

Comparative Analysis of Social Work Curricula in Asia: Recommendations for Curriculum Development in Cambodia

Socheata Somchan^{1*}, Ok Kyung Yang²

^{1,2}Department of Social Welfare, Ewha Womans University, South Korea

*Corresponding author: Socheata Somchan (paramjit@usm.my)

ABSTRACT

Despite growing recognition of the needs for social workers, Cambodia is at the initial stage in establishing a standardize system recognizing the social service workforce which is an important factor providing direction for social work education development. This paper compares social workforce development frameworks and curricula in developed countries like Korea and developing countries like Thailand to suggest improvements for curriculum development in Cambodia. The research aimed to assess the strengths and limitations of social work curricula in the region and identify effective methods for advancing social work education in Cambodia. The analysis of the social work curriculum using curriculum frameworks such as Curriculum Design and Content, Pedagogical Approaches, Field education, and Accreditation and Registration Systems provides a descriptive analysis of the current state of social work curricula in Korea, Thailand, and Cambodia. Nine recommendations for Cambodia's Social Work Curriculum Development include establishing a well-defined licensure and certification framework, expanding elective courses to focus on specific areas of interest, preserving practicum hours, enhancing collaborations with local social service organizations, including interdisciplinary courses, customizing curriculum material to meet local socioeconomic demands, providing ongoing professional development opportunities for social work educators, enhancing Competency-Based Education by prioritizing skills in line with local contexts, and promoting community involvement through community-based projects and activities.

Keywords: Undergraduate degree curriculum, social work education, curriculum development, social service workforce, field education

1. Introduction

Social work education is crucial in addressing social issues by preparing professionals to work with individuals, families, and communities to promote well-being and social justice (NAPSWI, 2019). Social work education is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses a range of theoretical frameworks and practical approaches (Nikku, 2010). It emphasizes the development of skills such as advocacy, communication, and critical thinking, as well as a strong foundation in social sciences, humanities, and policy analysis (Deneme & Ada, 2012). Social work education also includes fieldwork placements to provide students with hands-on experience and the opportunity to apply their learning in real-world settings (Study Tools: Aims and Objectives of Field Practicum, 2022). Social work curricula equip students with the knowledge and skills to address complex social issues such as poverty, discrimination, and access to resources (Amadasun, 2020).

The curriculum often includes courses on human behaviour, social policy, research methods, and interventions with diverse populations. Additionally, students are trained to assess community needs, develop and implement programs, and advocate for social change (Tsui & Yan, 2010). Understanding the principles of social justice, cultural competence, and ethical practice is also a fundamental part of social work education (Bhuyan et al., 2017). In Asia, the development of social work education has been shaped by various factors, including each country's socio-economic and political context (Cox, 1991). While some countries in the region have a well-established social work education system, others are still in the early stages of development (Pawar & Thomas, 2017). However, the current state of social work education in Asia varies widely, with some countries having well-established programs and others facing significant challenges in developing curricula and training opportunities (Tran, 2015) (Amin et al., 2022).

In Cambodia, the development of social work education has been relatively new and recent in comparison to other countries in Asia. While there is a growing recognition of the needs for social workers, the country continues to face challenges in establishing a comprehensive social work education system (JICA, 2022). This comparative analysis of social work education in Asia aims to provide recommendations for the development of social work curriculum in Cambodia, by analysing the status of the social work education in countries in the region.

This research aims to compare and analyse the structure of social workforce development and social work curriculum in several Asian countries, including both highly developed nations such as Korea and less developed ones like Thailand. The main objective is to propose enhancements for curriculum development in Cambodia. The study goal is to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of social work curriculum, with the purpose of identifying effective approaches that might facilitate the progress of social work education in Cambodia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Development of Social Work Education in Asia

Before 20th century, western colleges offered social work majors. In Europe and North America, social work attempts to reduce poverty, unemployment, and other issues have increased (Guzzetta, 1996; Noble, 2004). South Korea's social work degree program began at Ewha Womans University in 1947 (Yang, Lee, and Kim, 2020). Social work education in Asia has grown significantly in the past century due to its diverse cultural, social, and political circumstances. This shows that social work is increasingly valued in addressing socioeconomic inequality, poverty, and other community issues. Many levels of Asian social work education have distinct effects and major milestones (Simmons, 2017). India and Japan were early adopters of professional social workers. Indian social work education began in 1936 with the creation of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) (Singh & Saumya, 2021). Asia refocused on social work education after World War II and the subsequent reconstruction and growth. Many countries suffered major social and economic changes, increasing the demand for social welfare programs and qualified social workers.

