**Requirements for the Development of Professional Social Work Practice at the Mezzo-level in Light of Saudi Vision 2030**

Abstract

This research aims to identify the requirements of developing the professional social work practice at a mezzo level by considering the knowledge, skills, values ​​and institutional level from the point of view of members of a social work faculty and professionals working in the social work field. It does so meet the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030, as this document includes many mezzo-level practices that social worker encounter in the fields of education, the family, volunteering, youth, and elderly care; practices in these fields need to be developed to meet contemporary societal goals.

*Keywords:*requirements of social work practice,mezzo-level, Saudi Vision 2030

**Introduction**

Saudi Arabia (KSA) has adopted a vision to chart a better future for the country, by announcing the start of a new phase in the history of the Kingdom, as required by local, regional and international conditions, and developments; these are expected to turn the Kingdom toward competition and global leadership in all fields.

This vision is grounded in three pillars based on the Kingdom’s characteristics and components: Arab and Islamic dimensions, the leading investment forces, and geographical excellence that can connect the continents. It is based on building three aspirational axes: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).
 The field of social development has emerged in this vision, and acts as a fundamental starting point for planning subsequent developmental elements. The vision includes a number of general directions for the development of these fields. Human resources are the most important wealth possessed by the country, so the vision has focused on the need to comprehensively develop the educational system to achieve the ambitious aspiration of producing a generation of knowledge, skills, and good behaviors characterized by a spirit of initiative, perseverance, and leadership, through programs that contribute to achieving these qualities.

Social work is a profession that involves enabling the individual to adapt to new social frameworks and planned changes in society, thus enhancing his or her sense of belonging and pride in the society, and thus developing a sense of social responsibility, which promotes developmental achievements. Social work helps in the formation of the productive personality and in removing obstacles that prevent the maximum productivity of individuals, as it seeks to increase people’s skills and experiences; social development and social work, each of which seeks to cure social problems, and broken or distorting development efforts meet at the point of interest in the person thereby enabling him or her to lead life successfully, free from pressures and constraints (Gharaibeh & Mahmoud, 2008).

Social work students often face personal, institutional, and community challenges. If these challenges are not addressed, they may affect students’ professional development and impede their social contribution (Matthew, Lough, & Benjamin, 2017). These societal changes have forced the social work profession to seek out new knowledge, educational trends, and methods of professional intervention adapted to the circumstances, changes, and events in the world. The concept of general practice in social work has thus become a new direction that helps the profession to understand the nature and levels of events, and the extent of interactions that occur at the level of community systems (Suleiman & Hassan, 2005).

 As stated in the International Federation of Social Workers’ definition of social work as follows:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (Hare, 2004)

 Mayads et al. (2004) indicate that there is a need for renewed attention to the construction of knowledge in the profession of social work in keeping with the variables that have been renewed both scientifically and globally. It is important that the profession remains flexible, and is able to adapt itself to changing conditions. If social work did not present many different faces globally, given the wide range of national and local conditions to which it is called upon to respond (Cox and Pawar, 2006).

The aim of this research is to identify the requirements for developing the professional practice of social work at an intermediate or mezzo level in order to contribute to realizing the vision of Saudi Arabia 2030, which will have a considerable impact on the social recognition of the importance of the role of social work in society.

**Mezzo-level Social Work Practice**

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) identifies ten practice competencies along with knowledge, skills, values, and practice behaviors (CSWE, 2012). These competencies and practice behaviors reflect generalist social work practice for working with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations in a variety of social work and host settings. These competencies are developed to provide a framework for guiding social work curricula at both the bachelor’s and master’s levels of social work education (Bolin, 2014).

General practice at the mezzo level relates to working with groups. Social work has only been associated with the community and its constituent groups since its inception, through our view of society as an integrated unit that combines a grouping of “natural” groups and groups formed for specific purposes. The social philosophy of social work reflects the importance of groups and their role in society. Humans belong to “natural” groups (families, relatives, and dynasties), and industrial groups (co-workers, classmates) through study and work (Suleiman & Hassan, 2005).

It is axiomatic that people do not exist in isolation. Individuals function in an assortment of small and large group settings: families, work places, peer groups, social and religious networks, cultural and ethnic communities, and organizations of varying dimensions and formal constructs. Most importantly, at any given time most individuals are self-identified members of multiple groups with boundaries of mutable permeability and overlap) Rittner & Albers, 2008).

Group work can be an effective outlet for promoting client welfare at both individual and systemic levels. Groups are essentially a social microcosm of individuals of diverse backgrounds and interests ([Hays](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=SX59h9IAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra),  [Arredondo](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ruYaBMQAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra), & [Gladding](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=j6Af8CcAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra), 2010).

