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GLOBAL MODALITIES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS: WILL UKRAINIAN EDUCATION USE THE MOMENTUM TO CHANGE?

Abstract. The study outlines the current global priorities and standards of social work, which are formed, approved and further promoted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). This study was undertaken with regard to the concept of 'person-in-environment' and context of social work, as well as human rights framework.

The analysis demonstrate all recent global standards adopted by IFSW and IASSW are based on such principles as collectivism, addressing the structural causes of social problems, and building up the research and academic strengths of the profession. Despite the neoliberal turn within the socioeconomic context (manifestating in marketisation, consumerisation and managerialisation) and professional debates on knowledge indigenization, the key global priorities of social work as a profession include the following idealistic expectations: professional promoting social and economic justice, preventing conditions that restrict human rights, eradicating poverty and improving the quality of life of all people.

The specific applications are drawn for Ukrainian social work education in order to support social workers in viewing their clients not from a needs-based standpoint, but through the lens of promotion of human rights and social solidarity.

Key words: transnational social context; global agenda; human rights; education; social work; profession.

Introduction

Social work as a profession has dynamic nature. On the one hand, it is rooted in the cultural traditions of a particular society, but on the other hand, at the same time, global professional standards are being formed and a global agenda for social workers is being set by the international organizations. These priorities, according to scholars (Gitterman, 2014; Jones and Truell, 2012), become the key areas around which the requirements for the competencies of social workers are formed. These competences reflect the modern professional idea that social change should be the core of international development and social work (Dominelli, 2002), and that social work is regarded as a broad field encompassing micro, mezzo, and macro areas of practice (Forenza and Eckert, 2018).

Historically, social workers have focused their work in the context of social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2015). In Ukraine, in mid-1990s the international organizations initiated a variety of projects that brought to the country a notion of the professional social work. The scale-up of new social services had occurred in the 2000s. However, they were provided mainly by the non-governmental organizations, while nearly all statutory services established in the Soviet times and based on the ideological perspective of social pathology (Ramon, 2000) and medical model of disability (Bridge, 2005) are still operating in the country, keeping traditions of paternalistic approaches (Semigina and Boyko, 2014).

Our study aims to outline the current global priorities and standards of social work, which are formed, approved and further promoted by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work. We also discuss what competencies of future social workers should be formed in higher education institutions in Ukraine with regard to the transnational vision of professional social work and the contradictory trends of globalizing educational policy (Rizvi, Lingard, 2010).

Theoretical Perspectives

The study was undertaken with regard to two basic frameworks. First, we discuss the modern priorities of professional social work keeping in our minds the fundamental concept of 'person-in-environment'. This concept distinguishes social work from other helping professions and reinforces the importance of context in social work practice (Mapp, McPherson, Androff and Gatenio Gabel, 2019). Thus, it reflects the balancing of social work between micro- and macropractices affected by broader socioeconomic movements. Smith (2014) stipulates that developments within the social work profession are not merely formed through a natural progression of theories and practices, but are in fact deeply contextual and shaped by broader conflicts and forces.

Understanding this, social workers should become keenly aware of global realities and forces (Jones and Truell, 2012).

The second concept is a human rights framework. It provides a pivotal model for putting rights-based principles into practice (McPherson, 2016). The literature stresses that looking through the human rights lens changes the way we see society, social problems and the role of social work professionals (Mapp, 2020). Human rights and social justice are regarded by the global social work community as the core principles of modern social work. We share the position of Androff (2016) that the societal change and advocacy approaches are co-exist with clinical social work (the latter constitute the conservative side of the social work profession). Yet, our study is focused on structuralist vision of social problems and challenges for exercising of human rights. This leads to the recognition that global social work associations as external advocates are not neutral actors, as their understanding is based on their social and economic position, history, societal and geographical context etc. (Motta, 2015). In this social changes roles they decidedly impact the global professional educational policy, shaping transnational practices and expectations.

Methodology of Research

The study is based on retrospective systematic approach to reviewing international documents that identify modern priorities of social work and modern competencies of social workers. The documents adopted by the two biggest global professional organizations in social work were selected, namely by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work. The timeline for the analysis includes the last two decades in history of social work development.

