

THE SOCIAL WORKER'S ROLE OF EDUCATOR

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Abstract: *A social worker's profession is very complex if we take into account the variety of fields these specialists work in, namely: child care services, care for the elderly, protection of parole prisoners, human trafficking victims, probation services. The complexity of roles a social worker has to play is given by the integrated character of provided services, i.e. each client's issues are approached from multiple perspectives so as to make full use of the client's resources and potential as well as of the community resources. The topic of roles played by social workers alternatively during interventions is quite old and widely debated. In this paper I would strictly refer to the role of educator, trying to identify where exactly they play this role, the services this role is vital for and what is really involves.*

Key words: *social work, educator, professional roles, client system*

The social worker as educator

Starting from the definition of education as “an assembly of systematically applied measures aiming to train and develop intellectual, moral or physical abilities of children and teenagers...” (dexonline.ro) as well as by extrapolation, we can notice that this process is frequently conducted in social work activities. With no specific intention of training intellectual abilities, social work includes educational actions which ensure and even condition the success of most interventions. A simple argument underlines the interdependence of roles conducted by the social worker but places the role of educator immediately after the evaluation role when ranking the specialist's interventions.

The role of educator or trainer as referred to in certain papers is thus completed by other states, the social worker has to experience. The role of broker, facilitator, mediator, advocate, etc. alternate in the social worker's

interventions; they even overlap from time to time, as “there is no exact border between them” (Buzducea, 2009, p.67) .

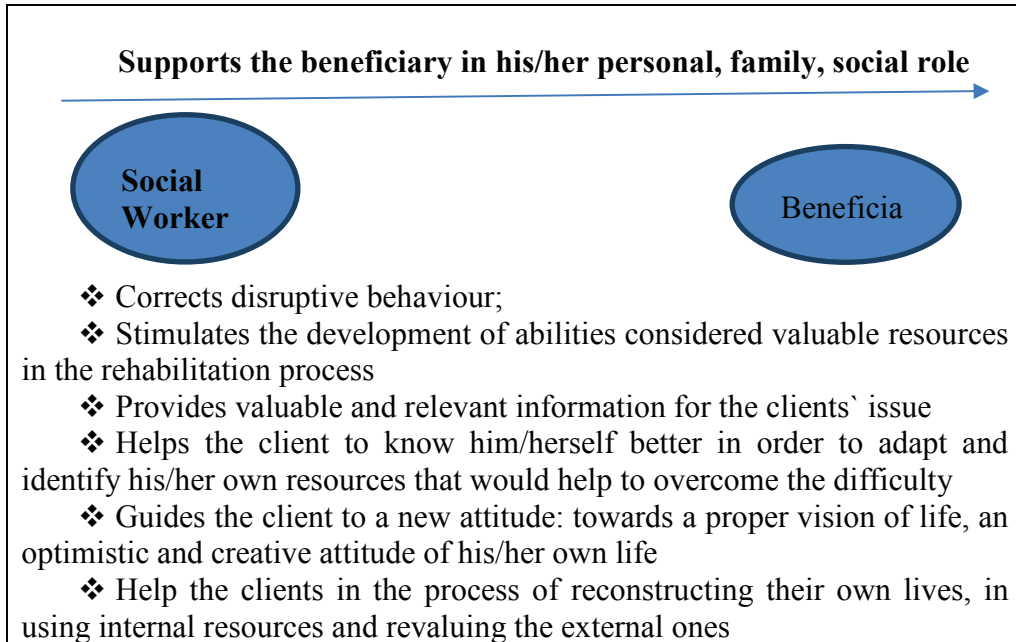
Which are the situations when the social worker becomes an educator? The literature available in our country describes pretty vaguely the social worker’s pedagogical activities. However, they underline that they consist of any activity which provides information, knowledge and contributes to the development of proper life skills or problem solving skills. So, if educating means training someone through education, influencing deliberately, systematically and in an organized manner his/her development, then the social worker is intrinsically an educator. How would it be possible to integrate an ex-convict without educating certain behaviours, stimulating certain qualities required by life in freedom along with abatement of certain antisocial reactions/behaviours? Is it possible to convince a mother to keep her child if she lacks parental abilities? There are numerous examples and they can be applied to any intervention field, starting with child protection, occupancy, delinquency, human trafficking, drug abuse, social integration of Roma minority and persons with disabilities, more tolerance, etc.

