

The Integration of Multicultural Education and Global Perspectives in Social Work Education

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Abstract: This study focuses on the integration of multicultural education and global perspectives in social work education, exploring how to cultivate students' cross-cultural adaptability and global problem-solving abilities through innovations in curriculum design, teaching methods, and practical components. The article first reviews the theoretical foundations of multicultural education and global perspectives, analyzing their application value in social work education. It then highlights the shortcomings of the domestic educational system in the context of globalization, particularly the limitations in curriculum design and practical opportunities. Finally, it proposes specific integration pathways, including the development of global perspective courses, innovations in cross-cultural teaching methods, and the promotion of international cooperation and transnational internships. The findings indicate that only by effectively integrating multicultural education and global perspectives can social work education better address the challenges posed by globalization and cultivate social work professionals with an international outlook.

Keywords: Social Work Education, Multicultural Education, Global Perspectives.

1. Introduction

The deepening development of globalization is reshaping the practice and education of social work [1]. In the face of increasingly complex transnational social issues, traditional social work education systems can no longer meet the growing demand for professional talent [2]. In the past, social work education primarily focused on local issues and solutions, emphasizing service to specific cultures and social environments. However, with the spread of global challenges such as immigration, global social inequality, and climate change, social workers are increasingly confronted with challenges arising from different cultural, social, and national contexts in their practice.

In this context, social work education urgently needs to move beyond the traditional localized framework, incorporating global perspectives and multicultural education to cultivate professionals capable of addressing transnational and cross-cultural issues [3]. Despite the growing prominence of the challenges brought about by globalization and cultural diversity, there are still notable gaps in China's social work education system in this regard. Currently, most social work courses remain overly focused on Western theories and localized practice models, neglecting systematic discussions of global issues and the cultivation of cross-cultural service skills [4]. This limitation often results in students lacking the global perspective and cross-cultural adaptability needed to address complex social problems in practice. This is particularly evident when dealing with issues such as immigration, refugees, and transnational social services, where students often fail to effectively carry out cultural adaptation and interventions [5].

In terms of multicultural education, there are also many shortcomings in social work education. Although in recent years, the domestic education sector has started to recognize this issue and has attempted to incorporate some cross-cultural teaching elements into the curriculum, these efforts often remain at the theoretical level and lack in-depth

innovations in cross-cultural practice and teaching methods. The course content is still overly limited, and the teaching methods are relatively singular. Students lack practical cross-cultural communication and internship opportunities, and the cultivation of global perspectives and cross-cultural understanding is still in its early stages.

Therefore, the core objective of this study is to explore how to effectively integrate multicultural education and global perspectives into the social work education system to meet the changing demands of the globalization process. By analyzing the current state of social work education both domestically and internationally, this study reveals the necessity and feasibility of integrating multicultural education with global perspectives, and then proposes specific educational pathways. The research aims to provide a theoretical foundation and practical framework for the reform of the social work education system, helping educators design curricula that better align with the needs of globalization and cultivate social work professionals capable of addressing transnational and cross-cultural issues. Through this study, it is hoped that valuable insights can be provided for the internationalization of social work education, promoting the modernization of the social work education system and, in turn, improving the quality of social services to better address the complex social challenges brought about by globalization.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Multicultural Education and Global Perspectives

2.1. Core Concepts of Multicultural Education

2.1.1. Definition and Development Background

Multicultural education, as an educational philosophy, originated in the early 20th century in the United States and Europe, with significant development during the civil rights movement and social changes of the 1960s [6]. The core idea of multicultural education is to acknowledge and respect differences in culture, language, religion, and social

background, with the aim of promoting students' understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity through education, thereby cultivating their global awareness and cross-cultural adaptability [7]. Its main goals are not only to eliminate discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes but also to provide equal opportunities and resources, allowing students from all cultural backgrounds to fully participate in the educational process, thus achieving social equity and justice.

In the field of social work, multicultural education emphasizes that educators and practitioners should have the ability to understand and serve diverse cultural groups [8]. As globalization progresses, the social service needs of immigrants, refugees, and minority groups continue to rise, and social workers must possess keen cross-cultural awareness and cultural adaptability [9]. To effectively address this challenge, social work education needs to integrate multicultural theory and practice, helping students develop the ability to respect and understand cultural differences, thus providing more effective services [10].

2.1.2. The Integration of Cultural Relativism, Cultural Adaptation Theory, and Social Work Practice

Cultural relativism is a theory for understanding and interpreting cultural differences, which asserts that each culture has its inherent validity and should not be judged by the standards of another culture [11]. This theory provides an important framework for social workers when facing cultural differences [12]. Social workers must discard cultural superiority and prejudice, recognizing the uniqueness of different cultures, and offering help that better aligns with the needs of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds [13].