The paper also reflects considerations of authors regarding the perspectives of introducing in Ukraine the international approaches shaping professional competences of the future social workers. The authors of the study have significant experience in teaching disciplines in social work, participate in professional discussions on the development of social work as a profession (arranged by the Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism in 2018-2020), involved in the elaboration of professional guidelines.

The data had been preceded based on discourse analysis model (Anderson and Holloway, 2020) applicable for educational studies. Dispute the certain limitations of our analysis, the results of this study could develop the debate on social workers' educational policy and practice within the postsocialist socioeconomic context and professional culture, as well as on inhibitions of global priorities to be implemented in the local educational context,

Results of Research

Overview of the key global standards on social work

The review of the recent documents adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (see a list in table 1) allows to state that all of them have a special focus on human rights and social changes. The global standards are composed based on the egalitarian way of thinking that people should get treated the same; however, in some respect they need more support to be an equal member of society. This is so-called redistributive justice; and social workers are considered agents of such justice.

Table 1: Key global documents on professional social work adopted in 2000-2020

Thematic Area	Document title	Adopted	Revision
Social work definition	<i>International Definition of Social Work</i> (jointly by IFSW and IASSW)	2001	Was under revision in 2012-2014
	<i>Global Definition of the Social Work</i> (IFSW and IASSW)	2014	To be revised in 2024
Social Work Ethics	<i>Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles</i> (jointly by IFSW and IASSW)	2004	Was under revision in 2014-2018
	<i>Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles</i> (separately by IFSW and by IASSW)	2018	To be revised in 2028
Social Work Teaching	<i>Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training</i> (jointly by IFSW and IASSW)	2004	Was under revision in 2018-2019
	<i>Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training</i> (jointly by IFSW and IASSW)	2020	To be revised in 2030
Social Work Research	<i>The IASSW Statement on social work research</i> (by IASSW)	2014	
Social Work and Policy	<i>The role of social work in social protection systems: The universal right to social protection</i> (by IFSW)	2016	

Source: IFSW (2020), IASSW (2020b).

In 2014, after long global discussions with representatives of more than 110 countries, the International Federation of Social Workers and the International

Association of Schools of Social Work agreed upon values and principles outlined in a globally accepted definition. This definition says:

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels” (IFSW, 2014).

Ornellas, Spolander and Engelbrecht (2018) look on changes to the global definition and observed the specified major shifts from the definition adopted in 2001:

– the strengthening of social work theory and knowledge: this definition reiterated the broad scientific knowledge base of the profession and highlighted the significance of indigenous theory;

– a shift from individualism to collectivism: the previous definition had been heavily criticized for its reliance on individualism and advocating for service delivery that worked from the inside outward, while the new definition emphasizes to the importance of collective and macro perspectives in social work intervention;

– a move from micro-heavy to macro understandings of inequality and social problems: the revised social work definition recognizes the underlying structural causes of challenges facing communities and stress on a collective approach that works to dismantle the structural roots of social problems.

Such shifts according are vital to inform social work education and practice to enable a reinvigorated profession able to address the contemporary challenges of both society and individuals with reference to social work’s commitment to social justice, ‘a renewed transition towards a profession that seeks to re-engage the ‘social’ in social work’ (Ornellas et al., 2018, 223).

The similar approach we may see in other documents presented in Table 1. All of them reflect key ideas expressed by Dominelli (2002) on the importance of anti-oppressive social work theory and practice shaped by the broader societal and natural environment.

For example, Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW, 2018) stipulates that *“Social workers have a responsibility to engage people in achieving social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work”*. This – according to Statement – means: challenging discrimination and institutional oppression; respect for diversity; work toward access and the equitable distribution of resources and wealth.

The IASSW Statement on social work research (IASSW, 2014) explicitly links social work research with social justice and human rights and looks to answer the question to what extent contributes social work research to their realization.

The Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training was initiated in 2000 and adopted at the IASSW and IFSW General Assemblies in 2004. This document served as an aspirational guide setting out the requirements for excellence in social work education (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004). It is worth noting the debates on a concept ‘global’ within IFSW and IASSW. Both organisations ended up that this inclusive concept referring to all regions and all countries of the world, while international may refer to two or more countries. As the standards are intended to be applicable to all schools of social work on a global level, the use of ‘global’ is more appropriate (Sewpaul, 2005), however, they are more of knowledge-driven transnational nature (Mikkonen, 2020), , than are really universal for the whole Global.

In 2019, the revision of this document has been launched by the IASSW in order to strengthen profession’s capacity to combat the increasing threats to human rights and wellbeing. It is expected that changes in these standards should be done with regard to “*social work’s role in supporting bottom up development to meet the aspirations of the SDGs, ensuring countries that are new to social work have global peers to support the advancement of social work education free from colonial influences and creating platforms for indigenous social workers to shape curricula and relevant courses*” (IASSW, 2019). These ideas reflect the inspiration of global agents in social work education to maintain the leading position in promoting social work education based human rights at the transnational level.

So, all recent global standards and documents adopted by IFSW and IASSW are based on such principles as collectivism, addressing the structural causes of social problems, and building up the research and academic strengths of the profession.

The global social work priorities in 2010-2020

In 2010, three global, professional organizations – International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) – launched development of The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (The Global Agenda). It was adopted in 2012 and set a strategy for 10 years (IFSW, 2012).

The process of developing The Global Agenda has re-established the connection between the practice of social work, the education of social workers and the development of social policy at national, regional and global levels. Extensive public discussion, involvement of representatives of different countries, national and regional associations of social workers allowed forming those priorities that go beyond the philosophy of paternalistic social welfare or “social rehabilitation” models.

The document stipulates that in the period up to 2020, the social workers’ professional community had to be engaged in: promoting social and economic equalities, promoting dignity and worth of peoples, working towards environmental sustainability, and strengthening human relationships (Jones and Truell, 2012). The

strategy explicitly focuses on changing the societal context that affects the people who use social work services.

The international reports (The Global Agenda Observatory), were prepared to meet these priorities (Jones, 2020), and global social work congresses arranged every two years were dedicated to the four themes in sequence. All in all, the Global Agenda has a significant positive impact on uniting the social work profession, changing social work education and strengthened social workers' commitment to social change, human rights and supporting social activism.

In 2020, the new consultations on global social work priorities had been initiated by IFSW and IASSW. The following issues were identified as the main current social problems, most of them evident in all regions in some form: environmental injustice; poverty and inequality; discrimination and exclusion; migration and refugees; under-investment in health and social services; professional recognition and working environments; indigenous peoples; knowledge base of social work; political instability, authoritarianism and increasing social tension (Truell, 2020).

Initially, the key priority of social work for 2020 was defined as a "social solidarity" to be expressed through dialogue, alliance and exchange. Immediately the question about the conceptualization of "social solidarity arose, continuing previous debates on social workers' responsibilities to act for social justice (Eversman and Bird, 2017; Guidi, 2020). Thus, by the end of 2020, the first theme was converted to 'Co-building Social Transformation' and 'Ubuntu: Strengthening Social Solidarity and Global Connectedness'. This theme should incorporate the learning the profession has gained in responding to Covid-19. According to Silvana Martínez, President of IFSW: *"This framework recognizes the need for important changes to take place in the world, a vision for a new social construction, in which all people are treated equally and can be protagonists of history and their future"* (IASSW, 2020a). The next themes (priorities) of global social work till 2030 still have to be shaped.

