

The Problems of Professional Training of Future Social Workers for Research Activities

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Abstract: This theoretical article analyzes the positive and negative aspects of research activities of future social workers during their professional training in Ukraine. The purpose of the article is to determine and quantify the subjective level of readiness of students for research work and against the background of generalizations of foreign experience to outline the range of methodological and organizational problems of research training of future social workers in Ukraine. We chose practical methods (sociological survey of a random demonstrative sample of students, teachers and social workers) and theoretical (thematic, structural, problem, critical types of analysis, generalization and comparison). The article proves: a) Ukrainian students show low readiness for research work, but a positive attitude to participate in it in terms of improving methodological, organizational and motivational conditions; b) global trends in the research activities of social workers are focused on current practice, constant exchange of interinstitutional experience, use multimodal methods of data collection and analysis (in microgroups, social networks, the use of big data), etc.; c) the main shortcomings of such work in Ukraine are excessive theoreticality, insufficient methodological training, attachment to specific disciplines, insufficient stimulation of students; d) among positive sides there is a gradual introduction of alternative forms of scientific work and scientific and practical activities outside the educational institution. The results of the study may be of interest to reformers of social worker training in the educational institutions of the developing countries; specialists in typological and comparative study of humanities education in different countries and their socio-economic regions.

Keywords: *Current level of readiness; forms of independent work; research-oriented disciplines; areas of training; Ukrainian experience; classroom and extracurricular scientific activities.*

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Introduction

The study of the Ukrainian experience of training future social workers for R&D has shown that it is carried out in the process of both classroom and extracurricular activities and has certain specifics in each educational institution, and has not yet overcome the traditionalist approach. Framework documents regulating the organization of research work of future social workers in the context of the current requirements of a neoliberal globalized society have not yet been developed (Gygli et al., 2019).

The study of the experience of local higher education institutions shows the ambiguity and inconsistency of the process of professional training of future social workers for research and development activity and a low level of use of recent electronic and smart technologies (Sheremet et al., 2019; Vuckovic, 2019).

The generalization of the analysis of the methodological sources gave grounds to conclude that the research and development training of Ukrainian students takes place mainly through the study of different lists of disciplines, practices and extracurricular forms of work (Nerubasska et al., 2020b). However, little attention is paid to the selection of scientific talents, which often occurs spontaneously or accidentally (Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020a).

This is explained by the fact that only in 2015 the specialty 231 “Social Work” was assigned to the field 23 of “Social Work” (according to the “List of Knowledge and Specialty Fields for which applicants for higher education are trained” (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015). Belonging to the eponymous field of knowledge led to the final formation of the concept of training social workers in higher education institutions and allowed to determine the appropriate list of normative disciplines and courses of the variable part of educational programs in accordance with the capabilities of educational institutions and the most relevant areas of social work, but the research concept and its methodological tools have not yet acquired an innovative character.

In this regard, training of students for research and development activities is accompanied by a number of problems:

1. Students’ lack of awareness of the role and importance of R&D in their professional activities, their unpreparedness for this process;
2. Research-oriented disciplines involve the study of mainly theoretical aspects of R&D, and the practice of research remains unnoticed

(while the possibilities of general disciplines for research training of students are almost not used);

3. The educational process is arranged mainly on the associative-reproductive scheme, which does not give the student the opportunity to take the position of the subject of research, does not provide the necessary practical readiness for its independent implementation;

4. Students' practice involves visiting social institutions and services, studying their experience, observation (at that the opportunity to develop research skills is not fully provided);

5. There is an extensive system of extracurricular R&D activities, but the number of students interested in R&D, independent research activities, taking part in conferences, contests, publication of research reports in student scientific journals is not large;

6. The existing experience of forming students' readiness for R&D is characterized by a lack of consistency, integration of system components.

This hinders to form in the graduates of the experience of application of theoretical knowledge acquired in the HEI as a means of solving professional research problems, as well as skills of synthesizing partial knowledge and skills in integrated operating systems (Povidaichyk et al., 2022).

The above list proves the relevance of the article, in which we should identify the main shortcomings of the R&D of future sociologists and outline the difference between such activities and the current global trends. Accordingly, we can formulate a key thesis, which we will argue and which is analogous to the hypothesis in experimental research. We formulate it as follows: based on three data sources (sociological survey, review of current international experience and the study of program-methodic materials) we can theoretically summarize the shortcomings and prospects of research activities of future social workers in Ukraine. This can contribute to the educational reforms that have been actively unfolding in Ukraine in recent years.

The purpose of the study is trilateral: a) by sociological survey of subjects of educational and practical activities in the field of social work to determine the subjective level of readiness for research (to confirm the relevance of the article and the outline of "the problem areas"); b) summarize the main prospects, directions and problems of research work in the field of social work through the analysis and generalization of recent foreign sources; c) to analyze the program-methodological support of the

leading universities of Ukraine in order to identify shortcomings in the organization of research work of future social workers.

