

Social work on the move.

Approaches and professionalization in times of transition

Paper for the international conference

Realities and challenges for social workers as a profession

University of Tirana

Faculty of Social Sciences

25-26 November 2013



History

2

- Social work in most European countries has been established in the context of
- industrialization - new social risks
- Female profession
- Concept of intellectual motherliness/motherhood
- Counterpart to the men's world (market, state, military)
- Emancipation
- Democratical developments and
- Movements

Professionalization - Process

3

- Charity Organization Society
- Occupation, paid job
- Trained workers
- Academic education
- Research
- Profession –reputation
- De-professionalization



Profession:

4

- Distinguished from other professions
- Professional standards
- Code of ethic
- Clear understanding and mission(mandate): what is do to in what field of action
- Social Work as a human rights profession 
- Global Standards for sw education 
- International definition 
- Different views uncertainty 



Richard Hugman

5

- „Professionalization is a process in which occupations make claim around particular practices and theories and use these to gain social status and authority“



• **social justice**

- Richard Hugman 2010,p86



human right

Professionalization - items

6

- (i) public recognition of professional status;
- (ii) professional monopoly over specific types of work;
- (iii) professional autonomy of action;
- (iv) possession of a distinctive knowledge base;
- (v) professional education regulated by members of the profession;
- (vi) an effective professional organization;
- (vii) codified ethical standards;
- (viii) prestige and remuneration reflecting professional

Profession - Discourse

7

- Concepts are self-description of an academic discipline - discourse
- Discourse refers to all that can be thought, written or said about a particular thing
- Discourse creates the possibility of a certain form of knowledge

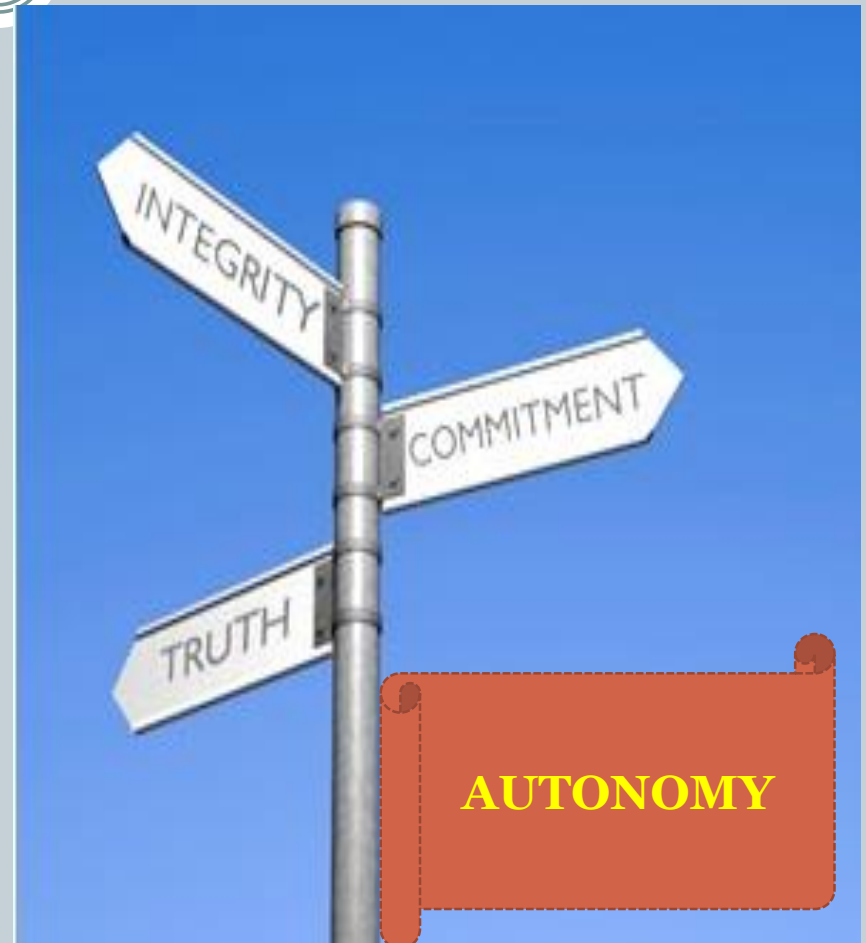
• D.Howe 2010,S.122

- „In all countries social workers see themselves as agents of social changes and institutional reform" (Hokenstad 1992)
- 1992: Start of the Faculty of Social Sciences , University Tirana

„Profession“ is related to the idea of autonomy

8

A key aspect of professional autonomy is the right of workers to make work-related decisions on the basis of their professional **knowledge and values**, without being subject to the directives of those outside the profession or to constraints that are inconsistent with that knowledge and those values.