Asia's social work education modernized and professionalized throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Many countries updated their social work curricula to emphasize theoretical foundations, research methods, and field experience during this time. The Philippines, which introduced social work education in the 1950s, updated its curriculum to meet global standards and increase quality (Henry & Austin, 2021). Recent developments in Asian social work education have focused on urbanization, migration, and

globalization. Since the government recognizes social work's role in societal stability and progress, China and other nations have considerably expanded their social work education programs. Malaysia and Thailand have large social work degree programs that emphasize cultural competence and regional practices (Yip, 2004). Social work education in Asia faces challenges such educational standard differences, resource shortages, and uneven government support. These challenges provide chances for growth and innovation. The future of Asian social work education depends on regional collaboration, technological integration, and curricular development (Han et al., 2016).

2.2. Comparative Framework

The comparative analysis of social work education in Asia is framed around four key areas: 1) curriculum design and content, 2) pedagogical approaches, 3) field education and practicum, and 4) accreditation and registration systems (Noble, 2004) (Brigham, 1982) (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004) (Coulshed, 1988).

2.2.1. Curriculum Design and Content:

Curriculum design and content are the crucial elements of social work education that shape the knowledge, skills, and values instilled in students. Asian countries have taken diverse approaches in structuring their social work curricula, reflecting their unique cultural, social, and economic contexts (Chang & Mo, 2007). Some countries, such as Korea and Singapore, have well-established social work education programs that balance theoretical knowledge with practical application (Han et al., 2016). In contrast, the development of social work education in Cambodia is still relatively new, and the curriculum content may not yet fully align with international standards or address the specific needs of the local context (Chang & Mo, 2007) (Yip, 2004).

2.2.2. Pedagogical Approaches:

The pedagogical approaches used in social work education across Asia vary considerably (Kwong, 2017). Pedagogical approaches play a vital role in shaping the learning experiences of social work students. Various pedagogical methods have been adopted across different Asian countries to educate and train future social workers (Han et al., 2016). Some countries, such as Malaysia and Thailand, have placed a strong emphasis on integrating active learning methods, case-based instruction, and community engagement into their social work curricula (Amin et al., 2021) (Zuraiju et al., 2020). Others, like China and Vietnam, have traditionally relied more on lecture-based teaching and rote learning, although there are efforts to modernize pedagogical practices (Hines et al., 2010).

In Korea and Singapore, the pedagogical approach in social work education emphasizes a balanced mix of theoretical knowledge and practical application (Han et al., 2016). This approach is designed to equip the students with a strong theoretical foundation while also providing them with hands-on experiences through fieldwork and case studies. Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios, preparing them for the challenges they may encounter in their future professional practice (Akinde et al., 2017).

In contrast, countries like Malaysia and Thailand have integrated active learning methods and community engagement into their social work curricula (Amin et al., 2021). This approach encourages the students to actively participate in their learning process, engage with local communities, and gain practical experience through internships and community projects. By

immersing themselves in actual social work settings, students develop a deeper understanding of the issues they will face in their future careers and learn how to effectively address these challenges (Sherraden, 1993).

It is essential for Cambodia to consider these diverse pedagogical approaches and tailor them to the local context to ensure that the social work education system aligns with international standards and effectively addresses the specific needs of the community. By integrating a mix of theoretical knowledge, practical application, and active learning approaches, Cambodia can develop a well-rounded social work curriculum that prepares students to meet the demands of the profession in a culturally sensitive and effective manner.