To achieve this goal, a number of methods were used: a survey of a random contingent of social workers, students and teachers; methods of analysis and generalization of the relevant literature; methods of thematic (according to the relevance of disciplines), structural, critical and problem analysis of the methodological material; the elements of the comparative-typological method.

Data collection. Data saturation was carried out through thematic selection and analysis of the educational programs of Zaporizhia National University (2018), Oles Honchar Dnipro National University (2022), Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021), Carpathian Institute of Entrepreneurship of the Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine” (2022), Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (2021), Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020), Uzhhorod National University (2022), etc. The selection of educational institutions was carried out on a multi-regional basis to represent different regions of Ukraine.

The ethics of the study is ensured by the documented consent of the administrations of each of the above universities to the analysis of their program and methodological support for qualitative and quantitative indicators of research work. The authors also received a written consent to participate in a social survey of students, teachers and social workers in the amount of 303 people. As the respondents did not belong to real groups and were selected by personal consent from a significant number of reference persons, we consider this sample to be random, and therefore not representative, but demonstrative.

Determining the current level of readiness of future social workers for R&D

In order to determine the current level of readiness of future social workers for R&D, we conducted their survey (303 students of higher education institutions, as well as social workers-practitioners and teachers took part in the pilot study). It should be noted that full-scale studies of the sociological experiment among future social workers can be found in the works of Povidaychik (one of the authors of this article) (Povidaychik, 2017; Kozubovska et al., 2017).

As a result of the survey, it was found that about 28% of students consider that R&D is one of the important areas of professional activity of a social worker. They note that during their studies in the HEI they perform

various research tasks with interest (mainly during research, writing term papers and qualification papers, projects). Almost 4% of students are systematically and purposefully engaged in the study of topical problems of modern society within the framework of the student scientific society of the HEI (these students have scientific publications in conference proceedings, student scientific journals). Note that an insignificant part of future social workers (4%) participate in Olympiads or competitions for scientific works of different levels. At the same time, 19% of students believe that research activities are not compulsory for a social worker. All others take a passive position during training, do not show initiative in the process of research activities, try to avoid it.

Most students recognize that every social worker must have an algorithm for research, know the methods of its implementation, understand the ethical limits of research. This, according to students, “will help to effectively solve professional problems” (25.4%), “will provide new professional information” (41.3%), “will promote the development of intelligence” (64.3%).

Students were also asked to identify the basic intellectual qualities needed by social workers to implement R&D. Future social workers have demonstrated the following results:

- sufficient level of intellectual development, observation - 96%;
- mastery of ways of mental activity that provide productive thinking - 94%;
- presence of receptivity, ability to concentrate - 87%;
- creative activity of thinking (intensity of generating ideas, ability to see unsolved problems) - 84%;
- independence of thinking - 79%;
- the presence of a developed imagination - 66%;
- presence of intuition, premonition, foresight - 47%;
- critical thinking (correlation of the results of own research with the data of other researchers) - 39%

Analyzing these abilities to R&D, 39% of students expressed confidence in their availability; 13% are almost certain that they have such; 41% are not sure and 7% believe that they do not have such abilities.

According to the self-assessment of future social workers, 62% of them have sufficiently formed information and communication skills, which include information retrieval, processing, analysis, the ability to present it in the form of an abstract, lecture notes and more. 68.3% of respondents mentioned certain difficulties that arise in them when writing abstracts,

scientific articles, annotations to it (Oswald, 2018). About 70% of students noted that they do not have the skills to present their own point of view, participate in discussions, scientific dialogue. The most of students report that during their studies they acquire a lot of theoretical knowledge, for example, about research methods and analysis of their results, but do not have the skills and experience of their practical application. So, to the question “What aspects of research, in your opinion, need the most coverage during classes and practice?” students’ answers were distributed as follows: 26.2% of students identified theoretical aspects, 70.6% of respondents - research methods, 29.4% - organizational issues of research work.

To the question “What research methods are you ready to use independently in the process of professional activity?” 47% of students indicate their readiness to use observation, conversation; 7% had the opportunity to conduct sociometry during practice; almost 22% of students are ready to conduct questionnaires on their own, interviews - 15.1%; 6.3% of students believe that they have a sufficient arsenal of knowledge, skills and abilities to develop a social project.

The results of their own observations and expert evaluation of teachers (based on the analysis of abstracts, term papers, qualifications, dissertations of students, their activity during classroom studies in the study of certain research disciplines) indicate a lack of future social workers such skills as generalization, generalization, to analyze scientific sources of information, to formulate research tasks, to solve them. About 70% of students do not know how to properly justify the relevance of the topic of work, independently determine the object and subject, purpose and objectives of the study, to formulate a hypothesis, (Shneyder, 2017). Only 15% of students can correctly design the results of research work.

To the question of what types of classroom and extracurricular learning most contribute to the growth of the level of research training of students, the answers were distributed as follows: 39% of students note the study of special disciplines “Fundamentals of scientific research”, “Methods and organization of social research”, “Social design and forecasting” and others; 7.9% of future social workers say that the formation of their research skills was facilitated by practice in social institutions and services, and 27% - volunteer work; 12% of respondents noted participation in sociological research. Only 4% of students mention a certain role of student research groups, participation in scientific conferences, competitions, etc. 35% of students indicate that the research readiness of social workers will be facilitated by close interaction “student-teacher”, the possibility of individual consultations.

