

SOCIAL WORK IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Zusammenfassung | Soziale Arbeit übernimmt zunehmend eine wichtige Rolle in der slowakischen Gesellschaft. Sie bearbeitet nicht nur gesellschaftliche Veränderungen, sondern versucht, sowohl die Probleme der zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen als auch die Achtung und Wahrung der Menschenwürde und Menschenrechte zu beachten. Die Autorinnen beschreiben die Entwicklung der Sozialen Arbeit in der Slowakischen Republik von der nicht professionellen Hilfe zur Profession und ihre Ziele. Sie soll soziale Not überwinden helfen, ihre Ursachen bekämpfen, psychische Störungen heilen und verhindern sowie die Entwicklung von Menschen und deren Integration fördern.

Abstract | Social work is becoming increasingly important in our society. It is not only committed to the pursuit of social change but also attempts to solve problems in interpersonal relationships in its effort to respect and preserve human dignity and human rights. The authors describe the historical development of social work in the Slovak Republic from its beginning in unorganized forms to the current state of professionalism. The aims of social work are to mitigate or overcome social needs and to support the active participation of citizens. Interventions are meant to prevent social problems and disorders of mental, physical and social development as well as to ensure social integration.

Schlüsselwörter ► Slowakei ► Sozialarbeit
► historische Entwicklung ► Menschenwürde
► Berufsausbildung ► Klient

Introduction | The complex theory of social work is a system of basic ideas of knowledge which not only explain the structure of society, but significantly focus on the balance of trends of social development. It can be seen as a systematic explanation of the observed facts and laws. The diversity of life may result in circumstances such as the segregation of individuals, families or whole classes. In this context, social work includes existing practical knowledge, research

and the interpretation of new information. Its aim is to point out and answer theoretical and practical issues of the social life of humankind.

History is a building block of presence. Everything we can observe around us today is a consequence of events in the past. Understanding historical development is a necessary step to understanding the present completely. Therefore, in this paper we deal with the history of social work in Slovakia. The strong development of social work was conditioned by several key factors such as the ordering of society and the political system, the development of social values, ethics and morality, and the formation of education and the helping professions. As the social system has become more complicated, the provision of assistances has gained more complexity.

The development of social work in the Slovak Republic can be divided into five different phases:

- ▲ until 1918: Charity care for the poor was established, providing care for war orphans and widows and the first forms of public social assistance were created (benefits such as sickness insurance etc. were granted to orphans).
- ▲ 1918-1938: Period of institutionalized social work. Establishment of the Ministry of Social Welfare in Prague.
- ▲ 1938-1948: World War II and the period of the first Slovak State: purposive social policy was aimed, for example, towards the birth-rate, war invalids' care, orphans and widows and the introduction of family allowances.
- ▲ 1948-1989: Period of totalitarian socialism, centralized management of social policy (artificial full employment, controlled economy, segregation of certain population groups, etc.).
- ▲ since 1989: Era of democracy, new social problems associated with the transformation of society (unemployment, drug addiction, migration), development of NGOs in the field of social assistance and integration into European social structures.

The historical origins of social work can be traced back to charities and philanthropy which have their roots in Christianity. Several religious orders have settled in the area of today's Slovakia. They founded charities and developed ethics of compassion for interpersonal relationships in community life. The Benedictines were among the first who came to our terri-

tory, then Hospitallers, Franciscans, the Order of the Poor Clares and others.

At the end of the 9th century some monasteries were founded and served as hospitals, shelters for the poor, the sick, the weak, the elderly, for widows and orphans. The oldest written record of the establishment of the first hospital in Slovakia gives evidence of St. Ladislav hospital which is known until today. From the 12th to the 14th century several religious orders were established and with them also a large number of monasteries. In 1238 a Franciscan monastery was founded in Trnava and in 1250 in Bratislava. Then, in 1288, a large monastery with a hospital was built by the order of the Antonins in Spišské Dravce, and all the hospitals in the Hungarian kingdom were under its authority. A very important person in the history of our country is *St. Stefan*, King of Hungary, who was known for his piety and charity. Equally important is the work of *St. Elizabeth*, Princess of Thuringia and Saxony, who was the daughter of King *Andrew II* of Hungary. At the age of thirteen, she married *Ludwig IV* of Thuringia. Both were outstanding royals. They founded almshouses, supported the poor and the sick and employed them in their kingdom. These monarchs tried to eliminate social inequality by changing interpersonal relationships, by fostering the respect of human dignity and also by granting rights for all. *St. Elisabeth* was known as an advocate of the Thuringian poor, sick and abandoned; she herself would bathe and nurse those in needs. After the death of her husband she had to leave the Thuringian Court and joined the poor. She was an admirer of *St. Francis* and, as a Franciscan sister of charity, she began to found shelters for the sick, poor and abandoned. *Elisabeth* died in 1231, less than twenty-five years of age, in the monastery she had founded.

