Do we need a new understanding of partnership between community and social work

Vera Grebenc, Fakulteta za socialno delo

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What could be the community today?

Different types of the community *:

1) **Community of place** (place where people live and/or work together; e.g. neighbourhood, school, old peoples home…)

2) **Community of identity** (family, similar life style)

3) **Community of common circumstances** (event, refugees, passengers, outside conditions)

4) **Community of interest** (share similar ideas, issues, aims; virtual communities: facebook,…).

Example: what is the difference among traditional hobby gardeners and urban community gardeners - the local presence and to improve individual economy/ now advocated also through political arguments (seed banks, self - sufficience…)

QUESTIONS THAT BOTHER US

How to position a social work as profession in the world of today?

How to understand our role in the society? (macro level)

How understand our role in the community? (micro and mezzo level)

Social work is facing challenges :

- Ideological (neo-liberal values vs. social welfare)
- Ethical (human rights values and social justice vice versus control and oppression, limitation of recourses)
- Moral (our responsibilities to each other/ to the world/ to future)

Are there any alternatives?

Communities or coalitions (the question: to argue our needs through political arguments or not: hobby gardeners again)

Definition of Social Work (IFSW, IASSW)
http://www.iassw-aiets.org/social-work-ethics, date: 15.6.2013

The social work profession promotes *social change, problem solving* in human relationships and the *empowerment* and *liberation* of people *to enhance well-being.*

Utilizing theories of *human behaviour* and *social systems,* social work *intervenes* at the points where people *interact with their environments.*

Principles of *human rights* and *social justice* are fundamental to social work.

Principles of Social Work

(Question for the discussion: How can we understand this principles today in the context of the community?)

- **Human Rights and Human Dignity**

- Social work is based on respect for the inherent **worth and dignity of all people**, and **the rights that follow from this**. Social workers should uphold and defend each person's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being.

- This means:

- **Respecting the right to self-determination** - Social workers should respect and promote people's right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.

- **Promoting the right to participation** - Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.

- **Treating each person as a whole** - Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments, and should seek to recognise all aspects of a person's life.

- **Identifying and developing strengths** - Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups and communities and thus promote their empowerment.

Social Justice

Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work.

This means:

- **Challenging negative discrimination -** Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs.

- **Recognizing diversity** - Social workers **should recognise and respect** the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practise, taking account of individual, family, group and community **differences**.

- **Distributing resources equitably** - Social workers should **ensure that resources** at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.

- **Challenging unjust policies and practices** - Social workers have **a duty to bring to the attention** of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are **oppressive, unfair or harmful.**

- **Working in solidarity** - Social workers have an **obligation to challenge social conditions** that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society.

An international ethical code for social work , **Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles , International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)**

- The position of social work in a society is a **paradox position** which can be recognised in following facts:

- The fact that the loyalty of social workers is often in the middle of **conflicting interests**.

- The fact that social workers function as both **helpers and controllers.**

- The conflicts between the duty of social workers to **protect the interests** of the people with whom they work and societal **demands for efficiency and utility.**

- The fact that **resources in society are limited**.

Ethical dilemmas and risks: how to understand them in the context of community work today?

Ethical dilemmas and risks: II.

Care, support and assistance versus control and demands. (servicess in the communty, institutions that spread the influence)

The risk of a—seemingly necessary—caring attitude leading to the *loss of a person's own power* of initiative and sense of dignity. (Bovec, earthqacke, state office)

Respect for a **person's right to self-determination** and freedoms versus the risk of one's efforts leading to the **stigmatization** of that person. (mental helath problems, domestic violence,victim to blame)

Difficulties in **treating people with respect** and of creating a positive relationship in a job that has unavoidable elements of demand and control. (new low on social benefits)

Ethical dilemmas and risks: II.

The conflict between, on the one hand, defending/ protecting certain users and, on the other, taking into consideration the interests of those closely related and others. (drug use, mental health programs; neighbourhood and service users)

The right of the child to advantageous living conditions versus the right of the parents to exert their parentage and live their family lives on their own terms. (poverty)

Prioritizing time and resources between different service users categories with different needs.

Carrying out measures deemed **necessary** and proper versus **demands for economic stringency.**

Maintaining loyalty with the work and the organisation, even when one finds policy and working conditions to be **contrary to well-founded practice** and the best interests of the service users and perhaps also to juridical norms for the work.

- **The professional identity of the social worker**
- The different aspects of social work—combined in different ways—involve partly different **professional roles** and partly different **professional ideals.** An emphasis on empowerment places one in a different role from seeing oneself foremost *as advocate, community builder, guide and fosterer, support, caregiver, or citizens' service function*.

- In certain professions, established phrases exist that briefly outline of the **essentials** of their task. An example of this is the formulation, "prevention, healing, alleviation and comfort", mainly used in the medical profession. There is no such key expression in social work, but an example of a condensed professional identity might be the ambition **"to help a greater number of people to live a life of dignity".**

Ethical values and norms I.

The principle of human dignity: the principle of the equal, high worth of all human beings

Human rights: the individual has the right to certain living conditions and resources which in turn puts demands on nation-states, but also on organisations and other individuals. In social work the concern is mostly for those types of resources and measures that correspond to social rights, e.g. an adequate standard of living, dwelling, work and access to health and sick care.

Humanity: one ought to be particularly observant and sympathetic towards persons in a vulnerable and difficult situation

Solidarity: solidarity suggests comradeship, a particular affinity with (certain) others, whose projects and aspirations we support. The solidarity idea expresses fellowship and an expected mutuality, "being there for each other"

Welfare, resources and security: citizens have access to different kinds of resources and security guarantees that can contribute to their personal well-being

Ethical values and norms II.

Dignity and integrity: we are treated with respect and shown interest, we can make our voices heard, we have the right to a private sphere…protected from other people's curiosity and from simplified judgements about ourselves…we can share in the resources and the help offered by the society when we are affected by difficulties in life

Freedom and self determination: to help individuals to develop the capacity to make free choices and come to own decisions as far as this does not involve a threat against others' freedom and well-being.

Democracy and participation: democratic approach means openness, dialogue, and the influence and participation of people involved.

(Social) justice: can be weighed from the point of view of equality, to treat similar cases in a similar manner. But justice may also be based on need, to pay attention to the unique needs of each individual *(dezinstitutionalisation)*

Equality: This means that a social work professional must receive and treat the client-citizen as an equivalent human being.

The discussion on the new partnership between community and social work:

How to understand the principles of social work today? How we can follow them in the community?

Factors that hinder or enable the social work in the community

- * The typology of community is done on the base of my research and observationa and using also the following resourcess: with some ideas from:

- 1. Glover Reed, Beth (2005), Theorizing in Community Practice: Essential Tools for Building Community, Promoting Social Justice, and Implementing Social Change,v: Weil, Marie, ed. The Handbook of Community Practice, SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi.)

- 2. Thom, B., Bayley, M. (2007), *Multi-component programmes: An aproach to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm.* Socialno delo 48, 5-6-: 315-325.

- 3. Grebenc, Vera (2006) Needs assessment in community : what communities can tell us. V: Flaker, V. (ur.), Schmid, T. (ur.). *Von der Idee zur Forschungsarbeit : Forschen in Sozialarbeit un Sozialwissenschaft*, (Böhlau Studienbücher BSB). Wien: Böhlau Verlag, Herbst, str. 167-189.