2.2.3. Field education

Field education and practicum experiences are essential components of social work education, providing students with hands-on training and the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings (Omorogiuwa, 2023). In some countries, such as South Korea and Singapore, field education is integral to the social work curriculum (Yeom & Bae, 2010). Students are required to undergo extensive field placements in various social service agencies, community organizations, or healthcare settings (Amadasun, 2020). These placements allow students to work directly with individuals, families, and communities, enhancing their understanding of diverse social issues and the practical skills necessary for intervention and support. Moreover, students are often supervised by the experienced social workers who provide guidance and mentorship throughout their field education experience (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016). On the other hand, countries like Malaysia and Thailand have also emphasized the importance of field education and practicum in their social work programs (Azman et al., 2020). Students are encouraged to engage in supervised field placements that offer exposure to the complexities of social work practice within multicultural and multilingual settings (Amin et al., 2021). By immersing themselves in different community contexts, students develop cultural competence and an awareness of the challenges and strengths present in diverse populations (Gutiérrez & Alvarez, 2000). Furthermore, the Philippines has been at the forefront of integrating field education and practicum into its social work curriculum (Salcido et al., 2002). With a focus on community-based social work, Filipino students engage in practicum experiences that involve grassroots interventions and community development projects (Averett et al., 2012). This approach equips students with the necessary skills to empower communities and advocate for social change (Ambagan, 2022).

It is imperative to acknowledge the significance of field education and practicum in nurturing competent and ethical social work practitioners. These experiences not only bridge the gap between theory and practice but also cultivate empathy, sensitivity, and cultural awareness among students, preparing them to engage with diverse populations and address complex social issues effectively (Amadasun, 2020) (Chui, 2008) (Nguyen et al., 2020).

2.2.4. Accreditation and Registration Systems

Accreditation and registration systems are fundamental in ensuring the quality and standards of social work education and professional practice. Developed countries like Singapore have well-established accreditation systems that rigorously oversee the standards of social work programs and professional licensing (Regan, 2021). These systems play a key role in maintaining the integrity and quality of social work education, as well as safeguarding the welfare of the individuals and communities served by social work practitioners (Dinerman & Walden, 2015). In

contrast, developing Asian countries, including Cambodia, encounter substantial obstacles in establishing robust accreditation and registration systems (Ha, 2021) (Matsuoka et al., 2020).

As the landscape of social work education in Asia continues to evolve, understanding the distinct approaches and challenges faced by different countries can provide valuable insights for the advancement of social work education in Cambodia (Ha, 2021). By learning from the experiences of both developed and developing nations in the region, Cambodia can work towards establishing a comprehensive and culturally responsive social work education system that addresses the specific needs of its communities and contributes to meaningful social change (Kijtorntam et al., 2015).

3. Methodology

To conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of social work curricula in Asia, a multi-faceted research method was employed. The research will involve the collection and analysis of curricula, course syllabi, program descriptions, and accreditation standards from selected Asian countries such as Korea, Thailand and Cambodia. Curricula and course syllabi from reputable social work education institutions in each selected country will be collected. The focus will be on understanding the curricular structure, course content, and the incorporation of diverse theoretical frameworks and practical approaches.

4. Result

4.1. Social Service Workforce Licensing System

4.1.1. Korea

The social work licensing system in South Korea is overseen by the Ministry of Health and Welfare and has two tiers of certification, each with distinct prerequisites (Yang, Lee, and Kim, 2020). Universities provide education and training at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The NGO sector employs a smaller number of people. Social workers assist children in need of protection, low-income families, the handicapped, those with mental health issues, and the elderly. Social work is done at all levels, from the micro (such as individual and family counseling, casework, and social groupwork), mezzo (such as development work with local communities), and the macro (in policy advising, research and management of social welfare organizations) (Choi, et.al., 2009). In South Korea, the main levels of social work certification are the First Grade Social Worker and the Second Grade Social Worker, as stated by the Korean Association of Social Workers in 2017 (Choi & Chun, 2017).

To be eligible for a First Grade Social Worker license, individuals must successfully pass the National License Examination. The examination assesses proficiency through 8 subjects (According to the Korean Council for Social Welfare Education, 2020). In order to take the National Exam, ten core and mandatory courses and seven elective courses are required to be completed. Those core and mandatory courses included Human Behavior and Social Environment, Introduction to Social Welfare, Social Welfare Research Theory, Social Welfare Practice, Social Welfare Practice Techniques, Social Welfare Policy Theory, Social Welfare Law and Practice, Social Welfare Administration, Community Social Welfare, and Social Welfare Field Practice. The Second Grade Social Worker license is given to those who successfully completed the 10 core and mandatory prescribed courses and 7 elective courses in the undergraduate. Those who are in

the graduate program are required to take only 4 core and mandatory and 3 elective courses prior to taking the national exam (Yang, Lee, & Kim, 2020).

