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**ABSTRACTS**



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**UNIVERSITY OF OSTRAVA**  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES



**UNIVERSITY OF OSTRAVA**  
EUROPEAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL WORK



## OLDŘICH CHYTL

### Changes in the Society and their Reflection in Theory and Practice of Social Work in the Czech Republic

Social work is closely related to the sphere of organizing modernity and when designing its theories and methods, it proceeded from this concept of the world. Therefore, it got into an awkward situation during the transition of the organizing modernity to a qualitatively different modernity. Although various authors (Beck, Bauman, Keller) label it as post-industrial, reflexive or liquid modernity, they find many features in it that distinguish it from the organizing modernity.

Using the work of theoreticians of modernization, we identified features and processes characterizing the changes of society which allow us to monitor the reaction of the Czech theoretical discourse and the practice of social work to the changes of society.

## PETER ERATH

### Current Issues of Social Policy and Social Work in Germany

At present social work in Germany is located in a very ambivalent position. Seen from a practical perspective it could be judged as highly appreciated; especially the increase of professionals in the field of children and youth services and for inclusion of more than a million refugees resp. asylum seekers within the years 2015 and 2016 has led to a situation where more or less all social workers on the job market have got a post. But - seen from a professional perspective social work has only in a few working fields being really successful in presenting and legitimizing its concrete evidence, productivity and efficiency both internally as well as externally. More and more there is good reason to be doubtful about the basic structure of the German welfare system with its predominance of the six big welfare organizations based on either ideology or faith.

## BRIAN LITTLECHILD

### Social Work Education and Practice in the UK: Government Policy, Professionalisation and Inequalities

This presentation will analyse the background to, and features of, the development of social policy in England in relation to social work in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

In terms of major policy shifts, it will examine to what extent England fits with the residual model of social welfare similar to that of the USA; the move since the mid-20th century from universal provision towards selectivism in provision; the move from preventative policies to ones which require targeted provision and meeting thresholds of care to receive services.

The place of legislation in defining/directing areas of social policy and social work practice, including the National Assistance Act 1948, National Health Service Act 1948, Children Act 1989, Community Care Act 1990, the Care Act 2004, and the regulation by the government for social work education, and of social workers as a registered and controlled profession. It will in addition discuss the move from state provision of services towards marketization. Outsourcing, privatisation and regulation, within moves towards individualisation and personal responsibility for one's own health and care.

The policy of austerity will be addressed, and its effects on social work, health and social care services, employment and employment benefits changes, and the demography relating to poverty. In particular, it will examine policies on migration and refugees.

Issues of the implications of a move towards coproduction of services with service users and carers will also be included.

## WALTER LORENZ

### Social Work Education for a Social Europe - Challenges in the Face of Individualism, Nationalism and Commercialism

This paper renews an appeal to social work educators, issued at the time when the fall of the Iron Curtain in Europe held out the prospect of expanding the European unification project not just geo-politically but conceptually in the direction of greater social solidarity. Being

politically committed as social workers is not a private matter but is part of the profession's mandate ever since its origins in the fundamental transformation processes in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Societies today face a comparable challenge which affects social work directly. The politically acute question is whether 'social belonging' and solidarity is to be restricted to people who qualify for support on the basis of their nationality or their personal efforts or whether solidarity needs to question and transcend those conditional barriers and promote a society that appreciates diversity constructively. This paper argues that in every act of social intervention, social workers express a version of socio-political principles. Their education therefore needs to enable them to take critical position towards prevailing ideological versions of solidarity which, on the basis of our specific professional knowledge, are bound to lead to conflict, disunity and social disruption.

## HANS VAN EWJK

### The Great Transformation and its Impact on Social Work in the Netherlands

Since four or five years Dutch Municipalities are responsible for social care for elderly, disabled and mental health users, youth care, social assistance, and special needs education. It is expected that local authorities are able to organise the social and care domain as an integrated approach directly answering to the needs of their citizens. Behind those transitions – together coined as the Great Transformation – we see a mix of neo-liberal policies, new-public management strategies and complexity theories. Social workers have to deal with those different perspectives. They feel themselves confronted with a growing divide between rich and poor and between different ethnicities; with high expectations in problem-solving and activating people; and with dealing in highly complex contexts where one way solutions – if any - are often not to find or to create. The impact of the Great Transformation on the profession is to identify in the quest for a broad generic social worker, and in creating social district teams who take care of all people in need for social and care support. Promoting social functioning of individuals, groups and communities is felt as the main overall objective and socialising as the dominant strategy. Socialising starts from a social perspective on human beings and aims at getting people to be supported in their contexts and communities by family, friends, neighbours, volunteers and where needed by social workers.

Most social workers endorsed the ideas of the transformation and broad generic social worker idea. After the first years, it is worth to come to a first evaluation. The biggest problem is that generic social workers are still confronted with highly fragmented and detailed regulations and with institutional thinking. Another problem is the case load of social workers, leading to most individual work and not answering the 'socializing ambition'. The third problem is in horizontal and vertical interdisciplinary work, and in mixing with the local communities and their residents.