Important in this period was also the work of the Silesians, who primarily worked with young abandoned apprentices. The shelter in Trnava was founded by Silesians in 1363. It provided care for elderly people of both genders for more than 600 years.

The best known institutions in the territory of the Czech Republic and Slovakia are:

- ▲ 1786 Prague Institute for the Deaf;
- ▲ 1807 Prague Institute for the Blind (Institute for private fostering and treatment of the poor blind children and children with visual impairments);

Ruf doch mal an

Der November ist ein wahrer Stimmungskiller. Nicht nur wegen des Wetters, sondern – so könnte man sagen – auch angesichts der dazu passenden Gedenktage: Die katholischen Feste Allerheiligen und Allerseelen machen stets den Anfang, es folgt der staatliche Volkstrauertag und dann, schon an der Schwelle zum Advent, der protestantische Totensonntag.

So wichtig vielen Menschen aus guten Gründen das Gedenken an die Verstorbenen ist, so werden doch auch die meisten zustimmen, wenn man sagt: An seine Nächsten, Freunde und Verwandten soll man vor allem denken und soll Zeit mit ihnen verbringen, solange sie unter den Lebenden sind. Wie gut dies gelingt, kann jeder für sich prüfen – und am besten schon im November und nicht erst Neujahr gute Vorsätze fassen.

Wie gut die Kommunikation von Älteren und mit Älteren gelingt, berichten aus wissenschaftlicher Perspektive die Autoren und Autorinnen der renommierten Forschungsgruppe Geriatrie an der Berliner Charité in ihrem Beitrag ab Seite 459 in diesem Heft. Eine kleine Überraschung: Nur ein Viertel der über 60-Jährigen wünscht sich mehr Kommunikation; und 80 Prozent der Befragten geben an, ein gutes Verhältnis zu ihren Familienmitgliedern zu haben.

Mit dem Austausch scheint es also im Großen und Ganzen besser zu klappen als vielfach angenommen. Dennoch stimmt eine weitere Information aus dem Artikel nachdenklich: Laut dem Deutschen Alterssurvey lebten 1996 noch 55 Prozent der älteren Menschen in der Nachbarschaft oder im gleichen Ort wie ihre erwachsenen Kinder; 2008 waren dies nur noch 44 Prozent. Eine rasante Veränderung, über deren Folgen und Schlussfolgerungen sich nachzudenken lohnt – vielleicht gerade im trüben November.

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- ▲ 1916 Provincial association founded for the care of the deaf in Prague;
- ▲ 1923 Levoča Grammar School for the blind and visually impaired.

At the beginning of the 20th century several institutions were founded for young adolescents with risky behaviour. These were mostly institutions under prudential authority. The development of social work began in the Czechoslovak Republic, continuing the social legislation and social policy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After its establishment it targeted on a wide range of social problems. The aim was to solve theoretical issues of social work related, for example, to insurances (health, pension, accidents etc.), medico-social issues (TB, infectious diseases, venereal diseases, hygiene, alcoholism, care for pregnant women etc.), the issue of war invalids and the care for abandoned and problematic children.

Since in the 19th and early 20th century it was common sense in Slovakia that girls had to obtain only elementary school education, there was no reason to establish high schools for them. As a consequence, education for women was not permitted by legislation. However, despite this situation, the most famous personalities who have contributed to what is now standard to us, whether in the education of women or in the area of social work, were two women – *Alice Garrigue Masaryk* and *Elena Marothy-Šoltésová*. The author of the first article on social work which appeared in the Czech press was *Alice Masaryk* in 1914. She applied a sociological approach to solving social problems for municipalities. *Masaryk* was also dealing with issues of social agencies and public health organizations in Prague. She was one of the founders of social education in our country and, along with *Alice Salomon*, one of the founders of international cooperation with a focus on social work. *Elena Marothy-Šoltésová* developed the idea of girls' schools and her social activity is linked to the existence of the Slovak women community called *Živena*.

The first Czechoslovakian President, *Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk*, expected that social work in practical and theoretical forms would be developed in Czechoslovakia in the spirit "of true charity, which is the ultimate purpose of all social life and not just looking for that love, but effectively working for the welfare of their own and their neighbours" (*Sotolař* 2000),

and he expressed the creed: "If social work is to be successful, it is then necessary that the private (voluntary) and public (state) care collaborate together."

