention methods, as well as tiered and categorized assistance policies. Its inherent requirement is to cultivate students’ professional abilities to accurately understand, interpret, and apply complex policy texts.

Against the backdrop of the Party Committee’s Social Work Department’s coordinated efforts to modernize the governance system, this policy competence has taken on new meaning. It’s no longer limited to a simple recitation of policy provisions; rather, it must be transformed into a comprehensive “political-professional” competency capable of bridging Party and government discourse with public needs and translating institutional goals into concrete service solutions. Through systematic training, students should be able to accurately identify the structural causes and individual needs of different disadvantaged groups and effectively communicate policy intent with public welfare in practical scenarios, thereby strengthening the institutional defenses for livelihood security at the service end.

3.2 Resource Integration and Collaborative Service Capabilities

The social governance landscape has shifted, with social assistance shifting from a survival-oriented approach to a development-oriented one, expanding from solely material assistance to encompass multiple dimensions such as daily care, psychological support, capacity building, and social integration. The establishment of the Party Committee’s Social Work Department also aims to build a unified and coordinated Party social work system, achieving comprehensive and effective organizational and service coverage. This institutional arrangement breaks down traditional administrative barriers that fragmented the system and promotes a new “holistic governance” framework characterized by cross-departmental collaboration. Against this dual backdrop, the core competency required of social workers is the ability to rapidly connect with diverse resources, including civil affairs, human resources and social security, education, and health, based on the complex needs of their clients. This ability to effectively coordinate government departments, community organizations, and social forces is crucial for providing targeted, systematic, and integrated professional services to those in need. This collaborative service capability has become an essential professional quality for social assistance professionals in the new era.

3.3 Data Empowerment and Smart Rescue Capabilities

Traditional social assistance mainly relies on offline methods such as manual investigation and neighborhood visits to identify service recipients. However, disadvantaged groups often find it difficult to speak out due to “poverty shame” or information barriers, resulting in some cases that really need help being missed, and there are blind spots in assistance coverage. With the advent of the artificial intelligence era, emerging technologies represented by AI large models have great advantages in empowering social assistance [4]. Through AI models, a social assistance information network with wide coverage can be established to achieve dynamic monitoring and intelligent identification, effectively support the implementation of a tiered and classified assistance mechanism, and promote the transformation of social assistance from “people looking for policies” to “policies looking for people”. Therefore, in the teaching of social assistance courses, students’ data literacy and smart assistance concepts should be further cultivated on the basis of traditional policy transmission and service coordination capabilities. Students should be guided to understand how technology empowers assistance practices, master basic data collection and analysis tools, and have the professional ability to use scientific and technological means to optimize service processes and improve assistance accuracy, so as to adapt to the new requirements of modern social governance for social workers.

4. Reconstructing Course Content Under the Background of the Party Committee Social Work Department

The purpose of higher education is to cultivate talents that adapt to the needs of social development. The transformation of modern social governance has put forward new requirements for the training of social assistance and social work talents. To promote high-quality talent development, social assistance and social work courses need to restructure their content to align with core competencies. This is necessary to respond to the requirements of social change for talent training and cultivate a high-quality social assistance and social work team.

4.1 Building Competency-oriented Course Modules

In response to the new requirements for social work talents put forward by the establishment of the Social Work Department of the Party Committee, the curriculum reconstruction should target the three core competencies of political literacy and policy transmission ability, resource integration and collaborative service ability, and data empowerment and smart rescue ability. It should break through the traditional chapter system divided by policy categories and establish a modular curriculum structure of the trinity of “concept-method-technology”.

Module 1, “Party Building Leadership and Modernization of Social Assistance Governance,” aims to systematically analyze the institutional positioning and functional role of the Party Committee’s Social Work Department within the grassroots governance system, focusing on its organizational

structure, operating mechanism, and resource coordination approach. By analyzing the inherent connection between the concept of development-oriented social assistance and the goal of common prosperity, students will be guided to develop a macro-policy perspective and master practical strategies for integrating the Party's mass work methods into professional services. Teaching can incorporate a "frontline expert in the classroom" mechanism, inviting heads of social work departments or community Party organization secretaries to provide in-depth analysis of the practical operation of Party building leadership in the allocation of assistance resources and service integration, strengthening students' understanding of the governance field.

Module 2: Evaluation of stratified and classified assistance. Stratified and classified assistance is an important idea for improving China's social assistance system. However, in the current assistance process, the assistance targets are targeted at the difficult situations, the allocation efficiency of assistance resources is low, and resources are wasted. This module focuses on the training of precise assessment methods and graded intervention strategies. Therefore, Nanjing Qixia District, Shanghai Changning District and Hangzhou City, which have the latest dynamics and the best reform practice experience, are selected as cases for the construction of a stratified and classified social assistance system. The Civil Affairs Bureau of Qixia District, Nanjing City carried out the "Grouping and Grading" to promote service-oriented assistance"; the Civil Affairs Bureau of Hangzhou City carried out the "Innovative creation of low-income population dynamic monitoring and assistance" application to solve the problem of precise assistance for potential people in need"; the Civil Affairs Bureau of Changning District, Shanghai City carried out the "Establishing a comprehensive assistance system for people in need and promoting high-quality development of social assistance" [5]. By comparing and analyzing the implementation paths and applicable situations of different models, students are trained to design personalized service plans based on the different needs of assistance targets.

Module 3, Social Assistance Data Literacy and Smart Assistance, focuses on enhancing students' data-driven thinking and understanding of smart assistance. During the course, tools are used to analyze assistance data, helping students identify potential trends and strengthening their understanding of data collection and analysis. Using the smart assistance model in Changzhou, Jiangsu Province as an example, students are taught the importance of smart assistance in identifying recipients, dynamic detection, early warning mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The module guides students to consider how technology can optimize traditional assistance processes and improve the accuracy and timeliness of services.

4.2 Create a Practical Teaching System of "government-school collaboration"

Traditional social assistance courses face challenges with contextual failure and a disconnect between teaching practice and actual governance. Extending the classroom to real-world governance scenarios plays a crucial role in cultivating social assistance talent. Therefore, we can collaborate closely with

the Department of Social Work to build a teaching case library, adapting typical and complex social assistance case studies into pedagogical models to form a course case library for classroom discussions and practical training simulations. Furthermore, we can establish teaching practice bases with the Department of Social Work and the neighborhood (township) Party and Mass Service Center, implementing a "dual mentor system" to engage students in visiting families in need, connecting resources, and other comprehensive services through practical courses. We will foster a practical teaching system that fosters collaboration between government and schools, reinforcing theory through practice and nurturing students' abilities through the process of refining theory through practice.

4.3 Establish a Multi-process Curriculum Evaluation System

As a practical course integrating theory and practice, social assistance and social work must evolve beyond the limitations of traditional single-paper assessments and establish a multifaceted evaluation model that permeates the entire teaching process and focuses on the development of core competencies. Course evaluation content should closely align with key aspects of professional practice, focusing on comprehensive assessment of students' performance in areas such as assessing the needs of vulnerable groups, designing personalized service plans, connecting with diverse resources, and collaborative teamwork. Specifically, through diverse methods such as case analysis reports, assistance project design proposals, performance in simulated coordination meetings, and field internship assessments, students' growth trajectory across the dimensions of "knowledge comprehension, skill application, and value internalization" can be dynamically monitored and professionally feedback provided. This competency-focused evaluation system not only comprehensively and objectively assesses students' professional development process but also, through continuous process feedback, guides students to proactively build their professional knowledge, effectively enhancing their future practical skills to handle complex assistance tasks within the governance context coordinated by the Party Committee's Social Work Department.

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