In general, a significant proportion of students (76.2%) consider their level of readiness for R&D low, and 23.8% of respondents - average. No one student can testify to their high level of readiness for research. To the question "Are you satisfied with the process of preparation for research activities in the HEI?" 35.7% answered that it is completely satisfactory; 60.3% - partially satisfied, 4% of students are dissatisfied with the level of research training.

Thus, the results of the survey showed a positive orientation of students to research activities. However, there are some gaps in research training of future social workers - insufficient level of students' theoretical knowledge in the field of science and research, the lack of research skills, inability to apply knowledge in practice, etc.

The results of the survey of social workers-practitioners showed significant interest in the research problem, as about 44% of professionals implement in their activities certain aspects of R&D. Thus, 52% of them are constantly studying the scientific and methodological literature related to the practice of social work, standards of its implementation, regulatory support, foreign experience, etc. ; 48% of specialists in their work use different research methods to diagnose a particular phenomenon or process, the client's condition, forecasting its development; 26% said that in different periods they participated in the implementation of state and international projects and grants; 46% stressed that they periodically (as part of a group) work on writing and implementing social projects; 25% - constantly participate in the work of scientific-practical and methodological seminars, conferences, which are held on the basis of social institutions and services, public organizations, HEI. At the same time, more than half of the surveyed social workers claim that the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during training in the HEI are insufficient for effective research activities, which necessitates continuous learning and self-education.

At this stage, we conducted interviews with university teachers who train future social workers. All respondents stressed the exceptional relevance and feasibility of forming students' readiness for R&D. Almost 82% of respondents reported that they do such work in fragments, with 75% of them noting enough hours to study research-oriented disciplines; 73% of respondents believe that for this purpose it is necessary to attract resources from other disciplines, as well as to include students in various extracurricular forms of work.

Problems of research training of social workers in the international educational discourse

The international experience in training social workers in the XXI century proves that there is no need to draw a clear line between research activities in individual disciplines and partial and current social problems. Awareness of this has led to significant segmentation of research issues: students no longer study global social issues, but focus on local challenges, social assistance practices for vulnerable groups, regional and even marginal features of social work. At the same time, there is no boundary between sociology students and practitioners: they often carry out joint research projects, share experiences equally, do not associate research work with learning at higher education institutions (Savelchuk et al., 2021).

There are fundamental researches on practice-oriented R&D activities of social workers, but there is a lack of methods of research training at the educational stage. Scientists generally offer either theoretical methodological research for non-practicing sociologists (the scientists) or practical research tools for experienced sociologists (Alston, 2018; Faulkner & Faulkner, 2018; Giddens, 1991; Kerlinger, 1964).

In recent times, scientists are considering the scientific work of sociologists in the praxeological aspect. Nowadays, few people are interested in theoretical generalizations, and the availability of total access to information and communication technologies on the Internet has turned the research activities of social workers into remote, online, without real contact with clients. For example, the study of social phenomena using ICT in the United States and Canada has almost completely replaced field research. Moreover, social workers (the result of an anonymous survey) in both countries informally use ICT and online surveys instead of the practice of direct contact with respondents (Mishna et al., 2021).

On the one hand, this contributes to the large scale and accessibility of research work of social workers, but this trend saves them from direct immersion in the problems of the social sphere, and therefore do not feel empathy, the real social environment on the ground. However, the treble ways to study society can be easily used by students without wasting time.

However, there is a group of scientists who see the future in the use of social networks to collect data with their further research. Thus, in Spanish-speaking countries, the term “digital social context” has spread. Its potential lies not only in the ability to quickly reach a large number of respondents for student research, but also in the strong motivation of young social workers to stay and work in cyberspace. Sociological surveys, social

flash mobs, virtual conferences have become an integral part of the lives of students-humanists, so many universities in planning the research activities of future sociologists take into account the needs of young people in the network communication and allow individual choices of topics, problems and reference group for current research.

From the above, the following problem arises: how students and practicing social workers can use large bodies of sociological data for research. Halford and Savage investigated: “In recent years, there has been persistent tension between proponents of big data analytics, who use new forms of digital data for computational and statistical claims about the “social”, and skeptical sociologists about the value of big data and related methods and claims to knowledge” (Halford & Savage, 2017). Scientists point out that it is necessary not only to combine offline field research with large statistical data, but also to develop multimodal methods of big data analysis (methods of interpretation, argumentation, separation of natural and organized, etc.). Halford called this synergy “a symphonic social science”, which combines global statistics, digital capabilities and personal research activity of a social worker.

