PROFESIONALIZÁCIA SOCIÁLNEJ PRÁCE ALEBO SLUŽIEB? PRIORITY VO VZDELÁVANÍ SOCIÁLNYCH PRACOVNÍKOV

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK OR SERVICE TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING? PRIORITIES IN EDUCATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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Abstrakt
Príspevok poukazuje na priority v oblasti vzdelávania sociálnych pracovníkov. Zdá sa, že súčasné trendy odsunuli skutočné potreby sociálnej pomoci klientom na okra, a hlavnú úlohu hrajú zručnosti sociálnych pracovníkov. Zameranie sa na kompetencie vedie k profesionalizmu profesie. Vo vzdelávaní sociálnych pracovníkov bol kladený dôraz na profesionálnu úroveň pri získavaní certifikovaných diplomov v odbore, čo vytláča, kedysi tak zdôrazňovaný, zmysel pre povinnosť a volanie po profesii. Tento príspevok ukazuje výhody a nevýhody profesionalizácie sociálnej práce.

Kľúčové slová
Profesionalizácia, sociálna práca, služby ľuďom, volanie po profesii, priority vo vzdelávaní.

Abstract
The article points out priorities in the education of social workers. Current trends seem to relegate to the margins the real needs of social assistance clients, and the skills of social workers play the main role. Focus on the competencies leads to the professionalism of the profession. At the education of social workers, the emphasis was laid on the professionalism of certified diplomas, which displaces – once so stressed – a sense of duty and calling to the profession. This article shows the advantages and disadvantages of professionalization of social work.

Key words
Professionalization, social work, service to close people, the calling to the profession, education priorities.

Introduction

The education system of social workers is constantly evolving. The changes aim to improve the profession and increase the efficiency of services. Despite reforming of the education system of social workers, the profession does not become easier. On the contrary, increasing demands, problems of people under charge, tasks, and the social workers themselves are increasingly losing the power undergoing to professional burnout. From this perspective, increase questions about the quality of education of social workers themselves: *Is the educational system efficient? Are social workers sufficiently prepared for the job? What priorities should be exposed in the educational system? Is professionalization of the job provides an effective problem-solving? To what extent do traditional values such as service to close person present in education? Is the social worker a profession or a vocation?* The content of the article provides the answers to these questions.

1.   Outline of the evolution in the education of social workers

The training of social workers has more than 100 years of tradition. It was launched in 1896 in the UK in the form of 18-month courses for employees of charities and volunteers.

These courses were conducted by the following institutions: British Women `s University, Settlers, National Union of Women Workers and London Charity Organization Society. The first school for social workers (New York School of Philanthropy) was founded in New York in 1898. However, the first courses for volunteers were held in London in 1873. Apart from the UK pioneers among European countries in the field of education social workers, founding the first schools were: the Netherlands (1899), France (1907) and Germany (1908). In other European countries schools were created in the 30's or after the World War II[12].

The first forms of social workers in Poland are associated with the development of social pedagogy and organization of Studies of Social-Educational Work at Wszechnica Polska in Warsaw (The higher school of the universal education in Warsaw) by Helena Radlinska in 1925. Helena Radlinska wrote about the training of social workers: "an overview of issues justifies the necessity of training social workers at a level such as doctors and engineers (...). Among the social service workers has created a type somebody between the activist and researcher. Due to the need for orientation in many cases education of social workers must be multilateral, include the elements and results of biological sciences and the humanities, take into account many issues of human life, which facilitate relationships with people." [13] In 1945 on the H. Radlinska's initiative the Department of Social Pedagogy was organized in Lodz, in 1946 Training Centre of Social Workers and the Polish Institute of Social Service began to function, and Personnel Training Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare appeared in Warsaw[14].

Education of social workers in the early twentieth century proceeded under the influence of the Catholic and secular trend. The Catholic religion showed an obligation to help another human being and the vital role of the Church in organizing various social activities. The secular trend has developed along with the democratic system referring to the procedural arrangements in the social welfare system[15]. Over the years the religious trend referring to a charity in assistance activities, reflected in spontaneous philanthropy and charitable initiatives to help people in need has been replaced by the laic trend based on a state legislation and its institutions of a strictly formal-legal nature. That reevaluation of assistance activities had an impact on the education system and social workers who, from philanthropists, guardians, benefactors and volunteers had transformed into the professional social workers – included in the group of public servants[16].

2.   Professionalization in social work

At the education of social workers one can observe a strong emphasis on the professionalization of the profession. According to researchers the terms "profession" and "professionalization" are ambiguous. In Polish language tradition, the term "profession" usually means "occupation", "job", "craft" and professionalization is attributed to the characteristics of the profession and the most common they are: the knowledge, skills, training, status of the profession and the associated prestige, social sanction for the fulfilling profession, professional organization, values and professional ethics[17].

