

# Reform of Social Work Internship under the Context of the New Setting of Society Work Department

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**Abstract:** *The society work department provides new opportunities and injects fresh developmental momentum into the development of social work in China. Its core functions, such as coordinating social governance and advancing people's livelihood services, pose new requirements for social work professional education, particularly for the social work internship. While, the social work internship had a disconnect between internship content and governance needs, imperfect collaborative mechanisms, and a singular evaluation system. Based on the functional orientation of the society work department, the study explores pathways for social work internship reform from five aspects such as internship content, collaborative mechanisms, evaluation methods, professional cognition, and safeguards, aiming to cultivate high-quality social work talents that meet the needs of national governance.*

**Keywords:** The society work department, Social work internship, Professional cultivation, Reform pathways.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the state has accelerated the promotion of the modernization and specialization of social governance. The establishment of the Party Committee Society Work Department constitutes a key measure for innovating the grassroots governance system and strengthening people's livelihood services, while also building a higher practical platform for the social work. The core function of the Society Work Department requires social workers to possess capabilities in micro-level casework and group work, meso-level community service, as well as macro-level policy advocacy and grassroots governance abilities. The internship is a crucial link for social work students to transform social work theory into social service capabilities and internalize social work professional values, ethics, and skills. The quality of students' internship directly affects the alignment between the supply of social workers and the demands of social governance. Traditional social work internships mostly rely on social work agencies and social welfare institutions, with limited involvement in practices such as grassroots governance and public petitions, creating a significant gap with the demands of the Society Work Department. The establishment of the Society Work Department disrupted the original governance structure, providing a new breakthrough for resolving internship challenges. Therefore, the social work internship is highly significant for enhancing the practical abilities of social work students and cultivating social workers who meet the needs of national governance (Chen & Xiao, 2024). In this context, there is an urgent need for higher education institutions' social work education to reform the social work internship to deeply align with the functions of the Society Work Department.

## 2. The Society Work Department Empowers the Social Work Internship

### 2.1 Expanding the Practice Field

The Society Work Department coordinates multiple functions including social governance, livelihood security, and dispute

mediation, covering various practical fields such as community governance, public petitions, grassroots party building, and volunteer services, which breaks through the limitations of traditional social work internship fields. Social work students can engage deeply in front-line positions such as sub-district communities, comprehensive governance centers, and social organization incubation platforms, participating in practical work like policy implementation, resource linkage, and inter-departmental collaboration. Through participating in social governance, they can understand the diversity of social work roles and enhance their ability to address complex social problems.

### 2.2 Coordinating Resources

As a coordinating body, the Party Committee Social Work Department can integrate resources from government departments, enterprises, public institutions, social organizations, and other parties, providing diverse resources for the social work internship. On one hand, it can facilitate the joint establishment of social work internship bases and provide core resources such as social service projects. On the other hand, it can help coordinate and resolve issues related to venues, funding, etc. in the internship, creating favorable conditions for social work students to conduct their internship and addressing the pain points of singular and scarce internship resources in universities.

### 2.3 Clarifying the Cultivation Orientation

The Society Work Department focuses on the national social governance needs, expanding the role of social workers in grassroots governance and people's livelihood services, thus pointing out the practical direction for the social work internship. Social work internship reform can closely align with the work priorities of the Society Work Department, setting internship content around issues concerning the urgent and difficult concerns of the masses, strengthening social work students' political literacy, public consciousness, and sense of responsibility. This aims to cultivate composite social work students who are proficient in professional social work practice and also align with governance needs, achieving precise alignment between talent cultivation and

government demands.

### 3. Problems Existing in the Social Work Internship

#### 3.1 Disconnect Between Internship Content and Governance Needs

Social work internships often focus on micro-level social work methods such as casework, group work, and community activities, with less involvement in policy advocacy, resource integration, and inter-departmental collaboration within grassroots governance. This results in insufficient connection with the social governance coordinated and advanced by the Society Work Department. It is hard for social work students to understand the role of social work in national governance, and their ability to handle complex governance scenarios is weak, leading to a misalignment between internship outcomes and governance needs.

#### 3.2 Imperfect Government-University Collaborative Mechanism

Government-university cooperation is often short-term or one-off, lacking a long-term collaborative mechanism with the Society Work Department as the hub. There is a lack of deep communication between universities and internship units, leading to discrepancies between the internship plan and the actual work of the internship unit. Supervisors in internship units are often administrative staff with insufficient professional expertise, making it difficult to provide professional internship supervision. Universities lack dynamic supervision of the internship process, making it hard to guarantee internship quality (Ye, 2021).

#### 3.3 Singular Evaluation System

internship evaluation primarily relies on quantitative indicators such as weekly journals, internship reports, and attendance, neglecting the assessment of qualitative indicators like students' application of professional skills, problem-solving abilities, and professional ethics. It is difficult to fully reflect students' performance in real practice or accurately assess the alignment effect of the internship with governance needs.

#### 3.4 Students' Deviated Professional Cognition

Some social work students' understanding of social work is confined to the traditional field of welfare services, with insufficient awareness of the important role of social work in social governance after the establishment of the Society Work Department, leading to weak professional identity. During the internship, they lack the initiative to align with governance needs and have low participation enthusiasm, affecting the internship quality and career development planning.