A study of the implications of research work for teaching and practical social work in Germany in recent years has shown that students’ scientific advantages are very heterogeneous. First, in Germany, curricula differ significantly between federal states and educational institutions. This provides a wide opportunity for individual choice of academic and scientific activities of sociology students (Schneickert et al., 2019). Scientists who have studied this problem hypothesize the possibility of creating a single scientific “sociological canon”. This is due to the fact that universities have different programs of scientific and practical training (they cause different attitudes and assessments of students), and in the social practice, the best methods of work and research are more established, defined, developed by many years of practice. Therefore, scientists have to recognize: “formal curricula may differ from theories and methods that are de facto used and evaluated by students in practice as effective” (Schneickert et al., 2019, p. 339).

Controversial provisions regarding training were recently expressed by Ralston. His main thesis is that sociology students should not study statistics because of the excessive epistemological and epistemological generalization (Ralston, 2020). The scientist found that sociology students from more than 30 universities in the UK are reluctant to use statistical methods and express anxiety and distrust about them. Because of the importance of observing social microprocesses, the scarce social groups that need help students feel the need for a more personal (anthropogenic rather

than statistical) experience. Addressing this issue is expected to reduce the uncertainty of students and researchers, which Ralston called “statistical anxiety”.

In contrast to Ukraine, Western countries are trying every year to reduce the gap between current life and social practices and its reflection in the program and alternative activities of educational institutions. In this regard, there is a mutual regular intervention of institutions (social and academic), NGOs, leading sociologists, activists, etc. (Bellamy et al., 2006). This is a permanent optimization process for translating student research into viable social practices.

The main directions of training of social workers for R&D in the process of classroom learning

The basic disciplines that form the basis of research training are “Philosophy”, “Sociology”, “Psychology”, “Introduction to the specialty”, “Fundamentals of Research”, “Theory of Social Work”, “Technology of Social Work”, which included in the block of normative courses in all Ukrainian universities were studied by us. These disciplines have some differences in the number of teaching hours and content in terms of Ukrainian universities. Nevertheless, they are aimed at achieving clearly defined learning outcomes that are unique to each of them.

Direct research training of social workers is carried out through the study of special disciplines (Table 1).

According to Table 1, in Ukrainian educational institutions of higher social education, research training of social workers is due to the presence of different positions on the organizational design of the research process, in particular in terms of research disciplines.

Table 1. Research-oriented disciplines of research training of future social workers: developed by the authors

Educational institution	Research-oriented disciplines	
	The first (bachelor’s) level	The second (master’s) level
Zaporizhia National University (2018)	“Social and demographic statistics”, “Methods and organization of research in social work”, “Social design”	Research scientific methodology
Oles Honchar Dnipro National University (2022)	“Social and demographic statistics”, “Methods of social research”	“Forecasting and modeling of social work”, “Methodology of system approach and analysis”,

		“Methodology and organization of scientific research”
Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021)	“Fundamentals of socio-pedagogical research”, “Project activities in social work”, “Social prevention”	“Methodology and methods of scientific research”, “Philosophy of Science”
Carpathian Institute of Entrepreneurship of the Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine”. (2022)	“Methods and organization of sociological research”, “Applied technologies of social work (Social design)”	“Methodology and organization of scientific research”
Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (2021)	“Fundamentals of socio-pedagogical research”, “Innovative models of social services”	“Methodology and methods of scientific research”
Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020).	“Social diagnostics and prevention”, “Social examination”, “Social design”	“Methodology and research methods in social work”, “Modeling of social processes”; “Monitoring and evaluation of social programs and projects”
Uzhhorod National University (2022)	“Methods and organization of social research”, “Social and demographic statistics”, “Social design and forecasting”	“Research seminar”, “Innovations in social work”

Thus, the educational programs of training bachelor of social work at Oles Honchar Dnipro National University (2022) provide for the study of “methods of social research” (1st year, 2nd semester, 6 credits, 54 hours of lectures and 36 hours of laboratory classes). The discipline is aimed at forming students’ ideas about the methodological principles of the research process, their assimilation of knowledge about the nature, specifics and types of scientific methods of obtaining social information, as well as the possibility of its use in specific practical situations; formation of skills and abilities to apply specific techniques and procedures for collecting, processing, presenting and interpreting empirical data (Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, 2022).

The analysis of the work program of this discipline shows an emphasis on social research methodologies, their organization and planning, but as far as the processing and analysis of research results are concerned, the main focus is on scales as a method of measuring social characteristics and types of mathematical and statistical procedures with different types of scales. At the same time, in our opinion, more attention should be paid to this content module, in particular in terms of analytical statistics (regression, variance, factor analysis, etc.), which will ensure a higher level of readiness of social workers for R&D. At the same time, practical classes are planned, although, in our opinion, laboratory ones would be more expedient, which provides fewer students and the possibility of individualization of training, practice of skills in applying research methods by each student under the direct guidance of the teacher.

Study of the course “Social and Demographic Statistics” (1st year of study, 1st semester, 3 credits, 18 hours of lectures, 18 hours of practical classes). The purpose of the discipline is to form in students the knowledge of the subject and methods of social and demographic statistics, the skills of performing calculations of basic statistical indicators.