The examination of the global profession's focus of the last 10 years proves the desire of international organisations to heighten the commitment to human rights and social justice. The Global Agenda has provided a global framework for the profession to project itself and develop the recognition it deserves (Jones, 2020). Yet, the identity, values and transformative practice of the social work profession promoted by the Global Agenda are facing severe challenges as a result of neoliberal turn (Ornellas, Engelbrecht and Atamtürk, 2020) and neoliberal national regulations in educational policies (Berkovich, 2012). Harris (2014) identifies three trends that are increasingly affecting social work day-to-day practice around the world: marketisation (markets are efficient and effective and should be introduced in as many and as wide a range of contexts as possible); consumerisation (individuals should be responsible for themselves and run their own lives); managerialisation (services in the public or voluntary sectors should be modelled on management knowledge). Studies in many

countries (Ornellas and Engelbrecht, 2020; Spolander et al., 2014) confirm contradictions between social work core principles such as collectivism, addressing the structural causes of social problems and current socioeconomic discourse, including individualism, marketisation, individual responsibility, welfare cutbacks and policy of austerity etc. The Corona crisis and ‘social distancing’ approach have added the new layer to social work challenges and shifts (Pentini and Lorenz, 2020).

The deepening of a neoliberal turn enlarges the gap between a professional social work guided by human rights, social work education constructed with regard to the Global Agenda ideas and the current socio-political context.

Discussion

In essence, although in general the aim of professional social work remains unchanged and is actualized by promoting social and economic justice, preventing conditions that restrict human rights, eradicating poverty and improving the quality of life of all people at the local and global levels, there is a constant global trend to expand work, there are innovative technologies, approaches, new trends in social work. The professional social work is balancing between (1) remedial, statutory and social control roles, leading social workers to become agents of the state and (2) policy advocating roles turning social workers into agents of social changes (Duffy and Tosone, 2019; Rothman and Mizrahi, 2014; Williams. and Sewpaul, 2004).

Currently, in most European countries, educational programs have been revised and adjusted in order to create a basis for the main learning outcomes to be based on the achievement by students of the competencies needed for modern anti-discrimination practice. These competences should support the findings of Keenan, Limone and Sandoval (2017) who underline the importance of social work abilities to challenge injustice on every level; to construct justice through relationship and resource organizing; and to construct justice through the creation of accepting environments where professionals, clients, and community members can change mind-sets and actions.

The study brought forth specific questions which are also inherent in international social work that aims to create transnational alliances for social change and justice (Deepak, 2011). At the same time the raising issue of the indigenous knowledge and decolonization trend shows limitations of transnational perspective developed within social work, challenging the global academic authority over knowledge (Tamburro, 2013). As Schrooten (2020) highlights, despite the increase of transnational lifestyles, social problems and social work practices, the body of knowledge in this domain is as yet rather limited and fragmented. The key global priorities and contextual factors are summarized on **Figure 1**.