## EMMANUEL JOVELIN

### Social Work in the Face of Weakening of the Welfare State in France – What Are Consequences?

Crisis of welfare state is not a new phenomenon: it has already known several stages in his decline. It is a fact that the rise of a bipolar world, the structures of which are in constant motion, means that this phenomenon of globalization, far from improving the living standards of people living in these countries, is so totally dependent upon economical factors of the major powers, that it tends to impoverish the population in both industrialized and emerging countries.

If we maintain that the construction of social work in Europe is intimately connected with the evolution of social policies, the field of social work is thus confronted with the crisis of the welfare state, a crisis which invalidates former structures and replaces them with a managerial approach. This in turn leads social workers to challenge their former professional practices. Each type of welfare state must deal with the pressure of globalization and at the same time adhere to the basic tenets that were established in their original construction; social questions must be answered in a different way. We are aware that the future of social work lies in its ability to take into account the evolution of society; I would thus like to contribute to the debate on the evolution of society and employment. Social work professions are destabilized by numerous factors that stem from an economical context, and especially the development of precarious conditions of life; they are also going through a crisis in terms of efficiency (social workers are often powerless to solve problems related to rising unemployment) and legitimacy.

My conference will address the topic of the consequences of the crises of the European States on social work, social workers, and clients. What difficulties are social workers confronted with due to these crises? What kind of social work should we plan for in the future, and for what kind of society, in this context?

## RIINA KIIK

### What Now? - Challenges in Social Work Practice and Teaching in Norway

For the last 30 years, Norway, like in other parts of the world, has been open to a more neoliberal approach in health and social welfare policies, where the welfare state has been to a large degree organized after the model of New Public Management (NPM). Reforms in the public sector have focused on efficiency, client orientation, increased competition and coordination of services.

How has the role of the social worker developed under the influence of neoliberal ideology during the past decades? What implications do these changes have for the practice of social work and for social work education? Social work at NAV (Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service) and Child Welfare Services will be used as an example. Presentation will also focus on big changes in social work education. Social work education have to respond to the changes in social work practice and make knowledge production more integrated part in social workers education. The national project RETHOS mapping educational situation and try to make updated guidelines for social work education. So What now - How to survive in all these changes and still be a good social worker.

## ELENA IARSKAIA-SMIRNOVA

### From Social Contract to the Market of Social Services: Routes and Roots of Social Work Professionalization in Russia

Social work, which emerged in Russia in 1991, is becoming a profession through contradictory steps and under multiple national and international influences and expectations. Since its establishment as an occupation and training programme, educators, students, administrators and practitioners have not only implemented several shifts in the national policy agenda but have also addressed various global influences and incorporated them into the local policy context. A number of policy actors have been promoting their interests in shaping the legislative, socio-economic

and political environment for social work, competing for legitimacy and status in policy processes. The 'professional project' (Larson 1997) of social work is considered in a complex environment where global and local forces intersect, their values compete, socialist legacies meet neo-liberal policies and neo-conservative orienteers, and form a new complex agenda for the development of the profession.

The rapid institutionalization of social work in Russia in 1990s occurred in a political environment open for the adoption of global experience. In 2000s, the public discourse in Russia was oriented towards the pragmatic mastering of national resources and skeptical attitudes towards institutional innovations. The public policy agenda was built around the themes of the unique national way and a special model of 'sovereign democracy', combination of liberal ideas of human rights and such indigenous doctrines as Orthodox doctrine of social ministry. An imagined community of a profession was formed around a shared knowledge about the past and present. New myths on the national history of a profession served as a part of process of social work indigenization. At the same time, the knowledge and value base of social work appeared to be fragmented and the definition of profession remains to be vague.

Current reform of the social sector in Russia may foster professionalization process for social work by introducing competition into the social sector. The Federal Law #442, "On the basis of social services for citizens of the Russian Federation," (enacted in 2015) provided for a major expansion of the role of Socially-Oriented (SO) NGOs in rendering social services through contracts with the state. It was intended to introduce choice of providers, expand service delivery in communities, improve responsiveness and effectiveness, and save money. Greater emphasis is made on civil sector participation in service provision. Linking civil society and the state could improve communication, feedback and outcomes of social workers' efforts. These changes promote re-imagining social work in Russia from 'social contract' to the 'market of services'. Our study (Cook et al. 2017) funded by the UNRISD, focused on the implementation of FZ442 and its impacts during 2015-16. We conducted semi-structured interviews with NGO administrators and experts in six selected Russian regions, and studied governmental databases, media reports and academic sources. In frameworks of the neo-weberian approach, the routes and resources for professional project of social work in Russia are analysed. After a short glance at the historic background, the welfare context of social work development as a profession is presented. The participation of non-state actors in social service provision is considered taking into account the recent reforms. The rationale behind the reforms as well as regional practices of the reform implementation are studied.