In the working programs of the discipline read in the universities we studied, its structure mainly consists of three content modules: “History and theory of social and demographic statistics”, “Methods of social and demographic statistics”, “Basic provisions of branch statistics”. The third semantic module involves the study of such areas of life as statistics on labor, employment and unemployment, population statistics, statistics on the level and quality of life. Of course, the choice of such basic aspects of life is influenced by the limited number of hours of the curriculum. But, in our opinion, other areas of social life (statistics of public health, education, social security, delinquency, leisure, etc.) also need to focus the attention of future social workers, at least in the process of independent work.

Conversations with teachers of this discipline indicate its excessive theorization: the use of statistical methods to explain a certain process or phenomenon involves cumbersome calculations, therefore, teachers only provide overview information about these methods, and the results of their application are demonstrated using examples calculated by the State Statistics Service. We believe that with the help of modern software (for example, MS Excel), students can apply these methods on their own, while they will better understand the specifics of the research, and will increase the level of information culture (Hobfoll, 2001).

It should be noted that these disciplines are provided by the educational programs of Zaporizhia National University (2018), Carpathian

Institute of Entrepreneurship of the Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine” (2022) and Uzhhorod National University (2022), except for their redistribution at the bachelor’s and master’s level.

Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021). The formation of readiness of future social workers in this institution is through the study of certain disciplines, in particular “Fundamentals of socio-pedagogical research” (3rd year of study, 5th semester, 4 credits, 16 hours of lectures and 16 hours of practical classes).

The content of the discipline consists of the following topics: “Science as a form of social consciousness”, “Types of scientific work of students”, “Content of socio-pedagogical research”, “Features of planning socio-pedagogical research”, “Theoretical methods of socio-pedagogical research”, “Empirical methods of socio-pedagogical research”, “Preparation of bachelor’s and master’s theses”, “Organization and conduct of socio-pedagogical experiment”, “Use of methods of mathematical statistics in socio-pedagogical research”, “Registration of results of socio-pedagogical research”.

We emphasize that the content of the content of this discipline overlaps with the course “Foundations of Scientific Research”, which is read in the other studied by us educational institutions, but, as noted by teachers of this subject at these universities and testifies to our own experience, the small number of hours to study the discipline does not give full coverage of the above material, which has led us to make certain adjustments in the organization of a similar course at Uzhhorod National University (2022).

The discipline “Project activities in social work” (1st year of study, 1st semester, 4 credits, 16 hours of lectures and 16 hours of practical classes). In the process of its study the following topics are considered: “Theoretical foundations of project activities in social work”, “Social project as a technology of social work”, “Conceptual foundations of pedagogical design”, “Organizational and methodological foundations of socio-pedagogical design”, “Fundamentals of text description of the project”, “Project substantiation, methods of collective work on the project”, “Social diagnostics as a stage of project activity”, “Social forecasting as a factor in assessing the viability of socio-pedagogical project”, “Social expertise as a method of assessing socio-pedagogical project”, “Social methods examinations”, “Project implementation as the final stage of project activities”.

This discipline is provided by the educational programs of all the HEI that we have studied, and it usually takes no more than 40 hours of the curriculum. Obviously, such a small number of hours is clearly insufficient

to cover all the material, especially if during its study it is necessary to develop such research skills of social workers as design, diagnostic, prognostic, technical, information-analytical, system-information.

In order to solve this problem, the courses “Social Prevention” (5 credits, 16 lecture and 48 practical hours) and “Psych diagnostics” (3 credits, 20 lecture and 20 practical hours) were included in the list of elective disciplines for training social workers. As part of the study of “Social Prevention” provides not only the study of its essence, levels, regulatory framework, but also mastering the methods of forecasting the consequences of the implementation of preventive measures. “Psych diagnostics” is aimed at studying the theoretical foundations of psych diagnostics and the basics of application of psych diagnostic techniques both in practice and in research.

Note that a similar algorithm of research training is observed in the Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (2021). The above issues are partially considered within the courses “Fundamentals of socio-pedagogical research”, “Innovative models of social services”.

At Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020), the problem of forming the readiness of social workers for R&D is solved by students studying such disciplines as “Social Diagnosis and Prevention” (2nd year, 3rd semester, 5 credits), “Social Expertise” (4th year, 7th semester, 3.5 credits), “Social design” (4th year, 7th semester, 3.5 credits).

It should be noted that in some universities the main stage of preparation of social workers for R&D is carried out at the bachelor's level (Zaporizhia National University (2018), Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021), Carpathian Institute of Entrepreneurship of the Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine” (2022), Uzhhorod National University (2022), although some HEI consider this process the prerogative of master's programs (Oles Honchar Dnipro National University (2022), Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020).

Thus, at Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University. (2021) at the bachelor's level students are offered to study two disciplines – “Social Statistics” and “Methodology and Methods of Social Research”, during which they get acquainted with the practice of research in the social sphere. The development of research skills, including projective, prognostic, information-analytical, technical, takes place at the master's level through the study of certain disciplines, practice, writing a master's thesis.