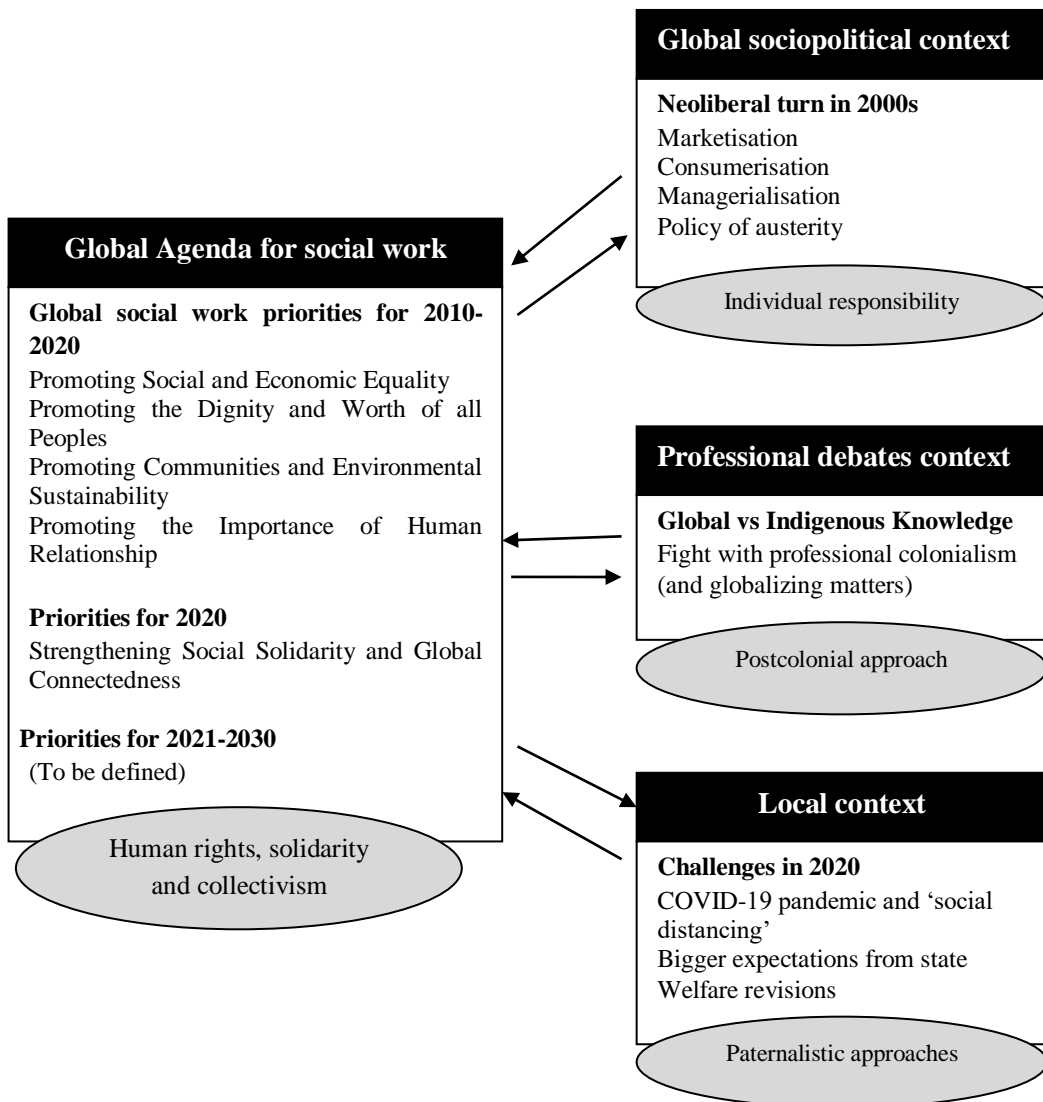


Figure 1. Global social work agenda within the various contexts

In Ukraine, like in some other post-socialist countries social work as a profession is underdeveloped and exist in an environment of neoliberal, developmental and paternalistic conflict. A combination of state intention to regulate all areas of society and pro-market practices can be observed, old-fashioned statutory social services are dominating over modern practices developed by the civic society. The social workers are still playing roles gatekeepers to social benefits, and thus, as Ife (2001) emphasizes, this power has been used to further oppression, while some social workers are serving as “handmaidens”, but not agents of changes.

Ukrainian social work education and practice tends to overly emphasise social rehabilitation and social care services, it is rooted in paternalistic professional culture of social work, Soviet-style paternalist scheme of thoughts and welfarism-based actions, expectation of clients that social workers had to solve all their problems. The global social work standards and documents based on human rights and social justice do not fit the Ukrainian ‘indigenous’ social work practices. Yet, this is an overall problem of balancing global and local in social work education (Schrooten, 2020; Sewpaul, 2005), and researchers (Lyngstad, 2013) pointed out the dialectic absence of contradiction between advocating more internationalization in social work education, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of contextual social work.

We are in concur with a notion of American scholars indicating the complicated process to move from the deficit model of the needs-based approach to competently contextualizing individual issues in their larger human rights framework will not happen overnight. But “if social workers believe that their work is expected to promote justice in the world, then they work to move their agencies forward” (Mapp et al., 2019, 268). From our point of view and other researchers (Dvoriak, Karagodina, Chtenguelov, and Pykalo, 2019; Ridkodubaska, Romanyshyna, Karabin, Kazakova, Tarasenko, 2020; Semigina and Gusak, 2015; Slozanska, 2017), Ukrainian social workers still need to learn how to use the core principles and values of modern professional social work in their practice, to understand their role in the promotion of human rights and viewing their clients not from a needs-based or benefits standpoint.