4.1.2. Thailand

In Thailand, social workers are engaged in a broad range of institutions, including government ministries, non-governmental welfare groups, enterprises, and private charities. While social work is not widely recognized as a profession, it is on the list of occupations eligible for government employment. Child protection, elderly isolation, anti-trafficking, domestic violence, mental health, and social welfare promotion are all legally required areas of social work (Thailand Association of Social Workers, 2021). The exams for license issuance and acquisition (hence referred to as "license examinations") are only held twice a year by Social Work Professional Council (SWPC). SWPC members with current membership may apply for the exams. If a member's membership has expired, they must request for renewal before taking the exams. Those who are not yet members are needed to apply for membership. They are eligible to apply for the exams subject to its approval and registration. To apply for membership, an applicant must have graduated from the faculty of social work studies or have graduated from another faculty and undergone SWPC training. The tests are divided into two types: one for theoretical subjects with 100 questions and another for practical subjects with 100 questions. Both are written exams with multiple-choice answers. Both forms of tests must be passed by the candidate (JICA, 2022).

4.1.3. Cambodia

Cambodia does not have a formal licensing system for social workers. However, Ministry of Social Affairs Veteran and Youth Rehabilitation (2019) has collaborated with foreign partners to create the "Basic Competency Guide for Cambodian Social Workers". The standards define three primary competencies: values and ethics, knowledge, and skills built in accordance with global and regional settings to meet the practical demands of Cambodia's social environment. It intends to establish guidelines for professional social service professionals and to utilize them as references and frameworks for capacity building and training for the social workforce. The guideline defines Social Service Workforce as "those striving to promote the well-being of victims and vulnerable individuals, including government, NGOs, professional and non-professional, and working for profit and non-profit." Furthermore, the guideline for fundamental competencies for social service employees identifies eleven important abilities for the social service sector. These abilities include engagement abilities, assessment abilities, service planning abilities, implementation and follow-up abilities, documentation and monitoring abilities, communication abilities, interpersonal abilities, networking and advocacy abilities, analytical abilities, and self-reflection and self-care abilities.

4.2. Curricular Structure

4.2.1. Korea

The Ministry of Education in South Korea's current rules stipulate that a bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences requires a minimum of 130 credits. Thus, the overall number of completion credits will stay same at 130 credits. The major compulsory credit must have a minimum of 30 credits, of the total completion credits. All primary completion credits are optional, with just one practicum course mandated as a mandatory major course. The criterion for conferring a bachelor's degree, namely graduation, is contingent upon the fulfillment of the prescribed credit requirements, without any further stipulations (KCUE, 2020). The Curriculum

Guide for Social Welfare 2021-2022 outlines the division of Korea's social work curriculum into three primary categories: compulsory courses for the licensure examination, compulsory courses without examination, and elective subjects.

Table 1 shows the core and mandatory courses and electives courses. Out of those, number 1 through 8 are the subjects for the National License Examination.

N	Courses	Compulsory / Elective
1	Human Behavior and Social Environment	Core and Mandatory Courses
2	Social Welfare Research Theory	
3	Social Welfare Practice	
4	Social Welfare Practice Technical Theory	
5	Social Welfare Policy Theory	
6	Social Welfare Laws and Practices	
7	Social Welfare Administration Theory	
8	Community Welfare Theory	
9	Introduction to Social Welfare	Elective Courses
10	Social Welfare Field Practice	
11	Family Welfare Theory	
12	Correctional Welfare Theory	
13	Elderly Welfare Theory	
14	Social Problem Theory	
15	Social Security	
16	Social Welfare History	
17	Social Welfare Ethics and Philosophy	
18	Social Welfare Data analysis	
19	Program Development and Evaluation	
20	Social Welfare Supervision Theory	
21	Industrial Welfare Theory	
22	Child Welfare Theory	
23	Women's Welfare Theory	
24	Medical Social Welfare Theory	
25	Volunteerism	
26	Welfare Theory for The Disabled	
27	Mental Health	
28	Mental Health Social Welfare Theory	
29	Youth Welfare Theory	
30	School Social Welfare Theory	
31	Family Counseling And Family Therapy	
32	Case Management Theory	
33	International Social Welfare Theory	
34	Poverty Theory	
35	Welfare State Theory	
36	Social Welfare And Cultural Diversity	