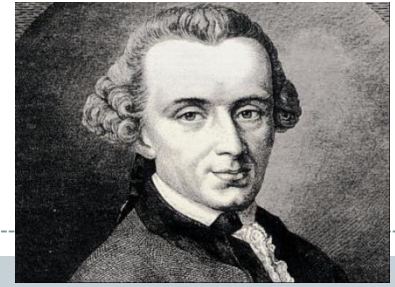
Autonomy - Modernity

9

- The idea of autonomy relates to modernity.
- Modernity as the project of the enlightenment is about order, structure and rational thinking
- „At the heart of Enlightenment thought was the human being. Salvation, was now replaced by happiness – a huge step forward in the history of individuality, whose evolution has been predominantly contained to the European-Atlantic region.
- <http://www.aufklaerung-im-dialog.de/assets/Uploads/PDFs/Katalogtexte/englisch/KatalogtextLottesEN.pdf>

Kant

10



- *Enlightenment is the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority. Minority is inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This minority is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! [dare to be wise] Have courage to make use of your own understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment.*
- <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/enlightenment.htm>

Set of principles

11

- Radical Enlightenment is a set of basic principles that can be summed up concisely as:
- democracy; racial and sexual equality; individual liberty of lifestyle;
- full freedom of thought, expression, and the press;
- eradication of religious authority from the legislative process and education;
- and full separation of church and state.
- <http://darkecologies.com/2013/06/30/modernity-enlightenment-or-anti-enlightenment/>
- **Sciences and reason, instead of belives and myths**


Professionalization - Process

12

- Charity Organization Society
- Occupation, paid job
- Trained workers
- Academic education
- Research
- Profession –reputation
- -----
- De-professionalization

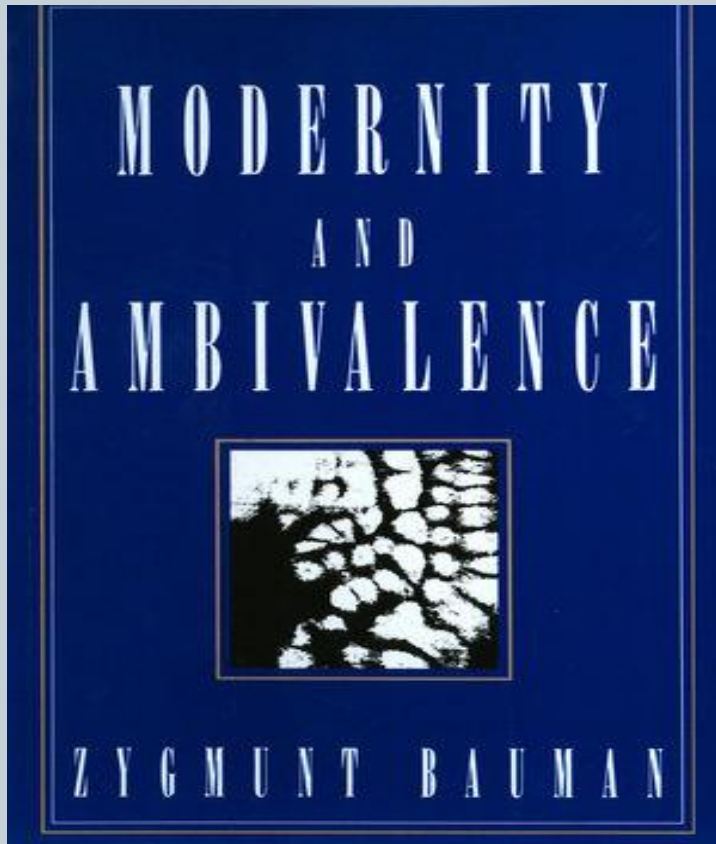
Enlightenment- modernity -post-modernity

13

- A step forward towards „knowledgeable societies“
 - Knowledge based societies
- 
- Post modern societies
 - From industrial towards service delivery work

Modernity and ambivalence

14



- Modern civilization promised to make our lives understandable and open to our control.
- This has not happened and today we no longer believe it ever will.
- Bauman argues: postmodern age is the time for reconciliation with ambivalence, we must learn how to live in an incurably ambiguous world.

Modern Societies

15

- Welfare arrangements are based on national thinking (methodological nationalism) in which >the social< has territorial boundaries
- Modernity' means no less than the belief in the possibility of rationalizing life conduct.
- Modernity does not mean improvement of living conditions for all

Professionalization and Scientific Knowledge

16

- **Social work is a modern profession**
- Social work has, since the 19th century, been based on the assumption that the generation of scientific knowledge is the appropriate form of progress.
- On the basis of systematic insights, cultural, economic and political inter-dependencies can be influenced in a targeted fashion
- With the help of scientific insights social developments can thus be regulated.