Many discussions on social work and tasks of social workers focus on the professionalization of the profession. This professionalization is associated not only with the

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[12] E. Kantowicz, *Praca socjalna w Europie. Inspiracje teoretyczne i standardy kształcenia*, Olsztyn 2005: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski, p. 200-201, ISBN: 83-7299-431-5

[13] H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wrocław- Warszawa- Kraków 1961: Zakład Narodowy named Ossolińskich, p. 383-384

[14] K. Wódz, *Praca socjalna w środowisku zamieszkania*, Katowice 1998: BPS, p. 44, ISNB: 83-7164-104-4

[15] Ibidem, p. 201-202

[16] Status of a public officer specified in the Act of 22 March 1990, the Local Government Employees

[17] J. Krzyszkowski, *Pomoc społeczna. Szkic socjologiczny*, Warszawa 2008: IRSS, ISBN: 978-83-89665-06-05, p. 64

trends in the training of staff, so-called social professionals who effectively provide help for those in need, but also the professionalism is imposed by the laws targeted at social workers.

Moreover, direction of social assistance is often referred through the prism of the so-called task imposed on specialist social worker, who has to be a narrow professional specialist. It is impossible at the same time to ignore the fact that criticism of social welfare, hits social workers perceived as less competent people, and who, by improving their skills, only would become professionals.

Social workers are often described as professional "helpers" – to help others solve problems, to assist it in obtaining funds to support in times of crisis and to facilitate satisfying the needs. to be a professional is not enough just the same degree of professional training, but there's something more, namely the principles, values, and generally high morale[18]. On one hand, professionalism, refers to the competence, knowledge and skill objectives of social work, and on the other hand, pays attention to the whole sphere of the underlying axiological so-called menial occupations.

William Wickenden marked out four distinctive features of a professional: 1) the type of activity – which requires a lot of responsibility and which uses specific skills to solve problems on a purely intellectual level, 2) the theme of servitude – indicating a moderate salary, treated differently than profit, 3) the motive of self-expression – which assumes the pride and joy of their own work and the internal need for excellence, 4) aware recognition of social obligation – realized by the following ideals and standards of the profession, gaining for it the public understanding and appreciation, sharing information about the progress of special knowledge and free public services over work for the ordinary salary as payment to public for the privilege of education and status[19].

Over the years, many efforts for the right place of the social worker among the social professions were undertaken. According to Ewa Kantowicz, in various European countries aimed to develop a professional identity, to determine its function in the structure of other professions and the pointing out of its social usefulness. The creation of a separate system of education – school of social work demonstrates the professionalization of social work in Europe. Another indicator of shaping the identity of the profession of social worker was also the creation of professional organizations, "guarding the autonomy of the profession" and the standards of education that authorized to exercise the profession. The other features of the profession, as a particular job, are included: running the activities for the common good and the disposition of autonomy in the conducting of professional activities and the subordination of certain representatives of the profession to ethical standards and internal rules of conduct by members of the profession[20].

Reality shows that many of these features do not occur in a professional social workers. Well, the prestige of authority is doubtful. In many countries the profession of social worker does not have the social prestige, not to mention the authority. Working in the social welfare sector is generally not highly paid. Social workers have a sense of lack of social recognition – even by low earnings. Many of the objections raised the professional autonomy of social workers. The autonomy of action is one of the indicators of professionalization. Meanwhile, professional margin of freedom turns out to be small. Just consider the requirements of laws, and the structure of social assistance, where it is hard to find a free and autonomous actions of social workers. According to given above arguments, the question arises: *How is it possible to achieve professionalism in the profession of social worker?*

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[18] Brenda Du Bois, Karla Krogsrud Miley, *Social work, the profession which adds strength,* Katowice 1999: BPS, T.1, p. 33
[19] Rex A. Skidmore, Milton G. Thackeray, *Introduction to Social Work*, Katowice 1998: BPS, p. 303-304
[20] E. Kantowicz, *Praca socjalna...,* op. cit., s. 197

3. Service to neighbour as the essence of social work

A social worker is one of the professions described as "menial." Doctor, nurse, psychologist or teacher may be an example next to the social worker. Each of these professions is a service to the suffering, sick, weak, disabled or poor human. The jobs called "menial" are not easy. Each of them contains the risk of failure as a loss of work motivation, enthusiasm, energy, loss of faith in your own abilities and effectiveness of its aid, the risk of detachment and depersonalization, and finally the risk of burnout. Because of the risk involved in occupations included in the servicemen, more and more are talked about the call to the profession[21]. A lot of ethical issues are involved with the servitude profession. An important role is played by the motivation of the profession, but also the responsibility for those whom are served. The satisfaction in this work is significant. Service of another human being is more complicated when we deal with the profession with specific requirements, limiting the autonomy of action, governed by the laws of bureaucracy and formal aid rules.