The discipline “Forecasting and modeling of social work” (4 credits, 18 hours of lectures and 18 hours of practical training). The course is aimed

at deepening students' understanding of the concepts, essence, methods and algorithms of social modeling and forecasting, defining areas and directions of their application in the analytical and practical activities of a social worker, mastering the relevant applied techniques. It is planned to study three content modules: "Project activities in the social sphere", "Theoretical aspects and methods of developing state social programs", "The place of forecasting in the theory and practice of social work". The main forms and methods of teaching are: lectures, conversations, discussions, round tables, individual independent tasks, which allows to determine the understanding of research problems and means of solving them, practice the ability to generalize and comparative analysis (Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, 2022).

The discipline "Methodology of systems approach and analysis" is aimed at developing students' ability to use the principles of systems methodology to solve problems and problems in the social sphere of society. Future social workers are expected to master the basic categories of methodological principles of the system approach; formation of ideas about the features and stages of formation of systemic views on social phenomena and processes; instilling skills in the application of system concepts and the formation of skills in the analysis of social systems of different nature, level of complexity, structural organization and origin; formation of abilities to use system knowledge for analysis and solution of specific problem situations that arise in the social sphere (Gardner, 1983).

The purpose of the course "Methodology and organization of scientific research" (3 credits, 18 lecture hours and the same - practical training) is to acquaint students with the methodological principles of research in the field of social work, ways to organize scientific research, report on research in the required form (thesis, article, monograph, abstract, dissertation, etc.), presentation of their results at scientific conferences and seminars. This discipline is the leading aspect of research training at Zaporizhia National University (2018), Carpathian Institute of Entrepreneurship of the Open International University of Human Development Ukraine (2022) and Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (2021).

A similar course "Methodology and Methods of Scientific Research" (4 credits, 16 lecture hours and the same amount of practical training) is taught for students at the master's programs at Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021).

For training masters of social work for activities in the scientific field at this university introduced a selective course "Philosophy of the Science"

(3 credits, 16 lecture hours and the same - practical training), which aims to form students' knowledge of the main stages of science, the reasons for its emergence and transformations, levels of scientific knowledge, changes in the subject and methods of philosophy of science in the process of its historical development, features of formal and informal institutions of science, stages of science as a direct productive force of modern production and the formation of new institutions and tools of science in this process (Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, 2021).

The master's level of training of social workers at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020) involves the study of disciplines "Methodology and research methods in social work", "Modeling of social processes" and "Monitoring and evaluation of social programs and projects" (4 credits).

At Uzhhorod National University (2022) research training of students at the bachelor's level involves the study of such special disciplines as "Fundamentals of Scientific Research", "Methods and Organization of Social Research", "Social and Demographic Statistics", "Social Design and Forecasting". At this level, students master basic research skills and abilities. In the master's program, such courses as "Research Seminar" and "Innovations in Social Work" are aimed at preparing social workers for R&D. Here students have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills of R&D and apply them independently in the process of practice or research.

We emphasize that in the curricula of the studied universities for the study of these courses is allocated a small number of classroom hours, while the time provided for extracurricular training is also insufficient. That is why in the process of research training of future social workers it is necessary to use the potential of disciplines of general professional and professional training.

The study of working programs of academic disciplines, conversations with teachers of the studied (and other) HEI indicate the predominant use of traditional forms and methods of teaching. The leading form of training of social workers for R&D is a lecture, as it begins with acquaintance with the teaching material of a particular discipline and mastery of various activities. Traditionally, the consolidation and control of knowledge, as well as practical training, is carried out during seminars and practical classes. The seminars are designed to deepen students' knowledge and discuss ways to implement them in practice. The formation of professional skills and abilities takes place in practical classes.

Forms of independent research work

Certainly, the training plans for future social workers provide for independent work, which can be carried out both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Its educational value lies in the fact that it forms independence as a quality of personality, because it is based on mental activity, which is carried out on its own initiative, without outside help (except for consultations) and without external motivation. Independent activity of students involves work with sources of information and is aimed at the perception, understanding, consolidation and reproduction of knowledge or the implementation of creative search and research tasks (Gerasymova et al., 2019).

The most common forms of independent research work in Ukraine are: preparation of abstracts and reports, writing term papers, bachelor's theses, reports at conferences and meetings of the student scientific society, individual research tasks, preparation of reports on industrial, pedagogical, undergraduate and other types of internships, etc. (Savelchuk, 2019).

The role of practice in the process of research training of future social workers is indisputable, the main tasks of which are: acquaintance of students with the peculiarities of the activities of various state and non-state social services; mastering knowledge about the directions, content, forms, methods of work of social workers and categories of their clients; formation of students' ideas about social work as a branch of professional activity; involvement of students in volunteer activity, mastering of innovative social and pedagogical technologies of the organization of summer rest and improvement of children; development and consolidation of knowledge and skills to develop and implement general and special technologies of social work with different categories of the population; consolidation and creative use by students of modern methods, forms, means of social work and innovative approaches in the management of social work, the formation of professional interest in research work; formation of skills of effective use of information and communication technologies for collection, analysis and processing of research projects, etc. (Frydenberg, 2002).