Source: The Curriculum Guide for Social Welfare 2021-2022, KCUE (2020)

4.2.2. Thailand

In Thailand, there are 6 universities offering degree program in social work. Thammasat University was the first university in Thailand to establish a department dedicated to social work studies. Thammasat University offers a variety of degrees in this field. Thammasat University was established in 1934. The Faculty of Social Administration offers bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degree programs. The Faculty is referred to as the Faculty of Social Administration in English, and it provides a program focused on social work. The term "Social Administration" is used in English owing to its historical association with the Public Welfare Department at the institution. The Thammasat University's Faculty of Social Administration provides 2 undergraduate degree programs, 5 graduate degree programs, and 1 doctoral degree program. The program for the "Bachelor of Arts in Social Policy and Development (SPD)" is offered in the English language.

The Thammasat University's Student Professional Development (SPD) department offers a two-month internship program for students in their third year of study. Regarding the Thai language programs, there are three distinct internships available during the fourth year of the bachelor's degree program. During the first internship, students acquire fundamental knowledge about the operations of recipient firms. During the second internship, students engage in the development of initiatives aimed at benefiting the community. During the third internship, students choose certain subjects and develop projects for the community, similar to the second internship (Data Collection Survey for Human Resource Development on Social Work in ASEAN Countries, 2022).

Table 2: List of courses offered at the Bachelor of Arts in Social Policy and Development, Thammasat University

Year	Semester	Courses	Year	Semester	Course
1	1	Civic engagement	3	1	Analysis and evaluation of development and welfare programs
		Thailand, ASEAN and the world			Globalization and international development paradigms
		Social life skills			Comparative welfare states
		Communication skills in English			International organizations and human rights framework
		Creativity and communication			Negotiation and conflict resolution
		Academic writing			Free elective (1)
	2	Life and sustainability		Socio-political economies of global communities	
		Critical thinking, reading and writing		Social welfare policies and development in ASEAN countries	
		Fundamentals of religions and		Social protection	

		philosophy			
		General psychology			Strategic communication for social changes
		Introduction to sociology			Civil society management and development
		-			Free elective (1)
2	1	Introduction to political science	4	1	Social entrepreneurship and social innovation
		Introduction to law and legal system			Seminar
		Introductory economics			Transnational corporations and labor welfare
		Human behavior in the social environment			Migration and the changing society
		Social change and social problems			Globalization and child rights
		Gender and social diversity			Public health and social well-being
	2	Social research methods for social policy and development		Development and social welfare project	
		Poverty and rural-urban development		Disaster management and social intervention	
		Evidence-based social policy		Social gerontology	
		Business and social development		Special topic in social policy and development	
		Social policy theories and practice		-	
		Welfare economics		-	

source: Data Collection Survey for Human Resource Development on Social Work in ASEAN Countries, 2022

4.2.3. Cambodia

In 2004, a collaboration between the University of Washington in the United States and the Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia came into being. After that, in 2008, the Royal University of Phnom Penh became the first institution in Cambodia to offer a bachelor's degree program in social work. This was made possible by the University of Washington. At the moment, the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the NISA, and the Saint Paul Institute are the three institutions of higher education in the country that provide a professional degree in social work (RUPP, 2022). Currently, 459 individuals have earned a higher education (bachelor's and master's degrees) in the field of social work from one of these three schools, with 375 individuals holding a bachelor's degree and 84 individuals holding a master's degree (JICA, 2022).