Cultural adaptation theory focuses on the process of individuals or groups adjusting and integrating into different cultural environments [14]. In social work practice, this theory emphasizes that service users may go through various stages such as culture shock, cultural conflict, and cultural adaptation when faced with a new cultural context [15]. Social workers must not only help service users understand and adapt to the new cultural environment but also support them in maintaining their cultural identity. For social workers themselves, cultural adaptation theory reminds them to continuously adjust their behavior and communication methods when engaging with cross-cultural groups to better understand the needs of their clients.

The integration of these two theories provides essential theoretical support for social work education, particularly in the development of students' cross-cultural service skills. Guided by these theories, social work education can help students understand cultural differences, respect cultural diversity, and effectively deliver services in a multicultural environment.

2.2. The Concept and Educational Value of Global Perspectives

2.2.1. The Necessity of Global Perspectives in Social Work

Global perspectives refer to the awareness, understanding, and attention to global issues. They require individuals or professionals to go beyond local or national viewpoints and analyze and solve problems from a globalized perspective. In the field of social work, global perspectives are particularly crucial because social work does not only address issues within local communities or national borders; many social

problems are transnational. For example, issues such as immigration, refugee resettlement, international humanitarian aid, global poverty, and environmental concerns all require social workers to possess a global perspective and be able to understand and respond to complex problems across different countries, regions, and cultures.

Global perspectives help social workers realize that social issues often have transnational and cross-cultural dimensions. Problems in one country or region are often closely linked to the political, economic, and social conditions of other countries and regions. Globalization has intensified interdependence among nations, and social problems are no longer isolated; many issues require global collaboration to resolve. Therefore, integrating global perspectives into social work education is key to training social workers with international thinking and cross-cultural competence.

2.2.2. Main Factors Influencing Global Social Work Practice

(1) International Cooperation

The complexity and transnational nature of global social issues require close cooperation between countries. Many international organizations, NGOs, and governments are collaborating to address global problems, and social workers must possess the ability to cooperate across national borders and cultures to effectively resolve global social issues. The education system should strengthen courses and practical experiences focused on international cooperation, helping students develop the ability to understand and engage in global collaboration.

(2) Transnational Social Issues

One of the biggest challenges in global social work is dealing with transnational social issues. These include issues such as transnational migration, refugee crises, global poverty, and global health crises. As globalization deepens, these problems often require coordination and collaboration across borders to resolve. Social work education must help students understand the root causes and development trends of these global issues, as well as develop their ability to work across borders and implement strategies to solve these problems.

2.3. The Intersection of Multiculturalism and Global Perspectives

2.3.1. The Connection Between Cross-Cultural Understanding and Global Social Work Practice

Cross-cultural understanding refers to the ability to understand and respect the values and behaviors of different cultural backgrounds, and it forms the foundation of global social work practice. Global social workers need to possess cross-cultural understanding in order to effectively communicate and interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and provide professional services tailored to the specific needs of different cultures. Cross-cultural understanding helps social workers avoid cultural biases, reduce misunderstandings and conflicts, and thus improve the effectiveness of interventions. In the context of globalization, social workers must not only address local issues but also possess the ability to serve diverse cultural groups, which reflects the intersection of global perspectives and multicultural education.

2.3.2. How Social Work Education Balances Focus on Local and International Issues

In the context of deepening globalization, social work education faces the challenge of balancing local and

international issues. Social work education must not only address local social issues such as community development, domestic violence, and social welfare, but also give due attention to global issues such as immigration, transnational poverty, and environmental change. The education system needs to design curricula that encompass these diverse perspectives, fostering students' ability to handle both local and international problems through methods like case studies and cross-cultural internships. For example, social work courses can provide background knowledge on global social issues to help students understand the impact of globalization on social services. At the same time, the curriculum should also focus on the in-depth exploration of local social issues, ensuring that students gain solid practical experience in local contexts. Through such curriculum design, students can both understand and address global issues within the framework of globalization, while also playing a professional role in local practice, thus achieving a balance between local and international concerns.