With regard to extracurricular activities, the intensification of independent teaching and research activities of students occurs through their participation in student scientific conferences, competitions, contests of scientific papers, etc. However, such work is unsystematic and is carried out without much enthusiasm from the students (Popovych, 2018).

Note that for a long time, students, future social workers had the opportunity to participate in competitions of scientific works at the level of educational institutions. In 2017-2018, for the first time the All-Ukrainian

competition of scientific papers in the specialty “Social Work” was held, where 73 students from different HEIs participated and where young people could present the results of their own research at the final scientific-practical conference, which took place on the basis of Uzhhorod National University (2022).

One of the forms of research training of social workers is the work of student research circles. In particular, in higher education institutions there are scientific circles, the theme of which is “Social and pedagogical conditions for the formation of tolerant relationships in children and youth” and “ORDO AMORIS” the research focus of which is “Psychological foundations of harmonization of educational space: design, modeling and examination of health-saving professional growth of future specialists” (Paulhus et al., 1997).

In order to popularize scientific activities student scientific society of Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University. (2021) introduces alternative organizational forms of interaction with students and young scientists, in particular: scientific presentations, tours for schoolchildren by university museums, intellectual tournament, psychological quest-fight, speaking practice, forum, scientific picnics at the agro-biological complex of the university, etc. The issue of the scientific and practical magazine for schoolchildren and students “Eureka” has been established. Despite a significant number of scientific activities implemented at Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (2021), teachers note low activity of students, their unwillingness to participate in them, lack of initiative.

Student scientific societies (SSS) function in all the studied HEI. Thus, in order to stimulate the research activities of future social workers, the student scientific society of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021) holds an annual all-university competition “Leader of student science of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021).” The Vasyl Nadimyanov Scientific Society of Students and Postgraduate Students functions at the Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021). The members of the society hold various scientific events, in particular: student conference-presentation “Chernobyl - three decades later” (May, 2017), intellectual game “What? Where? When?” (February-March 2018), student conference-presentation “Outstanding figures of Ukraine of the late XX - early XXI century” (March, 2018), student scientific conference “New Ukrainian school and inclusive education: problems and challenges of today” (May, 2018) (Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, 2015).

Based on the results of their own research work, students have the opportunity to publish articles or abstracts in student research papers. In particular, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020) annually publishes “The Student Scientific Collection” and collection of research materials of the master’s program participants “Master”. A collection of scientific-practical conference of teachers and students “Actual problems of modern science” is published at Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021); at Uzhhorod National University (2022) student collections “Socio-political studies”, “Challenging issues of contemporary sociology and social work”.

The experience of the Scientific Society of Gifted Students “Young University” at Zaporizhia National University (2018) is interesting. Its activities are aimed at helping high school students to develop their creative thinking, intellectual initiative, analytical approach to their own activities, improve skills and abilities of research, invention, experimental activities under the guidance of university students and scientists.

The main achievements of the Zaporizhia National University Scientific Student Society, as well as announcements of events, are published in the information bulletins “Young Scientist” and “Postgraduate Student”.

We emphasize that student research societies are created at certain faculties and involve students of different specialties. Often the problems that students explore are “far” from social work, and this reduces the interest of future social workers to participate in the work of SSS and the level of their research activity.

New and promising areas of research in the domestic education system are student participation in international research and projects. Most of the HEI of Ukraine have signed agreements with foreign universities, where Ukrainian students study, undergo internships, language courses, participate in summer schools, etc. A number of projects and programs are being implemented: the EU Research and Innovation Program “Horizon 2020”, the International European Innovation Science and Technology Program “EUREKA” - aimed at conducting research and practical implementation of their results and achievements; Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) - a program of cooperation with Eastern European countries and the implementation of joint research projects; IREX (USA) - Representation of the Council for International Research and Exchanges; TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus - cooperation and mobility programs in higher education, (Gerasymova et al., 2019); Vishegrad Fund Scholarship - provided for the purpose of a research / educational project, etc. Participation in these programs gives students the opportunity to

develop professional and research competencies, get acquainted with the culture, educational and scientific traditions and schools of another country.

One of the forms of research training of students-social workers is volunteer work. Thus, Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (2021), Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (2020), Uzhhorod National University (2022) have Clubs of social initiatives and volunteering, the main tasks of which are:

- providing services to orphans and children left without parental care;
- developmental-correctional, rehabilitation and leisure work with children with disabilities;
- inclusive work in educational institutions and establishments (day care, schools); social partnership (with government agencies and NGOs, charities, foundations, societies (Noonan, 2017);
- organization of charitable actions, cultural and leisure events for children and youth of the city, for volunteers of the HEI.

To acquaint first-year students of Zaporizhia National University (2018) with the basics of volunteering, the training “Volunteer School” is practiced. For the successful course of the training, its organizers are not limited to the form of lectures, but also use game techniques during classes and spend a lot of time communicating. After such training, students have the opportunity to work as part of the volunteer movement “Student Heart” and provide all possible assistance in specialized boarding schools, charities, rehabilitation centers, departments of social adaptation, homes for the disabled, geriatric resorts, etc.

