
SOCIAL WORK IN THE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC PROFESSIONS

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Abstract: Nowadays, in this dynamic world, the need for help and support is increasingly highlighted. This is where the role of social work intervenes. Its task is to enhance the personal and social functionality of the people so as to cope with all kinds of everyday problems and hardship they encounter and to highlight the opportunities for realization and socialization in the society.

The goal of social work is to reduce the number of people who suffer and need help, thus lessen the disbelief in coping with problems and highlighting the hope for the best. Such people can be children, adolescents, young people, adults and people with special needs.

Sometimes in the family environment or in the wide circle of acquaintances, people fail to overcome the difficulties, and then a consultation with a specialist from the social sphere should be made. This need confirms once again that social-pedagogical intervention is not lacking, contributing to adequate and professional work to help address problems and deficits.

For this type of realization, graduates of this major must have dedication and humanity to their work with people and their problems. They also need to know well the relevant risks in each occupation.

Still, there is hardly any other profession that is so varied and versatile. This profession has many benefits as well as risks. The work of the Bulgarian social worker is the lowest paid among the helping professions and yet the one with highest efficiency and effectiveness expected. People working in the social sphere - the social workers, perform a wide range of functions and responsibilities in accordance to the nature of the assistance they have to provide.

Keywords: Social work, helping professions, social worker

When working on a given case, social workers stand equal to the police in operations and searches, protecting children's rights in court, unfolding conflicts, and mediating between spiteful neighbors, parents, or even entire communities. The social worker works in extremely harsh conditions – among poverty and squalor, with people living in institutions, prisons, hamlets and remote villages, and is often subject to aggression and hostility.

A social worker is a defender, who provides protects to people, but in fulfilling his/her commitments he/she needs protection, and this is not yet regulated in the legislation. The position in this sphere is extremely responsible because decisions are made about life, safety and rights. Work requires direct contact with clients, and very often they are in the so-called “ghettos” where the assistant is not well accepted by the community, he/she often encounters people with addictions, mental problems, etc. Today, we witness a number of cases of violence over social workers. The media daily inform about such examples.

Social work is one of the varieties of human activity. As part of the humanitarian professions it has the mission of a helping profession. Providing assistance to an individual, as well as to families, groups and communities. In addition, via social work various social services are performed and, when solving a problem, it facilitates communication and cooperation with other institutions.

Professional help is a focused activity aimed at strengthening or building new foundations in the person seeking for a change that fits in with the generally accepted standards in order to be able to return to society.

In the rapidly developing world, many values, morals and transitions are constantly changing. In the pursuit of a person to adapt to the given conditions, including the primary care of survival it is quite difficult. Often due to the dynamics of everyday life, emotional and psychic crashes occur, which emerge as a barrier to meet as well as to resolve the changes that have occurred without assistance and support. Typically, this assistance is done by relatives and friends, but sometimes this is not enough.

The socio-pedagogical work arises in response to this deficiency of professional knowledge and skills to regulate human relations, to facilitate the “individual-society” relationship, which means not only the improvement of human relations but also the improvement of the person, the social organism, the society in which he/she lives (Kuzmanova-Kartalova, 2013: 8-9). Combined with other institutions, it could make an adequate contribution to resolving complex life situations.

Various definitions of social work are popular. The definition given by the International Social Work Association is as follows: “a profession supporting social change, solving problems in human relationships and empowering and liberating people to improve their well-being. Using theories about human behavior and social systems, the profession intervenes where people interact with the environment.” In the legislation concerning social

work in Bulgaria it is stated that “Social work is a professional activity to improve the mutual adaptation of the assisted persons, families, groups and the environment in which they live. It is a set of support activities aimed at achieving a better quality of life, dignity and responsibility in people based on their individual abilities, interpersonal relationships and community resources.” (Social Assistance Act). Regardless how it is described, the profession unconditionally anchors on help and assistance.

