

Child and Family Welfare

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Edited by

Patricia-Luciana Runcan, Georgeta Rață
and Mihai-Bogdan Iovu

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P U B L I S H I N G

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This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-5578-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5578-5

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FOREWORD

Welfare is a multidimensional concept characterizing the inner and outer state of an individual or a group of persons. Objective welfare refers to the optimal state of living while subjective dimension is defined by the affective and cognitive individual experiences.

Child and family welfare is a distinct area of interest of social work. The concept has evolved over time from a charitable and need-based model to a rights-based approach. This new perspective of social work emphasizes the idea of responsibility of duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations. It is a holistic approach in which all the people are entitled to welfare, not only the vulnerable or marginalized groups. Children and families are not passive recipients of welfare, but agents of the process. Moreover, the social work rights based approach is the only guarantee of respecting the human dignity and empowering people in reaching an optimal level of functioning. The current socio-economic context, pressure authorities to innovate and adapt existing social services offered to children and families. The studies focusing on welfare are an essential component of developing social work profession and evidence-based practice. A recent report from UNICEF (2013) is placing Romania on the last place among 29 developed countries on welfare indicators. Analyzing the material status, health and security, education, behaviors and risks and living conditions, Romanian was 27th only for behaviors and risks.

Considering this unfavorable context, the volume *Child and family welfare* offers the general public and the specialists a collection of studies analyzing the phenomenon in its current state in Romanian and Europe. The volume is structured in five chapters closely related to the principal dimensions of welfare. The 22 articles that are included carry the reader through theoretical analysis and empirical studies, helping construct an accurate image on present welfare.

Social work and welfare includes three papers addressing theoretical approaches of social work and its mission. The recent changes on child and family legislation are mentioned and debated. The issues regarding implementation are also discussed. Family social work is a specialized area requiring a multidisciplinary approach. The case of international social work is also brought in discussion. Social work needs to go beyond local and regional approaches in fulfilling its mission. The current

challenge that the general social work has to overcome is to propose and implement programs that should take into consideration the recent developments in the international arena regarding intervention.

The second chapter includes four empirical studies focusing on *Social and emotional welfare*. Child abuse and neglect is a phenomenon that, in spite of the existing programs and services delivered by social workers, is still very much present in the family environment. Another phenomenon that interferes more and more in the family space and disrupts the level of functionality is the work dependency. One of the studies is focusing on this topic revealing the dysfunctions at family communication, family involvement, family role dynamics, and quality time levels. The remaining two articles have a somewhat different approach of individual welfare: the way music contribute to the emotional, spiritual, and behavioral stability and the manner in which creativity can be stimulated in disadvantaged groups. These two articles address the general issue of education and its contribution to child welfare.

Positive functioning refers to the level in which individuals are able to fulfill their roles. The four studies that are included focus on children from residential centers and on the level of their participation (essential component of the rights-based approach), issues of adoption, the image of childhood in a disadvantaged area (Jiu Valley), and gender equality and work from a biblical perspective. These articles argue the idea that participation and equality are necessary premises in assuring a positive functioning.

Life satisfaction is another chapter including four empirical studies. One study discusses some aspects regarding children's education in the Jiu Valley. This is an area severely affected by poverty and unemployment that have a significant effect on the manner education is carried on. Another study is focusing on the health of children the manner this impacts the family functioning. The family-systems of children with asthma show atypical signs in terms of family interactions and organization, which most commonly take the form of fusion, overprotection, rigidity and conflict avoidance. One last study makes an analysis of the family life in Roman Dacia, and on the manner the rule of *pater familiae* influenced the life of the members. This is a captivating history lesson that offers valuable insights in understanding the manner the current families function.

The last chapter, *Theological approaches on welfare*, shifts the focus on the spiritual level. Social theology has its own contribution to the manner we understand welfare. The relation between social work and theology is revealed throughout this chapter. The concept of welfare is not

an “invention” of the modern social sciences. The Biblical perspective on child well-fare is discussed. The contribution that religion through philanthropic work carried in Timisoara during 1867-1918 is nicely described in one of the works. On the other end of the religious values are two other phenomena that are very much present in the current societies: altruism sustained by consumerism and suicide. These two phenomena are given a new interpretation.

We believe that the studies included in this volume fit well in the area of social work focusing on child and family welfare. Each work has its individual contribution in fulfilling the social work mission, especially in the current system characterized by constant changes when authorities find more difficult to fulfill their responsibilities. The papers have been selected after a rigorous analysis using criteria of quality and scientific relevance. The result is undoubtedly greater than the sum of its parts. As editors, we have enjoyed reading the papers and putting them together as a collection. We have been intrigued and surprised by the conversations that occur across them. Firstly, the volume is addressing professionals from the socio-humanistic area as an important resource in their future work. However, by its interdisciplinary approach, the volume also addresses the general public interested in the recent debates from social work, sociology and theology. By sharing and disseminating this book, Romanian research will gain wider visibility and acceptance.

The Editors

APPLIED SOCIAL WORK SERIES: ASA 2013

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CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL WORK AND WELFARE

RECENT DEBATES IN SOCIAL WORK

DORU BUZDUCEA

Introduction

Social work can be defined from many perspectives: as a science, as a profession or as a system that involves a certain architectural structure (institutional network, services, benefits, social workers, beneficiaries and normative framework).

As a science, social work has a set of fundamental theories, principles, methodologies and a study field that provide legitimacy and a well-deserved status among the social sciences (Shaw, Arksey & Mullender 2006). “Modern social work is perceived by its practitioners and by the public as a social science. It has strived to acquire the characteristics of science.” (Epstein 1999, 8)

As a profession, social work is unique as it distinguishes itself by its multidisciplinary character in responding to the complexity of social problems. Social workers are always concerned with the existing social problems affecting the society and their causes, and the solutions and the impact that these have on people, families and groups, organizations and communities. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) have elaborated during the Montreal General Assembly the following definition, accepted by most international social work communities:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. The principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

(IFSW 2009, 1)

In the above definition, the focus is on promoting social change, as social workers act as the interface between the individual and their social environment. By solving social problems, the profession contributes to

social change; in social work, there is a multitude of intervention domains depending on the subject problem area (DuBois & Miley 2007). By implementing the systemic theory in practice one can adapt the social work interventions to any society and local community. Social work addresses the social transactions that occur between the people and the contexts where they belong. The profession's mission is to "empower" the people to function at their optimal parameters from the psychosocial perspective. The definition also underlines the theoretical basis related to the dual psychological and social nature of human well-being as well as the importance of human rights and social justice. Affirming the relevance of providing both social support and respect for the individual values represents the fundament of the social work profession. We may conclude that IFSW promotes social work as a well-articulated system between theories, values and practice.

For sure, there is a set of values that are included in the deontological code of the profession that guides the social worker's interventions (Meacham 2007). Social work profession, grounded on a series of considerations and philosophical ideas, was born from humanistic ideals and aspirations, and its values are based on respect, self-determination, dignity, confidentiality, equality among people, cooperation etc. (Banks 2006). The social work services and benefits aim to fulfil the human needs and to develop human potential, while the respect for human rights and social justice motivates and justifies social worker interventions. Solidarity with vulnerable, socially disadvantaged people takes shape in the form of poverty reduction and social inclusion promotion programs (Ambrosino et al. 2007).

At the same time, the basis of the specialised practice, aside from values, also includes a set of theories that explain human behaviour and the complexity of the interactions between people and the context they come from (Payne 2005). In addition, there are the specific social work theories (problem solving, crisis intervention, task centred etc.) on which the social work intervention process is based.

Social work mainly focuses on people confronting difficulties, social inequalities and social injustice (Doel & Shardlow 2005); it represents an answer to the crises, emergencies and personal problems of day-to-day life. Social work utilizes a series of models, methods and techniques of concrete intervention as well as planning and development of social policies (Stepney & Ford 2009). We include here the entire social work services portfolio, from counselling to mediation and facilitation, to absorption of social benefits by the state institutions.

Over time many definitions have been elaborated for social work, but adopting a unique definition given the profession's history, the multitude of specializations and jobs, the perspectives, the roles, and the functions accomplished is not simple. Recent debates promote the interdisciplinary vision in social work not limited to the dichotomist manner of presentation between direct and indirect services, clinical and administrative, etc.

From a systemic perspective, social work functions interdependently with other social systems—health, education, administration—but in no case is it subordinated to any of them, but is rather a partner with a distinct identity. Currently, the world system is in continuous change generated by globalization and therefore social work, and an integral part of it is faced with permanent challenges to adapt to the new social configuration.

Over time, social work has adapted to the new contexts and social configurations (Gibelman 1999). We can mention here a series of internal factors that ensure the profession's progress: the “general” social worker tends to be replaced by the “specialist” social worker (increasing sub-specializations), increased competition among the social professionals, the need to incorporate theoretical research in practical activity, the bureaucracy associated with the administrative state apparatus receives an increasingly negative connotation and therefore enhances the role of the private practice as an alternative to the social services provided by the state.