Therefore, students-volunteers are involved in working with children and youth with special needs; orphans and children deprived of parental care; children from disadvantaged families. By volunteering, students have the opportunity to acquire professional knowledge and skills in the process of communicating with professionals, get acquainted with interesting methods and technologies of work, join the activities of public organizations, gain experience in communicating and collaborating with different people. As a result, volunteers grow not only professionally but also personally, showing initiative, creativity, activity and forming humanistic values (Troshani et al., 2018). However, there is no emphasis on research, although, as experience shows, volunteer work involves this type of student activity.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn in accordance with the threefold goal. We present them in the order of the partial aspects presented in the introduction.

1. The results of the sociological survey (questionnaire) found that a third of students consider research activity to be the leading form of specialization, but only 4% of students are systematically engaged in research on current issues of practical sociology. It is unfortunate that more than 70% of students admitted that they do not have sufficient research competencies. In the ranking of disciplines that contribute to the formation of research competencies, students named the top three: “Fundamentals of Scientific Research”, “Methods and organization of social research”, “Social design and forecasting”. This fact should guide methodologists in the implementation of these disciplines as mandatory in all HEI. Practitioners showed much greater interest in research activities (44% of specialists are engaged in personal research activities). At the same time, they prefer continuous learning and self-education and note that training in the HEI does not provide a sufficient basis for independent research activity.

2. The study of recent world trends in the research activities of social workers has demonstrated a multimodal approach to both the choice of research objects and methods of collection and analysis.

Unlike Ukrainian educational institutions, which train social workers on the basis of the dominance of the theoretical approach in R&D training, in Western Europe practically oriented research as well as science-oriented industrial practices are introduced. However, the main difference is the scientific-practical partnership between educational institutions, institutions and services that provide social services. Bellamy and co-authors in their paper propose to widely implement the evidence-based practice (EBP) theory (Bellamy et al., 2008). This theory involves formation of the content of research work of students on the basis of the factual evidence of the existence of the research problem. To this end, sociological research, focus group discussions, joint seminars for teachers, researchers and social work practitioners are conducted.

The main idea of such trends is to convince a young specialist in the developmental, professional and financial value of relevant-oriented research. To this end, numerous projects are organized to exchange experiences between educational, scientific and service institutions. The main goal of the future professional is to overcome stereotypes, lack of motivation, lack of experience due to the maximum convergence of on's research activities with personal priorities of the social worker profession

(public involvement, assistance, innovation, communication, personal fulfilment, etc.).

3. We have to recognize that the content of professional training for future social workers is more aimed at transferring the amount of knowledge and developing relatively insignificant research skills, mastering which does not mean their readiness for R&D. The content of only certain disciplines partially solves the issue of preparing students for research activities, fragmentedly shows its individual theoretical aspects, which mainly relate to research methods, rather than ways to solve professional research problems.

The educational process is built mainly on the associative-reproductive scheme, which does not give the student the opportunity to take the position of the subject of research, does not provide the necessary practical readiness for its independent implementation. In the structural, content and organizational aspects of educational programs and curricula do not provide targeted training of future professionals for active independent R&D (Gray, 2008).

Forms of independent research work are accompanied by a number of difficulties: unusual environment, non-recognition of experienced social worker trainees as partners, lack of free choice of forms and methods of work, conditions for creativity. Interns usually act within the framework established by the administration of the institution, which significantly narrows the field of expression of their independence and initiative; lack of a systematic methodological approach to self-education of the future specialist, its fragmentation, formal nature; insufficient provision of the process of formation of practical skills during practice with the necessary educational and methodical material (using differentiated, individual tasks, innovative technologies, computer tools), etc.

We also noticed positive trends in the optimization of research work. If we do not take into account the differences between the programs of different educational institutions, as well as the scattering of methodological principles of the research process between individual disciplines, students have more or less the opportunity to learn the most common scientific methods of obtaining and analyzing social information, as well as the possibilities of its practical use. In almost all HEI the scientific bases of normative-legal, accompanying, preventive and prognostic activity are obligatory with optional possibility to investigate these spheres.

Mastering applied methods of analysis, knowledge of social modeling and forecasting, application of contemporary research in analytical and practical activities of a social worker is still taught in the lecture-seminar

system, but we see that there is a tendency to analytical and project approach to solving specific problematic situations that arise in the social sphere.

A significant achievement of Ukrainian education is the free opportunity for students to participate in research competitions, international research and projects, as well as ample opportunities for volunteering and public activity with its further analysis based on their own experience.

In general, the analysis of the state of Ukrainian higher education shows that over the past decade there have been some positive changes in the understanding of its goals, content, technologies, methods and forms of its organization.

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Research limitations. The article is of theoretical nature and does not cover all aspects of research in the social sphere, but can be the basis for eliminating methodological and organizational shortcomings and creating a single concept of scientific training of future social workers in accordance with the requirements of today's single barrier-free society.

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