

PROBLEMS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FIELD INSTRUCTION PROGRAM AMONG SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN HANOI, VIETNAM

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Abstract. Social work students are coping with challenges in the community development field instruction (CDFI) program. Therefore, this study aims to find out problems in CDFI program among social work students in Hanoi, Vietnam. The total number of quantitative study participants was 30, and eight (8) social work students participated in in-depth interviews. Our results showed that problems in the CDFI program include personal, community, and supervision problems. These problems posed a challenge to social work students. We had suggestions to stakeholders to improve CDFI program.

Keywords: Problems, community development field instruction program, social work students, Hanoi, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

The profession of social work as a humanistic profession works for total human development. Having grown out of the humanitarian impulses to help people in need, its philosophy lies on the belief that all men possess worth and dignity, and this belief dictates how to help must be tendered [1]. Historically, social work, like many other voluntary efforts on behalf of one's neighbor, sprang from religious motives. Its earliest form of help was the giving of alms or charity. Today, beyond doubt this practice has dramatically changed. True to its commitment, it has evolved its role from humanitarian to developmental. Social work performs developmental tasks aimed at improving the living conditions of men. The modern social worker gives help by enabling man to deliberately and wisely utilize his own potentials and capacities to the fullest for his own welfare [2]. This is the challenge schools offering social work must face in this decade and the next century. Responding to this challenge would mean the development of an educational system that provides the groundwork for effective practice necessary for professional performance as a social worker.

The field instruction program plays a pivotal role in student education [3]. In the field

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instruction experience, students utilize classroom theories and knowledge, test out skills toward developing professional competence and identity, and begin their commitment to serve clients, communities, neighborhoods, and organizations - learning while serving. Field instruction includes skill-building, upholding standards of ethics and practice excellence, and developing competent practice. The overall objective of field instruction is to produce a professionally reflective, self-evaluating, knowledgeable, and developing social worker [4].

The University of Labor and Social Affairs (ULSA), established in 1961 by Ministry Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), is one of the top social work schools in Vietnam. ULSA began providing professional social work education in 1997. The ULSA-BA Program aims to prepare the student for direct practice in social work. After graduation, social work students are expected to have mastered the professional knowledge system and practice social work skills that support individuals, groups, and disadvantaged communities in society. They are likewise expected to have acquired political qualification, professional ethics, and health, etc. The ULSA-BA Program enables students to become professional social workers for the society [5].

As a requirement of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) [6], ULSA offers field instruction program for students, including Field Instruction I (Working with Casework and Family), Field Instruction II (Working with Groupwork) and Field Instruction III (Working with Community Development). To help students gain community development experiences, ULSA has cooperated with Actionaid Viet Nam (AAV) for a project called, "Investment with Young Generation in Community Development". The cooperation aims to bring students to poor communities, particularly Hoa Binh, Lai Chau, Cao Bang, Ha Giang, Ha Tinh provinces, where ethnic minorities reside [7]. Under the community development field instruction (CDFI) program, students have the opportunity to gain experience. However, the CDFI program has limitations that pose a challenge to social work students.

To our knowledge, there are several studies on social work education in Vietnam [8-10]. However, studies on field instruction, especially the community development field instruction (CDFI) program, remain unexplored. Therefore, in this study, we aim to find out problems in the CDFI program among social work students in Hanoi, Vietnam, and are not well reported in previous studies. We believe that our study could add more literature about social work education, especially the field instruction program.

2. Content

2.1. Methods

Study Design

The cross-sectional study design was chosen; the study used quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the problems in the CDFI program, posing challenges to social work students.

Participants of the study

We selected all social work students who participated in the CDFI program. For quantitative method, 30 respondents were purposively-selected based on the following criteria:

- They are in their final year of studies for their regular training in ULSA, Ha Noi.
 - They have taken the CDFI program for the school year 2010-2011.
 - They have joined the project, entitled “Investment with the young generation in community development” between the ULSA, Ha Noi, and AAV, which is being implemented in seven hamlets of five provinces such as Hoa Binh, Lai Chau, Cao Bang, Ha Giang, and Ha Tinh.
 - They are willing to share information as they experienced it.
- Among 30 social work students, we invited eight (8) social work students to participate in in-depth interviews.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed with three parts. Part one contains the respondents' nominal data like age, gender, civil status, number of months spent as a volunteer in an agency before the CDFI program, and area of placement of the CDFI program. Part two contains questions related to problems in the CDFI program that pose challenges to social work students. Part three is some qualitative questions focusing on some recommendations to enhance the CDFI program. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with a brief and concise introduction about the study to collect the data. After disseminating the questionnaire, an appointment was set with each of the respondents to fill up the questionnaire.

Interview

In this study, qualitative questions were asked to clarify matters that would supplement and complete the questionnaire.

Documentary sources

Aside from the techniques mentioned above, the researchers would like to use secondary data that comprises meeting minutes, newsletters, computer files, reports, diary, etc. of respondents, ULSA, Ha Noi, and AAV. These materials would be used with the permission of respondents, ULSA, Ha Noi, and AAV.

Data Gathering Procedures

As soon as the questionnaires were finalized, corrected, and grounded or tested in the field, the researcher talked with the Section Head of the Social Work in ULSA, Ha Noi for permission to be provided the needed information about the CDFI program and social work students. Next, he contacted those who have supervised the students in the project, “Investment with the young generation in community development”, which is a cooperation between ULSA, Ha Noi, and AAV for the school year 2010-2011. As soon as a meeting was set, he shared the purpose/objective of conducting the study and informed them that he was searching for qualified respondents who meet the criteria for the study. Then he contacted the social work students based on his familiarity with them since the accuracy of the data was not laid down, after which he explained clearly the purpose of meeting with them. He then asked them to fill in the questionnaire in his presence. The clarity of the purpose is very important in order to get the exact data from them. As he explained the purpose, he told them that he would contact again if there were a need for further clarification. After filling in the questionnaire, an interview was

conducted to get response for the qualitative aspect and some clarification for unclear answer to the questionnaire.

Statistical treatment of data

The researcher gathered all the data from questionnaires and interviews. Then, these were categorized by grouping the subjects under study according to the objectives or purposes of the study. Next, the data were coded and tabulated by arranging them in a systematic order with frequency distribution and other characteristics to make the analysis easier. The tabulated data were presented in tables and matrices. This provided a very clear picture of the data, which made it easy to interpret. The data regarding the respondents were tabulated separately. Significant themes of each category were drawn from the data.

The qualitative aspects were used to analyze the data and narration and even interpret and strengthen the analysis and interpretations.

This study utilized frequencies, percentage distributions, and tabular presentations using the Statistical Package for Social Science 15.0 (SPSS).

2.2. Results and discussion

2.2.1. Profile of the social work student-participants

The social work students' profile includes age, gender, civil status, number of months spent as a volunteer in agencies before the CDFI program, and area of placement in the CDFI program.

Table 1. Distribution of Social Work Students by Age, Gender and Civil Status

Variable	Category	F	%
Age	18-19	1	3%
	20-21	10	34%
	22-23	18	60%
	24-25	1	3%
	26 & above	0	0%
	Total	30	100%
Gender	Male	4	13%
	Female	26	87%
	Total	30	100%
Civil Status	Single	30	100%
	Married	0	0%
	Separated	0	0%
	Divorced	0	0%
	Widow	0	0%
	Total	30	100%

Age. Table 1 shows that the age of social work students ranged from 18 to 25 years, with age 22-23 having the most number. At this age range, students have good health, a brilliant mind, and right thinking. The age range from 18 to 25 years is a landmark of social work students, an age range whereby they start their career.

Table 1 also indicates that most of the participants in this study belonged to age 22-23 years (60%), followed by those belonging to age ranging from 20-21 (34%), then by age ranging from 18-19 (3%), and lastly by age ranging from 24-25 (3%) at the time of the study. Such an age range suits Viet Nam's requirement for students to finish a degree. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) requires students to undergo four levels of learning: (1) Elementary School, 6-11 years old (2) Lower Secondary School, 11-15 years old; (3) Upper Secondary School, 15-18 years old; and, (4) College, 18-22 years old [11, 12]. In this study, the most number of student-respondents were under the 22-23-year-old bracket. This means that most social work students take the CDFI program when they reach their fourth year, which is their final year and they are about to earn their bachelor's degree. Students are required to complete all social work subjects before they take field instruction, a very important matter in the social work education program. This is suitable for the requirement of the Ministry of Education [[6]]. Furthermore, social work students find it easier to integrate knowledge with reality, understand social work, and gain experiences from agency placement if they are provided adequate social work knowledge and skills in the classroom. As a result, they perform well and eventually grow professionally.

Gender. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in terms of gender. There were more females, 26 or 87%, than male, 4 or 13%. The data reflects that most of the social work students participating in the CDFI program were female. In Vietnam, most males prefer studying natural sciences and engineering than studying social sciences or nursing. Moreover, Social work is a new profession in Vietnam [[13, 14]]. It is not easy to apply for a stable job and earn more money as a social worker after graduation. In the CDFI program, females work very hard; however, they know how to communicate with people in the community. They face challenges/problems in the community, such as how to relate to the youth, health, security, and the like.

Civil Status. Table 1 indicates that all thirty (30 or 100%) social work student respondents were single. They could focus on community activities of the CDFI program; there is no complaint from their family whatsoever. They have more time to spend on their participation in the program; thus, they finish due time. Had the social work students been married, their family would have had put some restrictions because married life calls for more responsibility and attention for children, husband/wife, parents, and parents-in-law. Moreover, they must be responsible for the daily needs of the family. If they had a family, they will be forced to leave the community even in the middle of an activity to visit their family or to attend to any need of the family, if ever. Indeed, had social work students been married, it would have been difficult to focus on the CDFI program.

In another situation, had social work students been separated or divorced or widowed, their added responsibility would be to take care of their husbands or wives or children. It's possible that this stage would make them sad or bothered to do this type of work.

Table 2. Number of months Spent by the Social Work Student-Respondents as Volunteer before taking the CDFI Program

Category	f	%
01-04 months	12	40%
04-08 months	11	37%
08-12 months	5	17%
12 months & above	2	7%
Total	30	100%

Number of months Spent by the Respondents as Volunteer. Being a volunteer in agencies is very important for the social work students - respondents before taking the CDFI program because it enables them to apply their knowledge and skill to a real situation, gain experiences, and further understand the social work profession, role and responsibility of the social worker. It is obviously necessary for social work students to have some voluntary work before taking the CDFI program.

The data on table 2 indicates that 12 participants or 40% have spent 1-4 months as a volunteer in agencies before CDFI program; eleven (11 or 37%), spent 4-8 months; five (5) or 17% spent 8-12 months; and 2 or 7% spent 12 months & above. Most of the student-respondents spent 1-8 months as a volunteer in agencies before the CDFI program. Social work students spend time volunteering in Children's Villages as Hoa Binh Children's Villages, Nguyen Viet Xuan Children's Villages, SOS Children's Villages, etc. These Children's Villages are managed by the Department of Labor Invalids and Social Affairs of Ha Noi (DOLISA, Ha Noi), located in Ha Noi City. These organizations admit the children who are orphans, disabled, and infected by Agent Orange and HIV/AIDS, and they usually come from provinces in Northern Viet Nam. Social work students volunteer to help children during the weekend. They hold various activities for children, teaching Vietnamese, English, Mathematics, holding games, counseling, etc.

Table 3. Area of Placement for Social Work Students

Category	f	%
Cao Bang Province	8	27%
Ha Tinh Province	8	27%
Lai Chau Province	5	17%
Ha Giang Province	5	17%
Hoa Binh Province	4	13%
Total	30	100%

Area of Placement. Table 3 shows the areas of placement for social work students. In the provinces of Cao Bang and Ha Tinh, eight (8 or 27%) students are placed for each. They perform CDFI program activities in the said provinces. In Ha Tinh, the eight (8) social work students were placed respectively in Thong Nhat Hamlet, Ich Hau Commune, Loc Ha District, and 4 of whom in Ich My Hamlet, Ich Hau Commune, Loc

Ha District. In Cao Bang, the eight (8) social work students were placed respectively in Na Ngam Hamlet, Da Thong Commune, Thong Nong District, and 4 of whom in Lung Nhung Hamlet, Ngoc Dong Commune, Thong Nong District.

Lai Chau and Ha Giang have five (5, or 17%) each. Their respective areas of concentration are in Na Ly Hamlet, Ban Bo Commune, Tam Duong District, Lai Chau Province; Khuoi Kha Hamlet, Ngoc Linh Commune, Vi Xuyen District, Ha Giang Province.

Hao Binh has four (4) or 13% social work students are placed in Tran Hamlet, Tan Minh Commune, Da Bac District.

Lai Chau Province is located in the Northwest of Vietnam while Cao Bang, Ha Giang, and Hoa Binh provinces are located in the Northeast of Viet Nam, and Ha Tinh Province is located in the North Central Coast of Viet Nam. The terrains of almost all areas are very difficult to move. There are many steep and dangerous mountains, waterfalls, and rapids in the areas. The weather condition of these areas is very severe, like drought, flood, etc. The economic condition of all these areas is very poor. The household income of people in the community is impoverished. As farmers, farmers raising livestock, they earn minimal income for this type of livelihood.

Various ethnic groups abound in the areas such as King, Tay, Muong, Thai, Dao, Mong, etc. Most of them cannot go to school, so the literacy rate is very low, and their awareness is limited. The infrastructure is one of the weak points in all areas. For instance, in almost all of the areas, there are no irrigation systems, no dispensary, restaurant, market, etc. Moreover, almost all households do not have a sanitary toilet, latrine, cistern, hen-house, pigsty, etc.

2.2.2. Problems in CDFI Program that Pose a Challenge to the Social Work Students

Personal problem. Table 4 is an enumeration of the social work students' problems in the CDFI Program that pose a challenge to them. Twenty-five (25) social work students (83%) listed health is a personal problem in the CDFI program. As mentioned above, the weather condition in the areas covered by the CDFI program is very severe such as drought, flood, etc. There are so many mosquitoes in the areas because the awareness of community people about environmental protection and disease prevention is limited. Moreover, the living condition of the areas is deplorable [[15]]; therefore, social work students easily get the diseases, especially skin-disease and flu. There are no medical stations in the community; hence, it is difficult to look for medicine, let alone buying for the needs. There is no procedure being followed to check the health of social work students in the CDFI program. A few social work students get sick while they are in the community for the CDFI program. The duration of the CDFI program is limited but social work students have to complete many tasks in the community; therefore, they are pressured and stressed out sometimes. The pressure on the amount of work to be completed during field instruction is also one of the common problems among social work students that previous studies have clearly shown [[16, 17]]. In our study, most of them are female, so this is a challenge for female students' health problems in the CDFI program. The health problem makes social work students worried. A few social work students have to leave the community to treat some diseases acquired in a hospital. It affects the progress of activities in the community.

Twenty-one (21) social work students (70%) said the cost of living was a personal problem in the CDFI program. Our result is similar to a study by Manjunath [[16]]. Every day in the community, social work students receive an allowance of USD 3 from AAV (3 USD = 60,000 VND). Most of them spend around USD 2.5 buying rice, meat, vegetable, fruit, etc., during the day. However, social work students have to spend another USD 3 for their cell phone load because they use this to report to the field instructor their status of health, living, and community progress. Besides, aside from reporting, they also need to consult the field instructor about potential community problems as observed. Sometimes, the local government leader is absent; therefore, they will have to communicate with the local government leader through the cell phone, too. According to the social work students, *“Actually, we need some funds for the cost of living in the community and cell phone load since we use this to report to our field instructor the progress of our activities in the CDFI program. However, we are only provided for our cost of living by the AAV. We have no provision from ULSA for cell phone load. Besides, we have to spend our own money to treat our field instructor, CDC staff and leader of local government”*. Seldom do social work students buy food and fresh fruits in the community. Their meal is usually poor and lack of nutritious facts. Somehow, it affects their health.

Nineteen (19) social work students (63%) consider security as another personal problem in the CDFI program. Although a few leaders of local government are married, they still show interest to the female social work student. A few social work students shared that: *“The leaders of local government kiss the female student while asleep; they send suggestive text messages to the female student, etc. A few leaders of local government do not want to help the students; as a result, the students are not able to complete their tasks as scheduled”*. This is the challenge encountered by the social work students with regard to security. This challenge has a tremendous effect on the progress of activities in the community, especially since the local government leader and the people in the community play an important role in the community's progress. Three (3) social work students (10%) consider ego & relationship personal problems in the CDFI program. One social work student (3%) says that an individual's work is a personal problem in the CDFI program.

Community problem. A study by Lenore E. Matthew in 2017 indicated that social work students often face community challenges such as language and communication barriers, cultural differences that challenge values, and culture shock [17]. In our study, social work students have community problems such as community people's awareness, physical, the local dialect, lack of involvement, and culture.

Thirty (30) social work students (100%) regard limited or no awareness at all by the community people. Most of the community people have not gone to school; hence, they are not aware of things happening in their community. Their area is remote. The infrastructure is very poor, so the economic condition is bad. There is no television, radio, music player, newspaper, etc. in all households. They seldom leave the community to go to town and big cities in the province. Since time immemorial, their thinking is backward. When the social work students moved around for the community survey, the people in the community doubted them. They thought the social work

students were there to collect important information from the community to report to government organizations; thus, the community people did not want to share any information with the social work students. When the social work students discussed project funds, they thought there was no need to participate in the community activities; they would just divide the project funds. A few members of the community are selfish and dependent on others. A social work student shared that, *“One household built a cistern long time ago which has been out of order for quite some time already. In a meeting with the community people, the social work students suggested to repair the cistern and be made available to all people in the community for their common use. However, the household where the cistern is located does not agree with the suggestion. They believe that the cistern is private, therefore, not to be used commonly”*. So, the limited awareness of community people affects their participation in the progress of activities in the community and the result of community development.

Twenty-five (25) social work student-respondents (83%) consider physical features and conditions as challenges to social work students under the CDFI program. These social work students are placed in areas with unclear direction, steep and dangerous mountain, mountainside, waterfalls, and rapids, etc. In the CDFI program, AAV is responsible for looking for community placement while ULSA is responsible for the supervision of social work students in the community. One of AAV's objectives is to protect the poor people and vulnerable communities so that they are empowered to protect their rights. Following up on the objective, AAV always selects poor and remote communities for the CDFI program. However, the unclear direction in the community threatens the life of the social work students and affects the working productivity and working relationships of social work students and community people. A social work student said, *“To reach a few households in the community, we have to overcome steep and dangerous mountains and waterfalls and rapids. Besides, the road is slippery for walking due to frequent landslides”*.

Twenty-five (25) participants (83%) say the local dialect is a challenge to social work students in the CDFI program. Noble and etc also found that challenges for social work students were the language barrier [18]. Since social work students have to deal with people, language plays an important role in their field practicum. Knowledge of the language enables both the speaker and listener to exchange information and get effective results of the discussion. At the same time, language is also a barrier to social work students if they don't know how to speak the people's language. As a result, they may not be able to relay the right message to the people, which may lead to misunderstanding. As mentioned above, almost all community people are unschooled, so the illiteracy rate is very high. They always speak the dialect, so the social work students cannot understand them.

Seventeen (17) social work student-respondents (57%) regard lack of involvement as another challenge to social work students in the CDFI program. This seems to be a means for the local government leader to corrupt the funds of the project. However, the social work students prevented them from doing it, so the local government leader did not take responsibility for the progress of activities in the community. A social work student mentioned that: *“They never spent the time participating in the progress of*

activities in the community with social work students and community people. They always have reasons for their failure to cooperate with the social work students and community people. They always try to delay community activities and other reasons". Two (2) social work student-respondents (7%) consider culture as another challenge for social work students in the CDFI program.