After earning accreditation from the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities, the Royal University of Phnom Penh became Cambodia's first higher education school to offer an undergraduate degree in social work in 2008. The curriculum intends to foster students' awareness of complex societal problems through an ecological framework and to teach empowering solutions at the local, meso, and macro levels. Degree program graduates are intended to be able to work in development projects as child protection officers, youth counselors, case managers, community development officers, program managers, social advocates, social workers researchers, and so on (Royal University of Phnom Penh, 2022).

In addition, RUPP has formed a collaboration with Ewha Womans University (EWU) in Seoul, South Korea, to create and implement a master's degree in social work. In June 2007, RUPP and EWU signed an official Memorandum of Understanding outlining the EWU Graduate School of Social Welfare's support for establishment of a Master of Social Work course. Soon after, EWU's academic specialists design a curriculum for this master's degree in social work (Yang, Lee, Im, 2018). Through the collaborative relationship, EWU established Cambodia's first Doctoral degree program in Social Work (CEFIA, 2022). The master's and doctorate degrees programs were transferred to RUPP in 2022.

One of the criteria for assessment that is specified in the guideline is the intended learning outcome; compare the learning target of the Bachelor of Social Work degree and the courses that make up the degree. The BSW at the RUPP identified the nine competencies that match the SWD's vision and purpose, the BSW's aims, and the IASSW and IFSW's guiding principles.

The courses that make up the bachelor's degree program are included as follows. The curriculum is designed follow concept of competencies, and it was conceived of in light of the anticipated results of student education. A total of 129 credits must be earned over the course of four years to get a bachelor's degree. Students are expected to complete a total of 800 hours of practicum over the second, third, and fourth years of the program. This requirement is in accordance with the significant focus that is placed on practicum.

Table 3: Department of Social Work's Four-Year Curriculum at the RUPP (2022)

Year	First Semester		Second Semester	
	Subjects	Credits	Subjects	Credits
Y1	English	4	English	4
	Computer	3	General Psychology	3
	Fundamental of Sociology	3	Demographic Statistic	3
	Introduction to Philosophy	3	Culture Civilization and Khmer History	3
	Introduction to Social work I	3	Introduction to Social work II	3
Y2	English	4	English	4
	Interpersonal Skills I	3	Interpersonal Skill II	3
	Introduction to Professional Practice I	3	Introduction to Professional Practice II	3
	Causes and Consequences of Poverty	3	Governance	3
	Developmental Psychology	3	Introduction to Organizational Development	3

	Community Empowerment Practice I	3	Community Empowerment Practice II	3
Y3	English	4	English	4
	Community Empowerment Practice III	3	Introduction to Social Work Research Methodology	3
	Interpersonal Skill III	3	Working with Traumatized Clients	3
	Introduction to Mental Health	3	Building Relationships Among Diverse Groups Task and Treatment Groups	3
	Practicum I	4	Practicum II	5
Y4	Senior Project I	1	Senior Project II	1
	Advance Practice I	3	Practicum III	11
	Advance Practice II	3	Advance Practice V	3
	Advance Practice III	3	-	
	Advance Practice IV	3	-	

Source: Department of Social Work, Royal University of Phnom Penh, (RUPP, 2020)

5. Discussion

5.1. Social Work Curricula Design and Content

In Korea, the Ministry of Education has set a requirement of at least 130 credits for a bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as part of the social work curriculum. Out of these, a minimum of 30 credits must be completed in the primary field of study. The curriculum is categorized into mandatory courses for obtaining a license, mandatory courses that do not need an examination, and optional courses (KCUE, 2020). The course curriculum consists of eight core and mandatory courses for the licensure examination, two core and mandatory courses but exempt from examination, and a range of elective courses covering many themes in the field of social work in Korea (KCUE, 2020). The program encompasses a diverse array of subjects, guaranteeing that students get a comprehensive comprehension of social work. Furthermore, it included both academic coursework and hands-on instruction via field exercises. Nevertheless, the rigid curriculum tailored to align with the requirements of the national social worker license examination may restrict the ability to be flexible and react to growing social challenges or new approaches.

Thailand's social work education, namely at Thammasat University, offers a range of undergraduate, master's, and doctorate degrees. The program places a strong emphasis on practical training by providing students with several opportunities to participate in internships and community involvement initiatives (Data Collection Survey for Human Resource Development on Social Work in ASEAN Countries, 2022). The course four-year curriculum encompasses a wide range of internships and community initiatives that provide students practical, experiential learning opportunities. Furthermore, the program offers an interdisciplinary approach that integrates information from other fields, so increasing a comprehensive grasp of social concerns.