### 4. Pathways for Social Work Internship Reform Under the Context of the Newly Setting of Society Work Department

#### 4.1 Adding Internship Content to Align with Governance

#### Needs

The universities should optimize internship design to cultivate social work students who understand the functions of the Society Work Department, social policies, and mass work methods, and can integrate professional social work methods to participate in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and disputes, and grassroots governance. Guided by the functions of the Society Work Department. Meanwhile, the universities organize social work students for rotational internships in the Society Work Department, public petition halls, communities, etc., to cultivate their understanding of the logic and working methods of national governance. Further more, the universities arranged social work students for internships in Party-Mass Service Centers, assisting in tasks such as publicity of livelihood policies and resident deliberation and consultation, to strengthen policy understanding and application abilities. Next, the universities retain the traditional professional methods training module, innovating casework and group work methods in line with governance needs to achieve the integration of traditional skills and modern governance demands. Simultaneously, the universities set up special internship projects focusing on key areas promoted by the Society Work Department, such as party building, public petitions, volunteer services, and services for new employment groups, to enhance social work students' social governance capabilities (The Society Work Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee & The Ministry of education of China, 2025).

#### 4.2 Building Government-University-Society Collaborative Mechanisms to Strengthen Resource Integration

There is an urgent need to establish a collaborative education mechanism with the Society Work Department, and clarify the division of responsibilities among universities, the Society Work Department, and internship units (Ji & Shen, 2024). The Society Work Department coordinates resources, establishes long-term professional internship bases, and formulates social work internship standards and norms. Universities revise internship plans based on governance needs, arrange for professional teachers to participate in internship supervision, and carry out teaching and research cooperation. Internship units provide internship positions, ensure internship fees, assign supervisors, and implement internship content. Establish regular communication mechanisms, such as regular seminars and online meetings, to promptly communicate issues arising during the internship, achieving resource sharing and shared responsibility (Yang, 2025).

#### 4.3 Optimizing Internship Evaluation Methods to Highlight Governance Orientation

Construct a diversified internship evaluation method that combines both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Quantitative indicators cover basic content such as internship duration and completion rate of internship tasks. Qualitative indicators focus on assessing the application of professional skills, the effectiveness of complex problem-solving, professional ethics and values, etc. The universities evaluate internship outcomes multi-directionally through students' internship case reports, client satisfaction, etc. Simultaneously,

the universities add the evaluation subjects, forming a tripartite evaluation mechanism involving university teachers, internship unit supervisors, and clients. The social work teachers focus on the assessment of professional theory, values, and abilities, the internship unit supervisors focus on the assessment of social service capabilities, and the client feedback provides service satisfaction. The universities combine process evaluation and outcome evaluation to objectively and comprehensively assess social work students' internship achievements.

#### 4.4 Enhancing Professional Cognition and Improving Job Fit

Integrate the core functions of the Party Committee Social Work Department and the development of the social work industry into curriculum teaching. Invite staff from the Party Committee Social Work Department and frontline senior social workers to conduct special lectures, interpreting policy directions and industry development trends, and correcting deviations in professional cognition. Before the internship, conduct joint pre-service training by the university, the Party Committee Social Work Department, and the internship unit to clarify the connection points between internship objectives and governance needs. During the internship, regularly organize professional sharing sessions to guide students in summarizing practical experience gained during the internship. After the internship, provide career planning guidance, clarifying development directions based on internship performance, and strengthening professional identity.

#### 4.5 Improving the Internship Safeguard System to Consolidate the Reform Foundation

Universities should increase investment in internship funds for internship base construction, supervisor training, etc., to ensure the smooth conduct of the internship. Jointly formulate supervisor training plans with the Party Committee Social Work Department to enhance the professional of internship unit supervisors. Build a internship management and communication platform to achieve real-time supervision of the internship process, resource sharing, and communication exchange, improving communication efficiency. Simultaneously, establish internship incentive mechanisms where the Party Committee Social Work Department and universities commend outstanding students, supervisors, and internship units to stimulate participation enthusiasm.

### 5. Conclusion

The establishment of the Society Work Department brings new opportunities for the development of the social work. Social work internship reform is a key measure to adapt to the national governance needs of the new era and enhance the quality of cultivation for optimize internship design to cultivate social work students who understand the functions of the Party Committee Social Work Department, social policies, and mass work methods, and can integrate professional social work methods to participate in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and disputes, and grassroots governance. The universities need to base their efforts on the core function of the Society Work Department and, address the current

problems in the internship, and advance social work internship reform from five aspects such as internship content, collaborative mechanisms, evaluation methods, professional cognition, and the safeguard system, to align the social work internship with grassroots governance needs. Promote the connotative development of the social work major in universities, continuously optimize the internship reform plan, and enhance the effectiveness of the reform. Through reform, cultivate more social workers possessing professional social work abilities and social governance capabilities, providing strong support for improving the grassroots governance system and advancing the modernization of people's livelihood services.

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