3. The Current State of Multiculturalism and Global Perspectives in Social Work Education, Both Domestically and Internationally

With the advancement of globalization and the deepening of cross-cultural exchanges, social work education is facing new challenges and opportunities. How to effectively integrate multiculturalism and global perspectives into social work education has become an important issue of focus in today's educational community. The cultivation of multicultural education and global perspectives is not only related to social workers' cross-cultural adaptability but also to their ability to address complex social problems in the context of globalization. Therefore, both domestic and international practices and experiences in social work education provide valuable insights. However, the current state of social work education in China still lags behind, particularly in terms of integrating multicultural education and global perspectives. Despite the growing significance of globalization, the response of China's social work education system to these issues has been relatively slow, and effective teaching frameworks and practical pathways have not yet been established. In the following sections, we will explore the specific situation of social work education in China, focusing on the main issues, particularly the insufficient integration of multicultural education and global perspectives, and further analyze the impact of these issues on the training of social workers.

3.1. The Current State and Issues of Social Work Education in China

Currently, social work education in China is facing new challenges brought about by globalization. With the increasing complexity of global social issues and the rise in cross-national and cross-cultural exchanges, there is an urgent need to strengthen the cultivation of multicultural education and global perspectives in social work education. However, the current social work education system in China has significant shortcomings in this regard.

Firstly, there is a lack of systematic approaches to multicultural education in the domestic educational sector, and the course content and teaching methods have not

adequately responded to the need for social workers' cross-cultural adaptability in a globalized society. Secondly, the cultivation of global perspectives is still in its early stages. Domestic social work courses tend to focus too much on local issues and lack a systematic analysis and discussion of global social problems.

3.1.1. Multicultural education is not systematic

In China, although some universities and educational institutions have begun to pay attention to multicultural education, their curriculum settings are often loose and lack integrity and depth. Most social work education courses focus on analyzing and responding to local social problems, such as poverty, aging, and domestic violence, with relatively little discussion of cross-cultural and global social issues. The teaching methods are also traditional. Classroom teaching mainly relies on lecturing mode, lacking cross-cultural practice opportunities for actual contact and interaction with students. Although some courses will mention cultural differences, cultural adaptation theory and so on, but this kind of study often stays at the theoretical level, lacks the concrete operation and the practice.

3.1.2. Global vision is still in its infancy

At present, social work education under the background of globalization has not formed a systematic framework in China. Many social work courses lack in-depth discussion and practice when dealing with global social issues [16]. For example, although transnational social issues such as global poverty, transnational migration crisis and climate change have been paid attention to a certain extent, they are still not reflected in curriculum content, discipline design and practice links [17]. Internationalized courses and projects are still supplementary contents in the domestic education system and have not been generally integrated into the core curriculum of social work education [18]. Therefore, there is an urgent need for in-depth reform of social work education in China in terms of global vision and multicultural education, especially in terms of curriculum design and increasing practical opportunities, and it is necessary to learn from successful international experiences [19].

3.2. International Experience and Reference

To better address the challenges brought about by globalization, many countries' social work education systems have accumulated rich experience in multicultural education and the cultivation of a global perspective. By analyzing the social work education systems in North America, Europe, and other regions, we can gain some useful references and insights for China's social work education.

3.2.1. The practices in North America, Europe, and other regions

In North America, particularly in the United States and Canada, multicultural education has become one of the core components of social work education and has been widely implemented. For instance, the NYU Silver School of Social Work includes "Cultural Diversity" as a required course [20]. The curriculum not only covers the theoretical foundations of cultural differences but also incorporates discussions of practical cases, such as immigration and refugee assistance, to help students gain a deep understanding of cross-cultural issues. Additionally, the university collaborates with multiple international organizations to offer students cross-border internship opportunities, thereby enhancing their international perspectives [21].

European countries also have valuable practices in this regard. The social work education program at University College London (UCL) emphasizes a global perspective and multicultural education. The curriculum not only addresses global social issues such as international poverty and transnational migration but also focuses on developing students' cross-cultural adaptability [22]. In terms of course design, UCL integrates global social issues with cultural adaptation and international cooperation to promote the comprehensive development of students' abilities.

3.2.2. Intercultural Internships and International Cooperation

In addition to the diversification of the curriculum, cross-cultural internships and international cooperation are important components of social work education in Europe and North America. For example, Canada's Master of Social Work program offers cross-border internship opportunities in collaboration with developing countries and conflict-affected regions. Students are not only able to directly participate in international social service projects but also gain a profound understanding of the complexity of global social issues through practice [23]. Through these internship opportunities, students can not only develop their cross-cultural communication and cooperation skills but also address social problems involving diverse cultural groups in practice.

The practices of international cooperation and cross-cultural internships have been widely applied worldwide. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) provides a platform for promoting global cooperation in social work education. Many countries have strengthened academic exchanges and cooperation through this platform, thereby fostering the development of a global perspective [24].