According to Krogsrud Miley (2006, p.37) social work fulfils three main functions irrespective of the system level we refer to (individual, family, formal group/organizations or community, society), namely: the function of consultancy, resource management and education. In this context, the professional roles of advocate, consultant, broker, educator, etc. are played within these functions.

If we refer to providing information as a dimension of the role of educator, we can ask ourselves the following question: what are actually the information demanded by the beneficiaries and in what context can they be given? Depending on the status of the client’s issue (whether s/he began the procedure of solving them or is in an assistance process) the most frequent questions refer to:

- Which institution is responsible for..?
- Where is it placed?
- What are the necessary documents?
- What rights do I have as a (person with disabilities, refugee, ex-convict, single-parent family, etc.)?
- Where can I find material/financial support?
- What should I write a resume/an application form? How do I go to an interview?
- What are my obligations as a beneficiary (of social benefits, social services)?

Fig.1. The Social Worker`s Role as Educator



Who provides these services?

Irrespective of the type of issue a person may face, the handiest location/institution on local level which can offer relevant information about their social rights is the Public Service of Social Work/SPAS. The beginning of the improvement process of a difficult or risky situation takes place within the SPAS; an easy analogy can be made between this public service and medical care services. The GP makes an evaluation and prescribes a prevention treatment or sends the patient to a specialist. Our client can find a solution to the problems at the social work service on local level if the situation is not very complicated or can be sent to specialized services provided by DGASPC and NGOs. Hence, the above questions can be solved by the social worker at SPAS, who also offers prevention services on local level. For more complicated cases, any details on each client`s particular situation are given by the social worker who took over the case, the case manager, case responsible or the team which instrumented the case, etc.

Thus education is the fundamental instrument that a social worker uses to link the system with the client and community/society with the goal of identifying the available opportunities which respond to the client`s needs.

The social worker presumes that the client does not know the opportunities, cannot use them or does not know whether s/he has the right to access them. According to Krogsrud (2006, p.416), exquisite specialists in information are the case managers who "offer technical support on the availability, benefits, eligibility, requirements, procedures and any other vital information on resources". The author shows that „by giving relevant information, the case managers guide the clients through the network maze of social services, helping them to benefit from proper resources". This knowledge transmission should not be regarded as a bland process: the client is not always willing to learn, to answer to demands, to make an effort or to correct some mistakes. Rooney (2009) suggests some client conscription/participation strategies for clients who are unwilling to take part in their recovery process. He points out some factors which determine the clients' participative attitude. The artistry of influencing clients involves skilfulness, trustfulness and acceptance (Simons and Aigner, 1985, p.117 apud Krogsrud, 2006). Dean (2002), Serman and Fellenz (1989) cited by Galbraith, (2004, p.5) select a few essential qualities of a good educator for adults. We mention here some of them: self-confidence, information, enthusiasm, sensitivity/reaction manner and creativity. The success these qualities have in communication and in the persuasion act is already proven. Persuasion is often necessary in social interventions. However, numerous writings on the ideal and perfect educator do not refer to the social worker as educator. These qualities are perfectly valid for specialists in social work when they act as trainers or teachers.

Concerns for a classification of the most relevant social worker's roles are justified by the variety of these roles. Authors such as Dominelli (2009), Asquith and colleagues (2005) apud Moriarty (2015.p.11) support the idea that all social worker's roles/activities are equally important. This idea is strongly argued by other authors. Specialists use several classifications of the social worker's types of roles. Payne (2005) and Dominelli (2009) include the role of educator but without literary mentioning it. Payne distinguishes the following roles: therapeutic role, transformational role, social order role. Dominelli divided social activity in three directions: protection, emancipation, therapy. The educational role is included in the *transformation* role. It involves cooperation and learning. Dominelli does not include this role in his classification.

The social worker functions as an educator when s/he has to provide the client some information. This is one of the most frequent aspects of the social work profession. Giving pertinent information on the services that could help the client, on the legislation etc. requires knowledge of these topics. Thus, the social worker has to be perfectly familiar with the services,

available resources, legislation, procedures that can be applied to access certain rights, etc.

Table no 1 *Correspondence between the specific occupations from the COR (Classification of Occupations in Romania) and the social worker's attributions*

Occupations according to COR	Services provided by DGASPC where these roles are fulfilled	Attributions according to COR
<p>Code: 2635. Specialist in social work and counselling The specialist offers guidance and counselling to physical entities, families, groups, communities and organizations in response to their personal and social difficulties. S/he ensures access to support resources and services arisen from issues emerged due to unemployment, poverty, disability, addiction, delinquent and criminal behaviour, domestic issues or of any other nature.</p>		

<p>Code: 263501 Social worker higher level</p>	<p>I. Service Case Management Adults</p> <p>II. Departments SPAS³⁰</p> <p>III. Intervention in Cases of Trafficking, Migration and Remigration</p> <p>IV. Compartment for Prevention of Social Exclusion</p> <p>1. Family Planning and Contraceptive Education</p> <p>2. Monitoring, assistance and support for pregnant women</p> <p>3. Support and assistance for children in families with separation risk</p>	<p>Provides adults with assistance and support in their freedom of speech rights</p> <p>Provides free specialized counselling (information and assistance) on issues related to services and social work benefits</p> <p>Provides the victims of human trafficking with psychological and social counselling as well as legal aid services aiming personal and social recovery</p> <p>Informs women who are unable to take up parental responsibilities on contraceptive measures and guides them to a proper assistance aiming to reduce child abandonment and to promote the right for a better health and life</p> <p>Counsels (socially, legally or any other type of counselling) pregnant women, facilitates their access to material support, medical and specialized services by offering them useful information</p> <p>Informs and counsels families in order to prevent the separation of children from their families</p>
<p>Code:263502 Social worker in the field of addictions</p>	<p>Evaluation, Prevention and Antidrug Counselling Service</p>	<p>Information on the effects of drug abuse, alcohol, smoking through prevention campaigns on consumption in schools</p>

³⁰ SPAS Department within local public administration from villages

<p>Code: 263505 Social worker with competence in mental health issues</p>	<p>Centre for Mental Health for Children and Teenagers</p>	<p>Informing the sick person`s family on other community services that support the sick person, on the use of social service network, supporting the relationship between family and the mentally disordered person</p>
<p>Code: 263507 Specialist in assisted employment Specialist</p>		<p>Assisting the disabled in the identification of a work place by informing and guiding them towards protected workshops.</p>

Of all the definitions given to social work in time, Freynet (1995, p. 168) captured very clearly the way it should be understood”: *social work ... emerges in the centre of transactions between society and the outcasts ...*” This definition refers to the mediation role of social work. This mediation implies information, namely provision of data and useful information to the beneficiaries, according to their individual needs: employment needs, psychological support needs, access to day care services, residential services, etc.

Methods used in client education process

Krogsrud (op.cit. p. 390) suggests some models/methods of client education. His aim is to extend the clients` knowledge and consequently identify new solutions to their problems.

Role play, used as a simulation method, gives the client the possibility of experimenting new situations, learn new behaviours “without risking the consequences of failure” (Jonson, 2003). This techniques allows the social worker to correct deficiencies in the communication by assuming certain roles and creating certain contexts which the client would handle with difficulty in real life situations. Role play is an ideal way of overcoming the client`s fears, of building a correct and optimal “path” which would lead to balance in the client`s life. The method is proper in several situations: preparing a job interview, developing parental abilities, developing emotion expression skills, skills of managing problem situations, budget management skills, etc. Generally, the method becomes an important and efficient tool for the development of interpersonal communication. Specialists have elaborated varied *structured training programmes*, organized around different communication issues such as: Dare to Discipline, Parent Effectiveness

Training (P.E.T.), Nonviolent Communication (N.V.C.), Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, S.T.E.P.), Positive Discipline, Active Parenting, Love and Logic.

The clients' resources can be activated through different other techniques adapted to their educational level and the problems that have to be overcome.

Conclusion

One of the principles of social work is the dignity of the person, considered as fundamental principle in any context of life by each of us. The beneficiary of social work services or the client as often referred to, often experiences situations when the personal dignity is not respected. The social worker by the multitude of roles s/he assumes aims exactly to gain personal respect for the clients and placing them in a secure environment, where the inner resources can be revalued.

The social work profession is considered complex because of the multiple skills required in the interventions made and the diversity of the situations that occur. Special qualities such as empathy are absolutely necessary, along with skillfulness, determination, humanism, etc. Depending on the purpose targeted, a role is assigned to the activity conducted by the social worker. The educational role is one of the most used and needed in the clients' rehabilitation.

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