Modern Professionals: models

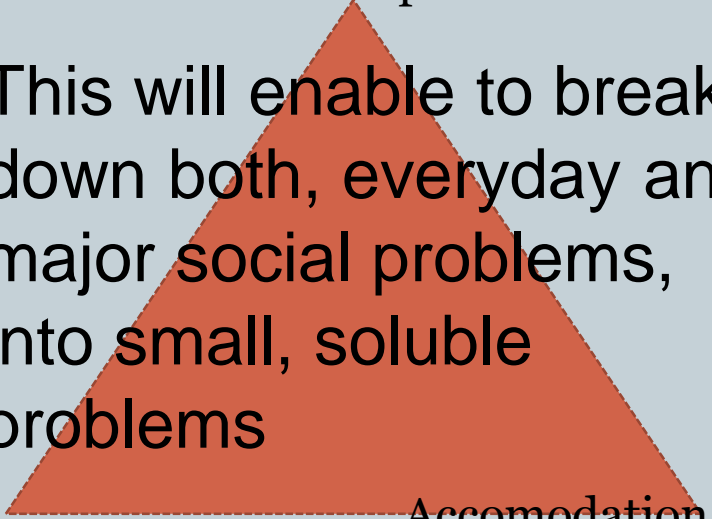
17

- Enhance the living conditions of human beings
- Use scientific/professional knowledge
- Make users part of the system
- Be succesful

Expert Dominance

This will enable to break down both, everyday and major social problems, into small, soluble problems

Accomodation



Political Transfer

18

- The *Lisbon strategy* for growth and jobs, launched in 2000 by the European Council, was the EU's joint response to facing the challenges of globalisation, demographic change and the *knowledge society*. It aimed at making Europe more dynamic and competitive to secure a prosperous, fair and environmentally sustainable future for all citizens.

Political arena :Lisbon 2000 - Europe 2020

19

- The Union has today set itself **a new strategic goal** for the next decade: *to become the most competitive and dynamic **knowledge-based** economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.* Achieving this goal requires an **overall strategy** aimed at:
- preparing the **transition to a knowledge-based economy** and society by better policies for the information society and R&D, as well as by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market;

Social sciences/ social work response

20

- More of the same - we are effective professionals
- Analysing the situation - we are experts to cope
- Looking at persons in environment – we empower
- Criticising the situation - we know alternatives
- Political action – we promote social change

Variety vs. orientation

21

- Paul Feyerabend:
- Outline of an anarchistic Theory of Knowledge
- Everything goes
- Theoretical anarchism is desirable because it is more *humanitarian* than other systems of organization, by not imposing rigid rules on scientists.



Variety vs. Orientation

22

- „A profession has a **triple mandate**, which consists of both previously mentioned mandates (help and control) as well as a mandate from the profession itself“
- A scientific base for methods to solve problems
- A ethical basis oriented towards human rights and social justice

- Silvia Staub –Bernasconi
Outline of the **triple mandate of social work**



“The principles of human rights and social justice serve as the foundation of social work as a profession.”

Past and future

23

- In social work we find ourselves at a point where there are many things from the past we want to hold on to, while at the same time we are challenged by the recognition of the diversity of contemporary society.
- For example, how does social work acknowledge the rights of people to live according to their own culture?

Transition: from structure towards diversity

24

- Uncertainty in societal classes
- Increasing differences between different classes and groups
- Erosion of traditional norms
- Inter- generative conflicts
- Political level
- Economical level
- Societal level
- Demographical level

Modern Society

- Clear structured
- Homogenous
- Systematic, logic of unity
- Universalisme
- Scientific knowledge, grand narratives
- Truth

25

Postmodern Society

- Fluid
- Pluralistic
- Ecletism, fragmentation
- Relativisme
- Variety of concepts
- Constructivisme



Integrating Diversity

26

- I have no objection to the change recommended here. I do believe, however, it will be difficult to secure acceptance of social work as a "professional discipline" in some countries, especially in North America (and possibly Western Europe). We have many applied disciplines here, but what sets social work apart is the fact that it is entrenched in law (and through legally established regulations, including certification requirements) as a profession. To this end, it has the same legal status as medicine, law and education here. Social work emerged from the applied disciplines, but there were founding members who fought hard many decades ago for recognition as profession. I appreciate that professionalism carries its own negative connotations, but unless we work on undoing the laws, the definition will not be relevant here.
- I appreciate that social work does not have the same meaning in other regions, including Eastern Europe, but perhaps we need to find a way **to integrate this form of diversity**. Otherwise, our educational programs and practitioners will simply ignore the global definition and rely exclusively on the existing local ones. Hope this helps. Dixon
- "Sookraj, Dixon" dixon.sookraj@ubc.ca
- