



## International Network for School Social Work

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## Electronic Newsletter May 2016

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### The Beginnings of School Social Work in Vietnam

Social work is a young profession in Vietnam. In 2002 Nguyen Thi Oanh, the prominent social worker, activist and teacher, wrote in an article on the historical development of social work in Vietnam, “Today, in the face of acute social problems, support from professional social workers is urgently needed, as well as appropriate higher education in social work”. For centuries charitable groups took care of people’s needs; now social work has begun moving from charity towards change and justice. Thanks in part to Nguyen Thi Oanh’s great drive, 40 BSW programs have been started. Then in 2011 the first MSW program was established at Vietnam National University. The legal basis for social work in Vietnam was established in 2010. It provided for developing social work as a profession and for training 60,000 social work staff by 2020.



In recent years the universities have worked to train faculty, develop textbooks and work out field placements. They note success by celebrating anniversaries; so in 2013 they celebrated the 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of World Social Work day with an international meeting “Enhancing the social work profession on helping disadvantaged groups – International experience and practices in Vietnam”. Then, in 2015, recognizing the potential to provide help to children through the schools, they turned their attention to school social work with the conference shown in the photo below, specifically addressing the need to train social workers for school social work at Hanoi National University of Education.



International Conference - Social Work in school – International Experience and Orientation In Vietnam 2015

With about 25 million children to educate, Vietnam has invested heavily in schools. Enrollment and academic success have increased steadily. Article 59 of the Vietnamese Constitution and Article 2 of Vietnam's 2005 Education Law guarantee the right to education. The law guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities, passed on June 17, 2010, mandates equal access to education. Enrollment in pre-school has increased and primary school enrollment is at 98.1%. In secondary school, enrollment and school completion drop considerably, especially for children with disabilities, children in remote and rural areas, ethnic minorities and those with alternative sexual orientation. Vietnam's 8 poverty indicators, lack of education, poor nutrition, inadequate housing, lack of health care, poor sanitation, child labor, family unemployment and lack of amenities such as toys and books, also create educational disadvantage. Social workers have a key role in helping each of these groups achieve equal access to education. In addition school children have the stresses and wide-ranging social problems of students the world over. In an effort to address these problems, there have been school social work pilot programs funded by donors, and social workers have been hired to work as school counselors in Hi Chi Minh City, but so far there is no school social work service. To help schools continue the educational successes of recent years and to deal with the remaining problems, training social workers to work in schools has become a priority.

An international conference on school social work was convened May 26 and 27, 2016 by the Hanoi National University of Education. The topics included the challenges facing schools and students, policies on child protection relating to school social work, worldwide models of school social work and the roadmap for developing school social work in Vietnam. Major goals of the conference were building a curriculum for training school social workers and developing guidelines for field placements in schools. The College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina provided expert help with curriculum matters.



HANOI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

*Thank you to the following for information and photos in this article: Xuyen Dangers, Le Chi An, Thu Ha Nguyen, Luong Quang Hung.*

Vietnam joins over 50 countries where social workers are helping support schools and school children: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Canada, China, Croatia, Curacao, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China), Hungary, Iceland, India, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macau, Macedonia, Malta, Mauritius, Mongolia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Trinidad/Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States and Vietnam.