In addition to the internal factors involved in the architectural re-projection of the social work systems, we also see a series of external factors leading toward the same goal—changing the public attitude toward the vulnerable groups, redefining the human need and public responsibility concepts, globalization and reduced governments' roles, technological advancement, unanticipated events, economic fluctuations, etc.

Recent Debates

Aside of these positive aspects promoted by the social work profession, there were, over time, a series of disparages against the social work. There are researchers (Jordan & Jordan 2000; Jordan 2004) that consider that social workers lost direction, that social work is facing “a crisis” determined by the social and institutional conditionality, but we know very little about its nature and remedies, and we only experience the effects of this crisis in the disorientation, demoralization and incertitude among the social workers. This “crisis” should probably be understood in the social, political, organizational and professional context of the changes following the two world wars.

Social work is seen by other social policy commentators as a strange and disunified profession, as there is no consensus and professional consistency among social workers. It incorporates too many sub-domains, and its inter-disciplinary nature places it in too many social and administrative contexts, sometimes giving the impression of deficit and lack of consistency. At the public speech level, all European states support the need to revise the curricular programs of social work both at the level of bachelor degree, masters and doctorate programs. In this area of social work education, IFSW and IASSW adopted the Global Qualifying Standards for Social Work Education and Training (2004) during the Adelaide meeting that include the necessary framework for developing new social work curricula.

While in the United States the education programs are based on high-level quality standards, in many European countries the curricular reform is still at an early stage.

Some social work faculties in Eastern Europe seem to have been trapped in a few traditional disciplines grounded in the social sciences, ignoring the social changes of the last two decades that have generated new social issues that the traditional education programs have not addressed. Too much emphasis is placed on the traditional courses (sociology, psychology, medicine) at the expense of specialty ones such as international perspectives in social work, corporate social responsibility, trans-national identities and multi-ethnic communities, emotional intelligence in social work, etc. A needed first step has been achieved by some European universities who have understood the mission of the Bologna process in achieving a European space of superior education where modern social work theories, evidence-based social work, case management, etc. are being taught. In many European countries, the social work curricula need rejuvenation so that graduates are better able to adapt effectively to their professional contexts as required by the social work systems' beneficiaries. There are disciplines based on fundamental research programs that require new standards and qualifications. For sure, there are fundamental changes in the production, economy and labour market division that add up to a new modernization wave; social work is also on this agenda as it supports the vulnerable groups in the process of adapting to the radical social changes. Europe needs practitioners, researchers, professors and managers that are competent for social work.

Recently, the private social work providers are mentioned more often alongside corporate social responsibility, marketing and global welfare, etc. Decentralization, standardization and privatization of the social work seemed, until recently, to be marginal themes of the debates. Currently,

however, in Europe this is a “new professional wave” of maximum urgency, although it is debated only superficially (Schwartz & Kinney 2003). In essence social work is not a liberal profession, but its practice may also take a private form, and social workers may also be authorized private professionals (according to the legal procedures) that may compete for the different social projects of the local or central public authorities. There is also the possibility, still hypothetical for the time being, that the state social insurance budget can reimburse the costs of the social services provided to the beneficiaries by the private social work offices. The public social services concept still prevails, as is normal, marginalizing the concept of privatization of social work services. The debates around this issue, however, are leading the way to another change in the social work policies paradigm, and the “fascination” that the case management currently entails in Europe is a part of the policy that relates to the concept of privatization of social work services. We do not believe that it would be possible for the entirety of social work to be privatized, only for certain services provided in certain social work departments. Privatization of social work is not a novelty—in the United States it is a long-term practice in clinical social work (i.e. counselling and therapy).

Such debates regarding the social work crisis are not common to Europe, but are in the international arena, even in states that do not have well-developed social work systems like the USA or Canada (Munday 2003; Rondeau 2000). We do not deny the fact that there are states where social work is in crisis, taking different forms such as the lack of recognition for the profession, the lack of professional social workers, the failure to recruit future social workers in the universities, less than optimal working conditions, the weak employment rate of social workers in the public local institutions, eroded professional borders, lack of resources, etc. However, we consider that social work is going through a critical stage in its organizational evolution and not a crisis regarding its scientific and professional structure and identity. Therefore, the current European debates related to introducing a new set of recognized social work qualifications will contribute, not by itself, but by bringing forward the agenda of the scientific and professional debates regarding the profession, resulting in an international crystallization of the profession.