Marie Krakešová (1973) developed a coherent psychological concept of social work in our area. On the basis of studying social case reports she developed a new psychological theory of their origin. Her systematic work was completed by the theory of psychological educational social therapy which was brought into practice at social clinics in the years 1946-1949. *Krakešová* introduced a new concept of social maturity. According to this concept, one of the causes of social problems can be seen in the dissatisfaction of basic social needs in childhood and adolescence. Her approach was a breakthrough in understanding the causes of social inequalities.

The revolution in November 1989 merged into a massive transformation and had a strong impact on social reality in Slovakia. Social problems came to surface which had previously been either latent or inexistent. Unemployment, crime, drug addiction, homelessness and many other problems caused the need to solve problems in the manner established in the "Western world", i.e. by the public institution of social work. It must, however, be emphasized that it was necessary to respond to an indolent ideology denying social problems and the needs of the population.

These factors were also influenced by legislative changes resulting in an altered approach toward the client. There was a shift of methods in dealing with complex social situations which was due to the fact that the state had changed its basic philosophy in abandoning paternalism and moving from welfare and security to social assistance. Requirements for the competence of newly recruited social workers prompted some universities to reintroduce studies of social work in Slovak universities. The establishment of an independent state in 1993 led to the necessity to take another important step to increase the number of qualified social workers. The change from a centralized to a federal state caused an increasing need of professionals skilled in the fields of social policy and social work, first at the level of state policy and later, as a result of decentralization, at the level of regional and local policies.

Due to increased administration and to law approximation, the integration of Slovakia into the European Union raised the requirement for qualified social workers again. Another factor which led to a growing interest of already employed candidates to study social work was the fact that according to the Act 312/2001 of the Law Code, civil servants have to meet the minimum requirement of completion of the first cycle of higher education in the field of social work. In this case, it was mainly the staff of district offices, then later the staff of the office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, who had to begin studying by the end of 2005. Interest in studying social work was also shown by other groups, such as employees of the police, of criminal justice authorities, of customs offices, of social security institutions and of local government municipalities, as well as by businessmen, bank officials and employees of private companies particularly in the area of human resources.

In Slovakia, it is currently possible to study social work at several universities, for example, at the Faculty of Education at Comenius University in Bratislava, at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Prešov, at the Faculty of Education and Theology at the Catholic University in Ružomberok, at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice, at the Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Slaákovičovo, at the Faculty of Education at the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica, at the University of St. Elizabeth in Bratislava and at Trnava University. These universities generate an enormous potential of professionally qualified social workers who are trained in their common profession, so that the actual profile of university graduates is roughly the same.

Social work under the conditions in Slovakia defines itself as a branch of education and is closely oriented to EU requirements. Social work as a profession deals with serious social problems. Among the most important are the welfare of clients and the social development of the whole society. This mission can only be fulfilled by qualified social workers. An important element of their qualification is vocational education which is provided in the framework of a vocational training and is further expanded and deepened in the course of regular professional education. According to *Strieženec* (1996) today's education of social workers is conducted at these levels:

- ▲ Preparation within the school system;
- ▲ Preparation in the further educational system;
- ▲ Preparation in the context of sectoral training.

Currently, a Slovak Association of Social Workers is being established which will serve as a professional association to enhance the expertise of social workers. Unfortunately, a distinct Chamber of Social Workers is missing in Slovakia. It is necessary and important that social work has a strong foundation in society.

The problem with the Department of Social Work was the lack of social work professionals with academic and pedagogical degrees. There is a need for a specific training for social work. The educational program should be defined as a form of tertiary education – undergraduate and graduate studies as well as opportunities for doctoral studies as the highest form of higher education, optionally leading to academic habilitation and professoral inauguration.

The profession of social workers is very demanding. "Social workers are the agents of change in society and in the lives of individuals, families and communities for whose benefit they work which is shown in solving problems in interpersonal relationships, to meet human needs and to develop human potential" (*Strieženec* 2001, S. 128). The term "agent" means that the social worker is a factor that contributes to changes in society and in the lives of individuals. Social workers have to study and practice to master a range of knowledge, skills and competencies that are relevant for their profession, and to meet the requirements of social practice.

The professionalization of social workers can be seen as a process of acquiring specific professional traits (personality qualities, skills and knowledge) which are necessary for interventions at the individual, group or community level and in the end for achieving a recognized qualification.