In Cambodia, the social work curriculum at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) is designed to focus on developing certain skills and abilities. It consists of a total of 129 credits, which includes a practicum component that involves 800 hours of practical experience. The program is specifically developed to tackle intricate social issues by using an ecological framework. It also involves partnerships with foreign universities like as the Royal University of

Phnom Penh in 2022. The competency-based approach emphasizes the development of particular abilities to guarantee the learning of appropriate skills. In addition, the comprehensive practicum helps students get substantial practical experience with 800 hours of practicum.

5.2. Pedagogical Approach

There is significant variation in the instructional methods used in social work education across Asia (Kwong, 2017). Pedagogical methodologies are crucial in influencing the educational encounters of students studying social work. Different Asian nations have used various educational approaches to teach and prepare future social workers (Han et al., 2016). Thailand has prioritized the incorporation of active learning methodologies, case-based education, and community participation into its social work curriculum (Amin et al., 2021) (Zuraiju et al., 2020).

In South Korea, the educational method in social work education places equal importance on both academic knowledge and practical application (Han et al., 2016). This method aims to provide students with a robust academic basis, while simultaneously offering them practical experience via fieldwork and case studies. Students are urged to use their knowledge in practical situations, equipping them for the difficulties they may face in their future professional activity in real-life environments (Akinde et al., 2017). The focus on practical application is shown via fieldwork practicum experiences, where students may apply their academic knowledge in community-based social work practice. Engaging in practical activities not only enhances their education but also equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the intricacies and difficulties they may face in their future careers. The conventional method of teaching that relies heavily on lectures, as seen in many Asian nations, may restrict students' access to practical situations and impede the development of analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Hence, the use of active learning techniques, case-based teaching, and community involvement, as shown in Korea and Thailand, presents a comprehensive and hands-on approach to social work education.

5.3. Field education

The social work curriculum in South Korea places significant importance on practical experience gained via field education. According to the curriculum handbook, students must complete at least one practicum course, which involves participating in substantial field assignments in different social service agencies, community groups, or hospital settings (KCUE, 2020). These internships provide students with the opportunity to put their theoretical knowledge into practice by working directly with people, families, and communities to tackle a wide range of social challenges. The supervised field experience is an essential element that guarantees students get assistance and mentoring from seasoned social workers (Yeom & Bae, 2010). However, despite the emphasis on practical experience, there is only one compulsory practicum course, which may be short for many students to get considerable hands-on experience.

Education in the field of Thailand's social work programs, especially those at Thammasat University, prioritize practical training by offering many internships. The respective department provides a two-month internship opportunity for third-year students and offers three separate internships during the fourth year. The internships include a variety of tasks, including gaining insights into organizational operations and creating community initiatives (Data Collection Survey for Human Resource Development on Social Work in ASEAN Countries, 2022). There are numerous internships provide students a wide range of practical experiences and the chance to get exposure to various social work environments. Moreover, the curriculum incorporates initiatives

that have a positive impact on the community, fostering the development of students' social responsibility and practical abilities.

In Cambodia, field education is a crucial element of the social work curriculum. Students are required to do 800 hours of practicum across their second, third, and fourth years as part of the program requirements. This comprehensive practicum guarantees that students get significant practical experience and can effectively use their academic knowledge in real-world contexts. The program is structured based on competencies to guarantee that students acquire the essential abilities for proficient social work practice (Royal University of Phnom Penh, 2022). The mandate of completing 800 hours of practicum guarantees that students get a substantial amount of practical instruction and hands-on experience. The curriculum's emphasis on competencies guarantees that students gain the essential skills and information required for professional activity. However, the substantial demand for practicum hours may provide challenges for both students and institutions in terms of locating appropriate placements and ensuring sufficient supervision.