The introduction in Ukraine a new ‘Co-building Social Transformation’ concept should be done with regard to acute social issues that demand innovative empowering approaches. As we can see the current global trend to focus on the thorough identification by the professional community of a limited set of priorities and relevant competencies that are really important and integrated, we (based on our experience and communications with other social work educators) can name three of many palpitating domains for Ukrainian social work educational policy and practice:

Social work response to disasters, including armed conflict, could be one of the areas where new principles of collectivism and social solidarity could be installed. This shift demands gaining by future social workers the ecosocial competences.

One more area of implementation of social change approach could be fight with gender discrimination and gender stereotypes. Gender sensitive social work and gender competences aimed at achieving gender justice should become an integral part of the Ukrainian educational programmes and social work practices, especially with vulnerable groups.

Digital injustice, especially in circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic, is rather painful for some social groups and certain social work clients. The social workers need to be prepared how to teach digital competences and how to carry out the effective online social work interventions.

The issues outlined here are not easy to introduce in a country with paternalistic social work culture. But as the rights-based approach constitutes now a substantive paradigm shift in global social work practice and professional ideology, Ukrainian social work has to reconsider a narrow micro focus and stand for real structural change in their profession in order to achieve more social justice in society.

Conclusions

The current principles, values and priorities of transnational social work are identified by documents of two major professional global agents– International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work. They reflect developmental approach to overcoming social in justice through social changes and promotion of human rights.

However, the gap between a professional social work guided by human rights and the current socio-political context in many countries could be observed. In Ukraine, the newly developing professional social work exists in an environment of conflict between neoliberal, developmental and paternalistic views. To overcome this gap the future social workers should be trained with respect to innovative empowering approaches. Special focus could be paid to social workers' competences to act in situations of disasters, including armed conflict, ecosocial and gender competences, to combat digital injustice in order to be able to operate within social transformative standards promoted by the global organizations.

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ГЛОБАЛЬНІ МОДАЛЬНОСТІ ДЛЯ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ: ЧИ СКОРИСТАЄТЬСЯ УКРАЇНЬСЬКА ОСВІТА МОМЕНТОМ, ЩОБ ЗМІНИТИСЯ?

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Анотація. *Стаття окреслює поточні глобальні пріоритети та стандарти соціальної роботи, які формуються, затверджуються та надалі просуваються Міжнародною федерацією соціальних працівників (МФСП) та Міжнародною асоціацією шкіл соціальної роботи (МАШСР). Це дослідження було проведено з урахуванням поняття "людина в оточенні" та контексту соціальної роботи, а також системи прав людини.*

Аналіз демонструє, що всі останні глобальні стандарти, ухвалені МФСП та МАШСР, базуються на таких принципах, як колективізм, усунення структурних причин соціальних проблем, а також нарощування наукових та академічних сил соціальної роботи як професії. Незважаючи на неоліберальний поворот у транснаціональному соціально-економічному контексті (що проявляється в маркетинговій, споживачтві та явищі менеджериалізму) та гострі професійні дебати щодо значення місцевих знань (знання та практики корінних народів), ключові глобальні пріоритети соціальної роботи як професії включають такі ідеалістичні очікування, як: професійне сприяння соціальній та економічній справедливості, запобігання умовам, що обмежують права людини, викорінення бідності та покращання якості життя всіх людей.

Українська освіта та практика соціальної роботи, як правило, надмірно акцентують увагу на послугах соціальної реабілітації та соціального обслуговування. «Корінні знання» в Україні підтримують патерналістську професійну культуру соціальної роботи і очікування клієнтів, що соціальні мають вирішити всі їхні проблеми, що суперечить сучасним глобальним принципам соціальної роботи. У статті запропоновано, яким чином можна застосувати ці стандарти в українській освіті із соціальної роботи. Йдеться, насамперед, про підтримку соціальних працівників у тому, щоб вони сприймали своїх клієнтів не з точки зору потреб, а з позиції прав людини та соціальної солідарності.

Ключові слова: *транснаціональний соціальний контекст; глобальний порядок денний; права людини; освіта; соціальна робота; професія.*