Further education of social workers | Social work requires lifelong learning. Social workers can acquire necessary knowledge and skills through continuing education. The Association of Educators in Social Work in Slovakia is a professional organization conceptualizing the curriculum as well as methodical and methodological approaches for preparing professionals for social work practice. The association

is co-author (in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic) of the educational standards in social work.

The qualifications required for social work include: a sufficient level of education, a specific focus of education (most suitably a required degree in social work, or in other social disciplines like, for example, social pedagogy and psychology) and practical experience. These elements should be supplemented with the additional education of social workers which is part of their lifelong learning processes. Today we can see new manifestations of professionalization like self-reflection (communication with oneself, self-evaluation, self-care and the subsequent self-education) as well as a new method of social work – supervision (method of continuous improvement of the professional competence of social workers).

Social work as an independent department nowadays | The first social work conference in Slovakia took place in 1998 with a focus on theoretical and methodological questions and on educational courses in social work which were unified in Slovakia. The next step was the establishment of a separate department of education in social work, taking into account prior knowledge as well as international and European experience. This led to the foundation of the *Asociácia vzdelávateľov v sociálnej práci* (Association of Educators in Social Work, AVSP).

In our country, Social Work as a department of education didn't exist for more than 50 years. The Social Work Department was established for the sake of granting social workers an appropriate status and for creating a public image and jobs. The problem with the department of social work is the lack of social work professionals with scientific and pedagogical degrees. This shows that social work education is becoming reduced to a vocational training.

“Social work is a specific professional activity, which aims to improve mutual accommodation of individuals, families, groups and social environment in which they live and to develop self-esteem and self-responsibility of individuals using the resources provided by the company. Activity is for the benefit of clients (individuals, groups, families, communities), which is characterized by the concepts: help, support and accompanying” (*Slovák, Vereš* 2009). Social work

belongs to the humanities which deal with social issues, with testing hypotheses and with solving social problems of the entire humankind.

The clients of social work | Clients of social work can be distinguished as follows in terms of the causes and nature of their problems:

- ▲ Clients with social pathology (delinquency, crime, conduct disorder, prostitution, violence, addiction, suicidal symptoms);
- ▲ Clients due to age (the period of childhood, adolescence and old age);
- ▲ Clients from different social groups (characterized by a certain lifestyle);
- ▲ Clients with health problems (somatic and mental illnesses);
- ▲ Clients with socio-economic problems (the unemployed, the homeless, people living on the poverty line);
- ▲ Clients with disabilities (mental, physical or sensual).

Subdivisions of clients according to specific patterns of behaviour:

- ▲ Involuntary client – comes to social worker due to pressure from the social environment, refuses to cooperate;
- ▲ Manipulative client – solves the problem in his or her favour, manipulates social workers;
- ▲ Aggressive client – solves the problem in his or her favour, displaying aggressive behaviour.

The focus of social work is on:

- ▲ Problems – explained by theories and solved or reduced in practice. This is accomplished taking into account the environment as well as the psychological complexity of humans as individuals or group members or of an entire community (*Strieženec* 1996).
- ▲ Clients of social work – by this term we understand individuals, families, groups or communities who need professional help in coping with their social problems.
- ▲ The social environment – in which an individual, group or community exists and where interactions may be disturbed.
- ▲ Social case work – social work with the aim of helping people who are unable to overcome their own life problems and obstacles.
- ▲ Social reality – specific social phenomena such as problematic situations, social events, social problems of individuals or problems of groups and communi-

ties in the process of their development. The answer consists in examining solutions and prevention strategies at the individual and social level, using adequate methods and techniques.

The realization that every individual is unique and that life cannot be repeated should not only be based on personal respect but also on respect for the universality of life and on the recognition of a shared responsibility of individuals, groups and communities with regard to the quality of life, survival, reproduction and participation. The aims of social work are to improve the quality of life as well as to prevent and solve problems of individuals, groups or communities.

Slovak legislation defined social work in the Act No. 195/1998 regarding social assistance which was later replaced by Act. No. 448/2008 on social services. Currently, social work belongs to the so-called helping professions. These are specialized professions whose primary objectives and activities are related to the fields of medicine, nursing, psychology, psychotherapy and education. They provide assistance in difficult situations. Helping professions emphasize their mission more than their professional performance. This means that they focus on the service to the people which, in our culture, has primarily been understood as a service to the neighbour. Social work is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach to the regulation and management of social issues. Its difference from other professions consists in the task of solving social problems (Strieženc 1996).