The evidence shows that the social workers can act efficiently in a variety of multidisciplinary and organizational contexts. The ethics and basic principles are far more important than the structures and the organizational or institutional arrangements.

The profession’s emphasis on the inequality and poverty produced by the economic and social systems is due to the increasing gap between poor

and rich in the modern society, leading to exclusion and marginalization of the underclass. This is the reason for giving social work a significant role in the social policies. We are also seeing a change in the paradigm from the bureaucratic vision of the welfare state, associated with the social dependency of the vulnerable groups, to the prevention and innovation in the social services. The non-governmental organizations are playing an active role in fostering the development of social support community networks and innovative social projects.

In addition to the globalization and the international perspectives of social work, the specialized conferences are also discussing themes related to rural social work, still relevant for many European countries where there are large percentages of the population living in rural areas, characterized by poverty, social exclusion, poor health, and limited economic opportunities. The factors contributing to perpetuating a rural perspective are the geographical positioning of the communities, the distribution of resources, and the lack of access to social services.

There are, as expected, different opinions related to the internationalization of social work practice and the universality of the social. The important question, taking into account cultural differences, is whether or not social work may be developed in all countries, such as Iraq or China, in the absence of interventions as standardized by the Anglo-American researchers to the practical evidence of the communities. The answer is “yes,” as all approaches tend to include intervention processes that can easily be adapted to all societies.

The social work systems, however, vary not only from one continent to another, but also within the same region, from the European bureaucratic systems, to the community-based but overly formalized American systems, and the Asian systems that prefer to approach the beneficiary as a member of their community and family. In most countries, whether they do or do not have a strong social work tradition, there are professional organizations that protect the rights of their members.

Any country confronts social problems that eventually generate loss and grief for the people. Loss and grief are a theme that is always current for social work as it passes through all times and human civilizations (Lyons, Manion & Carlsen 2006; Kellehear & Collyer 2007): “Loss is an integral part of the lifelong learning process, shaping our identities and personalities” (Bruce & Schultz 2004, 15).

Loss is an internationally relevant concept for all social work systems as it affects families, groups, communities and even nations. Such an example is the situation generated in 2004 by the tsunami that happened in the Indian Ocean, producing disasters of a magnitude never seen before,

affecting large populations, and creating huge trauma and losses at all levels. However, the pain and the loss are met in schools, in the placement centres, in social shelters, in the elderly homes or the hospitals for the HIV/AIDS infected patients. Multiple losses are related to poverty, human trafficking, homeless people, people in conflict with the law, the elderly and all types of exploitation and social exclusion in general. The most obvious situations in which suffering and loss may be relevant are those of the patients in terminal stages, abused and maltreated children, refugee communities experiencing displacement and changes in their life style or communities in war-affected areas.

Globalization and Social Work

As a result of globalization and its consequences, social work has become international. The practical interventions and especially the policies have passed through national borders for some time now. Global interdependence has created both new areas of responsibility and international opportunities for social work (Dominelli 2008). Thus, there are currently situations that can be described as follows:

- a social worker in a placement centre in Bucharest may be presented with the case of a refugee minor from Bangladesh needing shelter
- a social worker, working for an agency in Los Angeles, sends periodic child reports to Kenyan public authorities responsible for inter-country adoptions
- social workers from different countries are working as volunteers in humanitarian activities around the world
- Social workers organized in different professional associations are involved in prestigious European projects, etc.

It is obvious that the internationalization of social problems, as well as the modern ways of collaboration, require new responses adapted to the given situations. In this context, we are talking about the need for innovation in social work. Creativity will take a lead role in the upcoming decades in the social work systems both in the practical interventions and in the development of specialized service networks. For sure, the training of effective social workers must include:

- familiarization with the history, purpose, functions and field of social work

- knowing the differences and similarities in the public organization of the different international social work systems
- knowing the important international agencies involved in social work
- familiarization with modern theories and basic intervention methods, as well as with new concepts such as globalization, social development, human rights and trans-nationalism
- Knowing the role of the international organizations involved in setting up the social work standards and policies.

Although marginal until the early 1990s, the concept of international social work was launched after the Second World War. The global social changes have returned the concept to the public agenda. International social work is a complex concept (Healy 2008) that includes multiple dimensions, such as: comparative analysis, global social issues, international practice, humanitarian social work (both public and private), conferences and international professional collaborations, inter-governmental relationships, and global vision:

International social work can also be defined as the composite of major concepts that inform its practice. Along with the body of social work theories and practice skills, concepts central to international social work are globalization, development, human rights, and transnationalism.