There are many factors that distinguish social work groupings from other groups. Social work groups are complex systems with multi-dimensional tasks. Group members assume different roles that generate varied interfaces and interactions. The effective group creates norms and develops its own culture. An important tenet of social group work is that the group itself is an entity with its own lifecycle. Therefore the social group worker attends to each individual in the group as well as to the group as a whole. There are dynamics, patterns, and stages that evolve through the life of a group (Drumm, 2008).

## Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the cognitive requirements for developing the professional practice of social work at the mezzo level? 2. What are the skill requirements for developing the professional practice of social work at the mezzo level? 3. What are the value requirements for developing the professional social work at the mezzo level? 4. What are the institutional requirements for the professional practice of social work at the mezzo level?

## Method

This research is a descriptive analytical study aimed at obtaining accurate information that depicts reality, and contributes to the assessment, analysis, and recommendations of the phenomenon with which it is concerned. In the framework of the current research the aim is to identify the requirements for the professional practice of social work with the central units to achieve the vision of Saudi Arabia 2030.

## Population and Sample

The research was based on a questionnaire for faculty members at the Faculty of Social Work at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University and social workers working in various fields of social work (n = 61).

## Results

The results of the research shown in Table 1 indicate that the highest percentage of responses in the sample were from social workers working in different fields of social work 35 (57.4%) and 26 academics (42.6%) The former are more in touch with professional circumstances and have more field experience than members of the academic teaching staff.

<Insert Table 1>

It is clear from the sample that the highest percentage of those with 10–20 years of experience are professionals or academics, followed by those with 20 years or more of experience 20; the highest proportion of academics held the rank of professor (16.4%). These figures also help to obtain accurate and useful responses to professional practice.

 In response to the first question, the results in Table 2 show that the requirements for the professional practice of social work at a mezzo level in terms of cognitive level include using the results of scientific research by faculty members to overcome practice-related problems at the mezzo level. The responses resulted in a weighted score of 2.87.

<Insert Table 2>

 The second stage was linking knowledge-building to practice at the mezzo level in Vision 2030 which received a weighted score of 2.84; the third ranking statement was the development of the social work curriculum at the mezzo level in line with the achievement of the 2030 vision. This result is consistent with the result of LaRocque (2016) as the weighted score of 2.82 was ranked by participants in the same order. It suggests that the Vision 2030 axis should be utilized in the development of professional practice at the mezzo level.

In response to the second question the analysis of the results shown in Table 3 indicated that the requirements for the professional practice of social work with mezzo level skills include building permanent partnerships with community institutions for the benefit of professional practice; this requirement is of the first order with a weighted score of 2.92. Continuous evaluation of the programs of professional intervention at the mezzo level ranked in second place with a weighted score of 2.89, followed by the development of non-traditional tools for professional intervention at the mezzo level with a weighted score of 2.87.

<Insert Table 3>

 Responses to the third question shown in the results in Table 4 suggest that one of the most important requirements for the professional practice of social work at the mezzo level is being a role model in all behavior and transactions with clients thus adherence to the values ​​and ethics of Islam received a weighted score of 2.93. The second requirement is respect for the human rights of clients with a weighted score of 2.92, while the third-ranked value is openness, clarity, and functional commitment to mezzo-level clients, which received a weighted score of 2.90.

Social work using group methodology includes ethical codes from diverse sources. The National Association of Social Works (NASW, 2008) publishes the professional values for social work practice in the United States for all size systems—individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. (Lee, 2016)

<Insert Table 4>

 Responses to the fourth question inTable 5showed that the requirements for the professional practice of social work at the institutional level––which include continuous evaluation of the institutional programs of work at the mezzo level––ranked first with a weighted score of 2.92; this was followed by the need to identify channels of communication between academics and practitioners to find solutions to practice problems, which scored 2.89. This was followed in third place by the application of developmental and preventive approaches at the mezzo level according to the goals of Vision 2030, and attention to the development of field training mechanisms at the mezzo-level of social institutions. This obtained a weighted score of 2.85.

<Insert Table 5>

## Conclusions

 The practice of social work in Arab societies needs to be further developed so that their role in contributing to social issues is more apparent. This research focused on the practice of social work at the mezzo level as one of the stages of the professional practice in social work. This is evident in Vision 2030, whether in the family, education, among the elderly, in youth care, volunteering, or entertainment. Therefore, this research identified the requirements for the development of professional social work practice at the mezzo level in terms of the level of knowledge, skills, values ​​and institutional requirements that it would be necessary to take into account to achieve the objectives of this enlightened vision.

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