Like the world around us, social work is quite dynamic and adapts to this rhythm of action for better productivity. Its intervention starts from the moment the person is confronted with the surrounding environment, where there is an imbalance in the relationship “individual – individual” or “individual – environment”. Then case work begins in accordance to the needs of society, reflecting the social protection of the needy and striving to meet the needs of the individual.

In this line of thought, Todor Minev points out two main types of help - objectively determined needs and subjectively determined needs. In cases of objectively determined needs, pecuniary and institutional assistance, understood as cash benefits, housing, health insurance and other options to improve living conditions. And in the case of subjectively determined needs, the provision of social-pedagogical help is expected, realized as “help for self-assistance”, opportunities related to the development of the personal capacity of the needy (Minev, 2012: 10).

Todor Minev defines the main goal of social work as “... to ensure a quality standard for all members of society through the implementation of effective policies and strategies that guarantee a balance between living and environmental conditions and protection from a life adversity. The operational purpose of social work is defined by the author as a change in “... the lives of people who are unable to solve their problems on their own and to change the social conditions in order to maintain the adversity within bearable limits” (Minev, 2012: 13 -14).

According to Pepa Miteva, the goals in the social work are aimed at:

- Softening the effects of poverty, social isolation of individuals and groups; helping meet the needs of people experiencing the negative consequences of a swift move to improve the social system;
- Global reform leading to the institutionalization of social policy institutions;
- Centering on the individual and on his/her social environment (Miteva, 2006: 28).

Generally speaking, social work **aims** to solve social problems in the public activity which reverberate on the individual. In order to implement the identified changes, activities related to the available resources of the individual and the creation of new ones have been made. The expected result should be self-decision-making, responsibility, self-help, positivism, integration and social functioning.

The object of social work is society in general, namely individuals, groups, communities - people in need of assistance and support in case of difficulties and problems. Namely, the object is the problem or difficulty that has occurred in the process of building it with the environment in the fight with the environment in different risk situations.

The object is the organized assistance to the clients in order to support their personal development and their social functioning. Here the focus is the process itself and the development of measures and methodologies for achieving the goal.

The tasks are limited to forming and building the resources of the person. In order to achieve the set objectives against the subject of work, a number of specific financially, personnel-connected and organizationally secured tasks are required, such as:

- Clarifying the socio-economic situation in the country and regions and focusing on possible resources for social work;
- Regular research, educational and training activities on the different types, forms and levels of social work;
- Improvement and updating of the legal and administrative basis of social work;
- Increasing the share of the non-governmental, private and religious sector in the field of social work;
- Improving the organization and technology of social work;
- Increasing the level of professional qualification (knowledge, skills, experience) of social workers and assisting persons.

Following the aforementioned foundations of social work, it should be noted how functional it is and offering broad-based assistance in line with the nature of the problem, caused by any disposition.

A central place in the work of any helping profession and organization is the fight against social injustice. Throughout the world, social workers become advocates for the restoration of human rights, and not only, who rely on a complex of interrelated knowledge, skills and influence. It is particularly relevant today when the world faces the solution of practical challenges, called standards, criteria and laws, both for social work and in any public human activity. People’s problems arise from a national and global nature, and this leads to changes that once again touch people. Conflicts include political and social change. They exert considerable influence and affect people, resulting

in pressure - emotional and financial downturns. This is how poverty is increasing, and it is one of the main contingents from which problems emerge, and the prompt intervention of a professional from helping professions and activities is required. Many of the problems from the past remain today.

The twenty-first century is a century of innovation, interactivity and awareness. Social work is inevitable in the conditions created, and this innovation of change and prisms must be used as a tool for work. Poverty problems are far from unique in the spectrum of difficulties. In this connection, the task is also to strengthen values in people. The well-being of people and the pursuit of social justice and equality are a priority; the presence of specialists to work for this is not only inevitable but also extremely necessary. Nowadays, social work is an academic specialty, with an independent educational program and specialization covering the areas of working with people in groups, working in the community and working in the field of social policy. It supports social change, solving problems in human relationships. It has the opportunity and the power, through its professional staff, to give people the opportunity to improve their well-being. The principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

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