(Healy 2008, 16–17)

The current state of modern social work systems must be seen in the larger context of globalization, as this directly influences, by its modern forms of manifestation, the social work systems through the development of modern management and infrastructure, global communication, the creation of means for the development of effective human capital with expertise in the field, but also the generation of new social issues and, thus, new categories of beneficiaries.

The concept is materialized in the actions of specialized international forms, networking in the field, and global social problems.

The development, human rights and trans-nationalism include social and humanitarian actions, being compatible with social work values, mission and practice. The concepts are related to reducing poverty and economic and social wellbeing, as well as social justice.

We will analyze below a few aspects that constitute the object of international social work:

- Global social problems generated especially by conflicts and natural disasters. The conflicts and the dramatic events that are being

registered at the international level, such as terrorist attacks or natural calamities such as the hurricanes, tornados, major earthquakes, fires or floods, have generated new social issues and thus victims, as well as new categories of beneficiaries for the social work systems. Some of them are well known due to their magnitude: the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA; the Asian tsunami; the hurricanes and the tornadoes that have devastated cities like the hurricane Katrina, the worst in American history; the devastating earthquakes in Turkey, Iran and China; the forest fires that have destroyed large areas and even cities; world wars; and floods that have affected Europe especially, such as the recent examples in the Banat area. In this context, we must mention that the human security concept is associated to that of international social work.

- Classic social problems (poverty, social and economic inequality, etc.) that take a new shape and form, requesting innovative practices and interventions from the social work services. Most states are confronting the housing issues, an aging population, changes in the family structures, unemployment, social dependency, refugee camps, HIV/AIDS, environment issues, etc.
- The military, economic and social actions of a state directly affect the entire world (the exponential increase in the oil prices, financial crises, and the military intervention of Russia in Georgia, the farmers and agriculture workers strikes, the strikes of the French students).
- Global communication—the possibilities for professional interactions among communities of social workers have even exceeded the predictions of Jules Verne (internet, wireless, international databases, advanced search engines, videoconferences).
- International public and private assistance—we mention here the organizations such as UNICEF, USAID, UNAIDS and UNDP that develop and implement technical assistance programs for developing countries. In addition to the organizations being supported by the UN or the national or federal governments we would like to mention that there are private international organizations like CARE International and World Vision that implement social projects in many states that do not have sufficiently developed social services to respond to the existing social problems in their communities. There are bilateral agreements among states regarding many aspects of social life, including social protection agreements.
- International specialized conferences that are frequently held on different themes, either under the patronage of IFSW or organized by other national structures, but with international participation. These

conferences are extremely important as they facilitate the creation of cross-border relationships, knowledge exchange, dissemination of results of excellence research and specialized practices, the development of formal and informal networks, and debates on the most recent themes. For example, in September 2008 in Baltimore (USA) the International Social Work in the 21st Century conference was organized, discussing the practical evidences in social work, international child welfare issues, repatriation, immigration, housing, adoption, and other social work transnational issues. In April 2009, in Croatia, the European Conference Social Action in Europe: Different Legacy and Common Challenges? was organized. We have mentioned just a few of such meetings, but there are hundreds of such national, regional or international meetings annually that discuss global themes or specific aspects of the social work. The names of the organizations demonstrate the international themes and interests of the social work communities and we can mention here the professional network International Consortium for Social Development.

- Global vision—all the above-mentioned aspects contribute to the development of a global vision in social work, innovative strategies and programs that can develop the services capable to address the consequences and prevent the manifestation of other global social problems. IFSW, as the international representative of the social work, has affiliated associations in eighty states and 470,000 members from Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa, CIS.

Conclusion

Our intent was not to close the discussion here but rather to re-open the debate on the professional challenges and opportunities at the beginning of the third millennium. We note a “fall in the future” of the profession as it experiences permanent crises and issues related to its identity, despite the fact that its scientific status is well outlined and stabilized; the profession is naturally related to the social and the administrative-organizational contexts. There will definitely be new social services developed, especially with a role in prevention, but the social workers, especially those working in the local public authorities’ institutions, will continue to experience professional dilemmas and disillusiones generated by the rigidity, resistance and inertia of the public administration institutions.

Social workers can respond to the general globalization-led trends by setting up a common identity and representative similarities in the context of acceptance of the differences between the states. The circle seems to