5.4. Accreditation and Registration Systems

In South Korea, the system comprises many levels of certification, notably the First Grade and Second Grade Social Worker licenses. The Korean Association of Social Workers (KASW) has a crucial role in upholding standards and guaranteeing excellence in social work education and practice. The exam is a comprehensive national assessment administered by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. It evaluates knowledge in areas such as Human Behavior and Social Environment, Social Welfare Policy Theory, and Social Welfare Administration (Kim, 2015). The stringent criteria guarantee a high degree of proficiency among social workers. Thorough educational and practical prerequisites cultivate experts with a broad range of skills and knowledge that align with the needs of the social welfare practice.

Regarding Thailand's accreditation and registration systems, the Social Work Professional Council (SWPC) is responsible for managing the certification of social work. Social work is officially recognized as a profession that is eligible for government employment, however it is not uniformly accepted in all industries. The Professional Certification Exam provide continuous evaluation and guarantee the maintenance of high standards.

Cambodia lacks a defined regulatory framework for licensing social workers. Alternatively, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) has collaborated with foreign partners to create the "Basic Competency Guide for Cambodian Social Workers." Framework for assessing and evaluating competencies. It defines the roles and types of social work practitioners and highlight the practical skills required include engagement, evaluation, service planning, implementation, documentation, communication, interpersonal skills, networking, advocacy, analytical ability, and self-care (MoSVY, 2019). Applicable to both the governmental and non-governmental sectors, its scope encompasses both professional and non-professional personnel. A flexible framework that caters to the specific requirements of the local context while integrating internationally recognized best practices. Emphasizing competences enables the development of skills that are directly applicable and useful. However, the absence of a structured licensing system could hinder the acknowledgment of professionals and the establishment of standardized practices.

5.5. Recommendation for Cambodia's Social Work Curriculum Development

According to the curriculum analysis above the recommendation for Cambodia's social work curriculum development is entailed as follows: (1) Establish a well-defined, official framework for licensure and certification to ensure uniformity and enhance the professionalism of social work education and practice. (2) Enhance the adaptability of the curriculum by expand the range of elective courses to enable students to focus on specific areas of interest and keep up with new social concerns and techniques. (3) Preserve the substantial amount of practicum hours while guaranteeing a wide range of placements that are of exceptional quality. (4) Enhance collaborations with local social service organizations for practical training opportunities. (5) Include interdisciplinary courses that synthesize information from relevant subjects such as public health, law, and education to provide a comprehensive grasp of social problems. (6) While fostering international cooperation might be advantageous, it is crucial to customize the curriculum material to suit the local environment and effectively meet the distinct socioeconomic demands in Cambodia. (7) Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for social work educators to ensure they stay informed about the latest global best practices and innovative teaching methods. (8) Enhance the effectiveness of Competency-Based Education through keep prioritizing the development of certain skills, but make sure these skills are in line with the unique circumstances and requirements of the local environment. Continuously revise competence frameworks by incorporating input from employers and practitioners. (9) Enhance and broaden community involvement by promote community-based projects and activities in the curriculum to cultivate a more robust bond between students and the communities they assist.

6. Conclusion

Although, there is an increasing awareness of the need for social workers, Cambodia is at the beginning stage of establishing the standardize system recognizing the social workforce. This study examines social workforce development frameworks and curricula in developed nations such as Korea and developing countries like Thailand in order to propose enhancements for curriculum development in Cambodia. The objective of the study is to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of social work curriculum in the area and determine efficient approaches to enhance social work education in Cambodia.

An examination of the social work curriculum in Korea, Thailand, and Cambodia is conducted using curriculum frameworks such as Curriculum Design and Content, Pedagogical Approaches, Field education, and Accreditation and Registration Systems. This analysis provides a detailed description of the current status of social work curricula in these countries. Therefore, nine recommendations for the development of Cambodia's Social Work Curriculum are as follows: 1. Establish a clear and comprehensive framework for licensure and certification. 2. Expand the range of elective courses to cater to specific areas of interest. 3. Maintain the required number of practicum hours. 4. Strengthen collaborations with local social service organizations. 5. Integrate interdisciplinary courses into the curriculum. 6. Customize curriculum materials to align with local socioeconomic needs. 7. Provide continuous professional development opportunities for social work educators. 8. Prioritize skills that are relevant to the local context in Competency-Based Education. 9. Encourage community involvement through community-based projects and activities.

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