Supervision problem. Previous studies pointed out supervision problems in field instruction program such as lack of qualified field supervisors, loose collaboration between universities and field agencies, and inadequate student assessment methods [[16, 19]]. In our study, twenty-one (21) social work student-respondents (70%) consider the method of supervision as a problem in the CDFI program. The field instructor supervises the social work students only by cell phone. They seldom go to the community to supervise the social work students physically. Physical supervision plays an important role in the CDFI program. It helps field instructors, such as: to grasp or to know the status of the progress of activities in the community, find out advantages and disadvantages of the project, know and meet the needs of the social work students, provide advice upon consultation by the social work students, and adjust limitations, if there are, etc. Supervision by cell-phone may not be reliable as there can be some tendencies for social work students to lie about their output. A social work student said, *"Sometimes, we lie about our output because the field instructor always calls us to check on the community's progress. Our worry makes us lie to the field instructor. In addition, we love to be appreciated by the field instructor, so we can get a high grade in the CDFI program. One example of a lie is the quantity of some work. For instance, only a few community people are doing road repairs. However, we reported to the field instructor that there were a lot of community people doing road repairs. Hearing this report made the field instructor very happy and appreciated us for the work."* As mentioned earlier, there has not been any agency supervisor in the CDFI program. Now, the method of supervision by the field instructor is a problem. This is a challenge for social work students in the CDFI program. Two (2) social work student-respondents (7%) regard the number of field instructors as a problem in the CDFI program, and two (2) social work student-respondents (7%) reported that supervisory capacity is one of the supervision problems in the CDFI program.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution showing Problems in the CDFI program

Variable		f	%
A. Personal problem	Health	25	83%
	Living Costs	21	70%
	Individual work	1	3%
	Ego & Relationships	3	10%
	Security	19	63%
	Others * Multiple responses	0	0%
B. Community	Physical	25	83%

problem	Awareness of community people	30	100%
	Culture	2	7%
	Local dialect	25	83%
	Lack of involvement	17	57%
	Others * <i>Multiple responses</i>	0	0%
C. Supervision problem	Supervisory method	21	70%
	The number of field instructors in supervision	2	7%
	Supervisory capacity	2	7%
	Supervisory responsibility	0	0%
	Others * <i>Multiple responses</i>	0	0%

3. Conclusions

“In short, we found out problems encountered in the CDFI Program that has posed a challenge to social work students. They are the personal problem (health; the cost of living; security; ego and relationship; and individual work), community problem (awareness of community people; physical; local dialect; lack of involvement; and culture), supervision problem (supervisory method; supervisor capacity; the number of field instructor in supervision; and supervision responsibility). In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to stakeholders:

For the University of Labor and Social Affairs (ULSA, Ha Noi)

Generally, the CDFI program in ULSA is limited, so it needs to be modified and standardized as follows:

- ULSA must formulate a clear policy in terms of procedures, especially on the security of social work students in the CDFI program to contain insurance, certificate of residence, and health.

- ULSA should pursue its cooperation with AAV to bring social work students to the community. In line with this, ULSA should forge an agreement with AAV to provide more equitable allowance for the cost of living and cell phone loading, which social work students use to report purposes about the CDFI program.

- For the Medical Center of ULSA to issue a certificate of health and security to those going to the field for the CDFI program, Corollary, subject social work students for a health check-up before the fieldwork ensure they have a clean bill of health.

- ULSA should pursue its cooperation with AAV to bring social work students to the community.

- ULSA must attract funders to support social work students in the CDFI program.

- Enhance the quality and quantity of field instructor by sending field instructor to study social work course or related fields abroad or open venue for faculty exchange

with other Asian Schools, and cross-posting of social work field instructors with qualified agency supervisors.

- Learn about the CDFI program of other countries in Asia Pacific such as Australia, Singapore, HongKong, and the Philippines or on the Internet or have an immediate visit to schools of social work in these countries.

For Actionaid- Viet Nam

- Hold a workshop with ULSA that aims to discuss and revise the CDFI program.
- Cooperate closely with the local government to provide the certificate of residence and ensure social work students' security during the CDFI program.

Field instructor

- Field instructors should spend more time visiting social work students in the community regularly.
- Field instructor should be aware of his/her responsibility and further his/her knowledge and skills in supervising social work students in the CDFI program.

For Social work students

- Re Pre-field practicum, social work students should prepare everything such as health, individual work, necessary materials, etc. carefully.
- They should relate subtly with the local government leader and the community people, including the youth.

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