By comparing the social work education models in North America, Europe, and other regions, we can draw some valuable lessons for domestic social work education. First, the curriculum should focus on the organic integration of multiculturalism and a global perspective, paying attention not only to understanding cultural differences but also to strengthening the analysis and resolution of global social issues. Second, the introduction of cross-cultural internships and international cooperation opportunities can significantly enhance students' global vision and practical abilities. Finally, domestic social work education should strengthen collaboration with the International Federation of Social Workers and other global universities to promote students' participation in more international projects and academic exchanges.

3.3. Differences and Reflections on Domestic and International Practices

Although domestic and international social work education share many similarities in the cultivation of multiculturalism and global perspective, there are still significant differences in specific practices and educational models. The integration of multiculturalism and global perspective in domestic social work education is relatively low, while abroad, a comprehensive system and set of methods have already been established.

3.3.1. Comparison of fusion methods at home and abroad

In the integration approach of social work education, domestic education tends to focus on solving local social problems, with relatively less content on global issues. In terms of curriculum design, domestic social work courses

often pay more attention to the needs of local groups, such as community development and family intervention, while global social issues under the backdrop of globalization, such as international migration and global poverty, have not been given sufficient attention. In comparison, social work education systems in foreign countries, especially in North America and Europe, have already organically integrated multiculturalism and a global perspective into their curricula. The course content is rich, balancing both local and international issues, and emphasizes the cultivation of students' cross-cultural service capabilities in a global context.

3.3.2. Shortcomings and room for improvement in the existing domestic education system

The main issue with the domestic social work education system is that the curriculum content is overly localized, with weak integration of a global perspective. Although multicultural education is gradually gaining attention, it still lacks systematicness and practicality overall. Moreover, there are few opportunities for international cooperation and cross-cultural internships, and the cultivation of students' global vision and cross-cultural service capabilities remains lagging. These issues make it difficult for domestic social work education to meet the requirements of the globalization era for social workers. Therefore, domestic social work education urgently needs a series of improvements. First, the curriculum should be strengthened in terms of globalization and diversification by incorporating content on global social issues, transnational cooperation, and international humanitarian assistance to enhance the internationalization and cross-cultural perspectives of the courses. Second, more cross-cultural internship and international cooperation opportunities should be provided. By collaborating with international organizations and foreign universities, transnational internship programs should be added to give students practical experience in a global context. Finally, global academic exchanges and cooperation should be promoted. Strengthening connections with organizations such as the International Federation of Social Workers and expanding students' international exchange opportunities will enhance their global competitiveness.

4. The Path to Integrating Multiculturalism and Global Perspective in Social Work Education

In the context of globalization, how to achieve an organic integration of multiculturalism and a global perspective in social work education is key to enhancing the comprehensive abilities of social workers. To realize this goal, it is essential to make systematic adjustments in curriculum design, teaching methods, innovation of teaching resources, and assessment systems. The following are several main pathways:

4.1. Internationalization of Curriculum Design and Content

To effectively integrate global issues and multicultural content, the design of social work curricula needs to be re-examined and adjusted. On the one hand, the curriculum content should focus on global social issues, especially those that are transnational and cross-cultural in nature. For example, international social work, transnational social issues (such as environmental change, global poverty), migration

and refugee issues, and others are pressing topics that need to be addressed in the context of globalization and must be incorporated into the curriculum system. These courses should not be limited to theoretical teaching alone; they should also employ methods such as case analysis and field research to enable students to systematically understand and address global social issues.

On the other hand, the curriculum design should emphasize the diversity of cross-cultural education. Multicultural courses should not only teach students about cultural differences but also help them enhance their cross-cultural sensitivity in daily practice. For example, by integrating social work methods from different cultural contexts, students' cross-cultural communication skills can be developed. The curriculum could also include practical projects in collaboration with international social work organizations, allowing students to learn and grow within the context of globalization. In this way, the education process can achieve a dual reinforcement of cultural awareness and a global perspective.

4.2. Innovation in Teaching Methods and Teaching Resources

Social work education should focus on cultivating students' practical abilities, rather than simply imparting theoretical knowledge. Traditional teaching methods, while capable of transmitting knowledge to some extent, are insufficient when dealing with the complexities of multiculturalism and a global perspective. Therefore, more innovative and interactive teaching approaches must be adopted. Case-based teaching is an important method. By analyzing and discussing cross-border and cross-cultural social work cases, students can gain a more intuitive understanding of the complexities of global social issues and learn how to implement appropriate social work interventions in different cultural contexts.

In addition, role-playing is another effective cross-cultural teaching method. By simulating real-life social work scenarios, students can assume roles from different cultural backgrounds in a simulated environment. This allows them to understand and experience the needs and challenges of different cultures, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural competence. Moreover, virtual internships are increasingly gaining attention. Students can participate in social work projects worldwide through virtual platforms. Despite being in different geographical locations, they can still be exposed to social issues from around the globe and engage in cross-cultural analysis and collaboration.