My research shows that more than half of social workers selected the profession of a desire "to serve another human" (55.6 % of respondents). But over the years of work motivation is weakened (every third social worker 33.1 % said they felt the drop in work motivation). According to social workers, there are many causes loss of motivation to work, including excessive requirements of the job, bureaucratic restrictions, lack of support from other institutions, the lack of alternative forms of assistance, lack of non-governmental organizations[22]. Factors listed here are classified as barriers to the implementation of social work. Many factors in the local environment and at the welfare institutions clearly limits the sense of servitude profession. The desire to help others with simultaneously occurring restrictions leads to deformation of the idea of helping, and even burnout[23].

A sense of professional servitude has weakened considerably in recent years, especially at candidates for social workers. The research presented by George Krzyszkowski showed that only one third of social workers (31.5 %) guided by the motive "to help other people" at choosing a profession. The largest group of respondents – almost half (47.5 %) gave as a motive "chance, no choice of other offers". However, "the desire of professional fulfillment," was indicated by 13.7 % of respondents[24]. These results remind us significant changes in the profession of social worker that is increasingly moving away from the traditional model, where the main motive was to serve close people for the benefit of the profession, which increases the chance of the unemployed on the labour market.

The specificity of the profession of social worker makes it directed to help others. The assessment of social workers is the real help they gave to their charges. Caring for another human being plays a key role in social work. If there were not people in need, the profession of social worker would be unnecessary. Therefore, we must not forget the essence of the profession, where the highest rank is the man – who needs help. However, the element of the servitude profession occupies less and less space in the educational system of social workers. Servitude associated with the relevant predispositions to its execution. Today, the selection of candidates for the social worker does not conduct tests that verify the actual reasons for choosing a profession. Place of the servitude takes the knowledge and skills confirmed by

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[21] T. Zbyrad. *Pracownik socjalny – zawód czy powołanie?* „Praca Socjalna", No 3, 2007 r., p. 17-38

[22] *Research conducted by the author, some have been published* : T. Zbyrad, *Pracownik socjalny w środowisku lokalnym – czyli o trudnościach zawodu i dezaktywizujących wymaganiach*, in K. Wódz, K. Faliszek, A. Karwacki, M. Rymsza (Eds), *Nowe priorytety i tendencje w polityce społecznej – wokół integracji i aktywizacji zawodowej*, Toruń 2012: Akapit, ISBN: 978-83-89163-91-2, p. 205-232

[23] T. Zbyrad. *Służebność zawodu korelatem wypalenia zawodowego pracowników*, in E. Bilska (Eds.), *Wypalenie zawodowe pracowników placówek resocjalizacyjnych – zjawisko, zagrożenia, wsparcie*, Warszawa 2010: Pedagogium WSNS, ISBN: 978-83-62902-00-2, p. 244-258,

[24] J. Krzyszkowski. *Między państwem opiekuńczym a opiekuńczym społeczeństwem. Determinanty funkcjonowania środowiskowej pomocy społecznej na poziomie lokalnym*, Łódź 2010: UŁ, ISBN: 978-83-7171-834-2, p. 211

obtained diplomas, skills and competencies. Thus, in social work professionalism, confirmed by a diploma, assumes greater importance rather than the actual disposition of people to this profession. Today, the desire itself to help others is not enough to be a social worker. However, opposite situations may happen, i.e. employment a person without a sense of professional servitude as a social worker.

Summary

Responding to a question in the title of this article*, Professionalization of social work or service to another person? –* one should agree that both are very important. Without professionalization it was difficult to imagine the development of the profession, which is very necessary and in front of which society puts more and more new challenges. But this professionalism is not possible everywhere. Its implementation requires the cooperation and coordination in the sector of social services carried out by both the state organizations and non-profit sector. Lack of suitable conditions for forming the professionalization of social work can lead to overload the system of education and disproportionate burdens on social workers. Servitude of profession should occupy the same place as the professionalization of social work. Servitude cannot be ignored, minimized or marginalized. It is an integral part of social practice. Social work profession is dedicated to other people, it is a menial profession. Therefore, both the professionalization and servitude are two sides of the same coin: the professionalism without the servitude can lead to dehumanization and the servitude itself may be too weak at professional help.

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