It is shown that the effects of this reform are yet limited. The top-down approach to solving social problems is still in place, so that the state has the main jurisdiction over the new profession, not only providing it with financial and symbolic capital, but also influencing the professional project. However, legislative efforts to improve implementation are ongoing, and the law is providing more space for new possibilities for social workers to develop knowledge and value base, professional identity and status in the changing realities of welfare state and civil society.

## MARIUSZ GRANOSIK

### The Impact of Social Policy on Social Work in Poland - a Critical Review

Over a hundred years, with varying degrees of success, social work is being fought for recognition as a profession. In most contemporary interpretations, normative as well as interpretative, social work is no longer perceived as a tool of social policy, but as an legitimised, independent, autonomous activity, based on specialised knowledge and experience. Every singular direct dependence on social policy is a clear evidence of deprofessionalisation. Unfortunately, politicians have been transforming social work in Poland towards the nationalistic and neoliberal hybrid model.

Taking broad definition of (social) policy as the power to organize discourses (Foucault), social work is indirectly formatted by neoliberal Governmentality. What's more, social pedagogy/work often participates in the process of mass production of a neoliberal, individualistic, entrepreneurial and educational "subject" (subjectification). As a result, education is becoming the universal answer to all social problems.

As this is clearly shown by recent political changes in Poland (but also in Hungary, the USA, etc.) a significant part of society is not identified with the dominant neoliberal discourse. This is probably the key contemporary challenge for social pedagogy/work, which can no longer be answered by education. It is very necessary to look for new, other than deliberative, forms of social participation and democracy.

## BÉLA SZABÓ

### The Evolution of Social Work in Romania

The recent history of the Romanian social work already reached the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, heading to 30<sup>th</sup>. The present paper tries to offer a comprehensive review of the professional experiences of these years. Although we outline the major milestones of the social work profession in our country, we also point out the different social challenges and social policy issues that need to be dealt with. The analysis focuses on areas like social work education, legislative approach and actual societal challenges. One conclusion could be that despite of the experience accumulated, the social work profession still meets major challenges that needs an effective collaboration among

involved organisation (both governmental and NGOs) – but for that a clear social policy strategy and vision is required.

## BERTA GRANJA

### Ethical Challenges on Education and Practice on Social Work, Facing up Changes on Society and Social Policy.

This lecture addresses the changes in Portugal in recent years (2008 to 2018). The Portuguese society has suffered highly intensely the social economic and political crisis in the world, with increased poverty and social inequality accompanied by drastic reduction of domestic consumption through the dropping of wages and social benefits, and through the increasing of taxes, unemployment and precariousness due to the closure of companies, privatization processes and the decline of basic services such as health, education and communications. All these changes interfered with demography, education, culture and economy.

This situation was complemented by an increase in the visibility of corruption both in the financial system as well as in the local and national governance system, accompanied by the privatization of strategic sectors that came to be controlled by foreign companies (e.g. energy).

The social worker is always at the forefront of social services and responses, embodying the face of social policies or, usually, their absence. On one's professional practice the social worker challenges with the:

- Diminishing resources for social policies when more and new groups need social support;
- Emerging needs for the provision of basic resources such as food, health, and housing in the context of economic and control measures that jeopardize the dynamics which are intrinsic to social work, such as the help relationship with sensitive listening, pedagogical work, and the construction of transformations in the dynamics and social processes with the creation of bonds, solidarities and cooperation, delayed in time and spaces;
- Reduction and precariousness of job offers for the social worker professional group, when there is a greater demand for services, with less resources and less comprehensive social policies;
- Portugal's exposure to critical measures at international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, but with great impact on the unique life of citizens and their daily living spaces where Social Workers intervene;

- Greater complexity of social problems, which requires research, study and reflexivity, but whose readiness for study and reflexivity is neglected and blocked in the face of daily pressure;
- “Liquid society”, devoid of ties and solidarities as characterized by Bauman, which individualize human suffering by disconnecting it from the social causes of this suffering. As Byung-Chul Han states, it is necessary to socialize human suffering and Social Workers are in a privileged position to do so!

Confronted with these challenges, Social Workers can follow different paths:

They can take refuge in administrative bureaucratic work and simply act uncritically in accordance with the law. This trend will provide the risk of loss of social usefulness of the profession and reduce and stagnate its knowledge and the permanent construction of professional discipline.

They can be assumed as critical and reflective professionals who understand that what “the social does, the social can undo”, according to Bourdieu's proposal. They can create provisions to confront the dominant neoliberal thinking which, as Arendt asserts, “trivializes” evil, and makes the growth of inequalities, impoverishment, destruction of nature, war and corruption inevitable and desirable.

That is why social workers need to deal lucidly and consciously, and to have knowledge about the ethical dilemmas of a profession that mediate social regularities and social singularities, that act between regulation and autonomy of populations, between growing needs and scarce resources.

The central core of this presentation will reflect on the revalorization of ethics in the practice and education of social work, as a discipline and profession that states itself with scientific foundation, that materializes pragmatically in the social reality here and now, but simultaneously has a teleological dimension because it does it, according to values of social justice and well-being, in a project of a society which is (must be) more human, more equal, more peaceful and respectful of the planet.