Innovation in teaching resources is also a crucial means of integrating a global perspective with multiculturalism. By developing international teaching platforms and promoting cooperation and exchange between domestic and international social work education institutions, teachers can interact in real-time with foreign experts and scholars through video conferencing and online courses. This provides students with a globalized perspective. Additionally, with the support of international networks and platforms, social work education can introduce more international teaching resources and materials. This helps students understand global solutions to social problems and their effectiveness.

4.3. Assessment Systems and the Development of Student Competencies

In the process of integrating multiculturalism and a global perspective, the reform of the assessment system is equally

crucial. Existing assessment criteria often focus excessively on students' mastery of theoretical knowledge, while assessments of cross-cultural understanding and global perspective are relatively lacking. Therefore, it is necessary to develop assessment standards that meet the requirements of cross-cultural education, especially in evaluating students' global perspective and cross-cultural understanding. This is not merely an examination of students' knowledge but should also focus on their ability to address multicultural and global issues in real-life situations, such as communication skills, adaptability, and the ability to implement cross-cultural intervention strategies.

To comprehensively enhance students' global perspective and cross-cultural capabilities, social work education should provide a wealth of practical opportunities. For example, organizing cross-cultural internship programs allows students to participate in real social work projects in different countries and cultural contexts, where they can directly experience and address global social issues. In these internships, students can not only improve their cross-cultural service capabilities but also integrate the theoretical knowledge they have learned in the classroom with practical operations, thereby deepening their understanding of global social issues. Additionally, introducing simulations and practices of global social work can further strengthen students' cross-cultural cooperation and global problem-solving abilities. These practical opportunities will help students better understand the challenges and opportunities in the global social work field and cultivate them into social workers with global competitiveness.

5. Conclusion

Multicultural education and a global perspective play an extremely important role in social work education. With the acceleration of globalization, social workers are not only required to have a profound ability to address local issues but also to be capable of delivering effective social services in cross-cultural contexts. Multicultural education provides social workers with the foundation for understanding and respecting different cultures, while a global perspective helps them engage in more comprehensive and forward-looking thinking within the framework of global social issues. Therefore, in the era of globalization, social work education must be committed to organically integrating the cultivation of multiculturalism and a global perspective to ensure that social workers can handle international and diverse social problems with ease. Through the exploration of this study, a clear conclusion can be drawn: the path design that combines multicultural education with a global perspective is crucial for training social workers with global adaptability and cross-cultural service capabilities. This not only enables students to have stronger adaptability in cross-cultural communication but also allows them to propose more innovative and effective solutions when facing global issues. Thus, innovation in the education system and teaching methods is the key to achieving this goal.

In response to the existing shortcomings in current social work education, this paper proposes some policy recommendations and practical measures aimed at promoting the globalization and diversification of social work education. First, it is suggested that education departments increase courses on global perspective in social work education, ensuring that the curriculum covers topics such as international social work, transnational social issues, global

poverty, climate change, migration, and refugees to enhance students' global adaptability and cross-cultural service capabilities. Second, universities are encouraged to engage in extensive cooperation with international social work organizations to build more platforms for cross-cultural internships and exchanges. Through international cooperation, not only can more practical opportunities be provided for students, but it can also promote the internationalization of educational concepts, thereby advancing the development and improvement of domestic social work education. Additionally, at the policy level, there should be increased support for cross-cultural internships and international cooperation projects, providing more funding and resource support for social work education and promoting international academic exchanges and collaborative research among teachers. These measures can help improve the quality of education and further advance the internationalization of social work education.

Future research can further explore the deep integration of multicultural education and a global perspective in social work education from multiple dimensions. First, the further optimization of teaching methods and assessment standards will be an important direction for future research. Although the current curriculum already includes some content on a global perspective, how to truly cultivate students' global perspective and cross-cultural capabilities through innovative teaching methods and assessment tools, such as role-playing, case analysis, and cross-cultural virtual internships, remains an urgent issue to be addressed. For the standardization of teaching assessment, how to develop scientific methods that can quantify and assess the effectiveness of global perspective cultivation is also a topic worthy of in-depth exploration. Additionally, research should focus on the impact of different educational backgrounds and national differences on the effectiveness of global perspective cultivation. Under different cultural and educational systems, students' development of a global perspective may face different challenges and opportunities. Therefore, cross-national comparative studies can provide more references and insights for optimizing the path of global perspective cultivation.

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