Social work as a practical activity is trying to primarily focus on barriers, inequalities and injustices that exist in every society. It responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems. With its special methods social work helps in dealing with various social problem situations of citizens. It is not only applied in cases of material deprivation but also provides help and support to unemployed people as well as to disabled and elderly citizens. Social work deals, for example, with the problems of addicts and people in penitentiary and post-penitentiary care; it makes use of a range of skills, techniques, and activities consistent with its holistic focus on people and their social environment.

The application of social work in virtually all sectors of society is reflected in the perception of real

problems of real people. We can say with hindsight and life experience that it is the right path, the path of knowledge, understanding and helping other people who need assistance. Economic problems are widespread in our society. Many people are confined to low incomes and struggle to survive month after month, not to mention those people who have serious social problems and depend on social benefits.

A holistic focus on social work is universal, but the priorities of social work vary chronologically, depending on the context of cultural, historical and socio-economic conditions. Social work has a unique place and perspective, not only in primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, but also in providing basic, vocational and specialized social counselling and also in clinical social work, group teaching and family therapy. Social therapy is making great efforts in its development of technical assistance and appropriate services for socially disadvantaged people. It monitors, evaluates and proposes solutions to serious socio-pathological phenomena in society.

Social work influences the development of social changes necessary to enhance the quality of life of people in need of social assistance. Also important are the expertise, qualification and ethical competence of occupational therapy personnel and related staff.

“Every individual is unique and has a unique and inalienable dignity and value which results from the nature of being human. The main mission of each of us is to be a responsible human being at all levels – to be responsible to oneself, to the outside world and of course to those who need our help. Quite naturally any activity within social work is related to these levels” (Davideková 2010). Social work is mainly based on the values of respect and dignity for all people. The development and application of this profession, which is carried out by various institutions in Slovakia, has become a great asset to our population in recent times.

Social work has a crucial role in promoting social and economic equality and in exerting efforts to create a human-oriented and regulated economy. The basis of success in solving any social problem consists in listening to and understanding each other and in building interpersonal relationships and solidarity.

PRAXISANLEITUNG UND MENTORING | Profile verantwortungsvoller Aufgaben

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Thus, efforts will be continued to initiate a transfer of a mutual experience and to improve mutual awareness in the field of social work.

Résumé | In Slovakia the professionalization of social work took place in the development of social work education and in the context of organizations. It is important to become aware that any social work intervention is connected with a socio-educational impact on the client. This should be reflected in the development of the educational content. Although the knowledge and the skills of social workers are based on an interdisciplinary social work approach, the theoretical foundations are derived from the social science disciplines. Social workers deal with a wide range of diverse issues and problems. The most significant of these are ethical issues and problems: questions with regard to the relationship with the client or issues of power and control.

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Zusammenfassung | Praxisanleitung und Mentoring sind vielseitige Aufgaben, die oft keine angemessene Beachtung erfahren. In die professionelle Gestaltung von Anleitungsprozessen bringen die Anleiterinnen und Anleiter sowie Mentorinnen und Mentoren nicht nur die eigene Fachlichkeit ein, sondern zudem Kompetenzen in der Erwachsenenbildung sowie als Coaches, Führungskräfte und Change Agents. Individuelle Begleitung von Entwicklung ist dabei stets in den jeweiligen Organisationszusammenhängen zu verorten.

Abstract | Practical guidance and mentoring are multifaceted tasks which often do not receive the attention they deserve. In the course of providing instruction, professional trainers and mentors do not only contribute their specialised expertise but also offer skills as change agents and competences in the fields of adult education, coaching and management. Their support of individual development must always be related to the relevant organizational context.

Schlüsselwörter ▶ Erwachsenenbildung
▶ Coaching ▶ Praktikant ▶ Mitarbeiter
▶ Praxisanleitung ▶ Mentoring

1 Einleitung | Praxisanleitung und Mentoring als prozessorientierte Begleitung von Praktikantinnen und Praktikanten beziehungsweise neuen Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern gewinnen im Zusammenhang mit dem sich abzeichnenden Fachkräftemangel als wesentliche Elemente der Personal-, Organisations- und Qualitätsentwicklung an Bedeutung. Dadurch werden Anleitungsbeziehung und Anleitungsprozess¹ sehr viel deutlicher als bisher in den jeweiligen organisationalen Kontext eingebettet. In Praxisanleitung und Mentoring tätige Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen sind als Fachkräfte, als Erwachsenenbildner, als Coaches und als Führungskräfte mit viel-

1 Während sich die Begriffe Praktikant oder Mentee jeweils auf den speziellen Kontext von Praxisanleitung oder Mentoring beziehen, stehen die Begriffe Anzuleitende und Anleitung für beide Formen der Einführung und Einarbeitung.

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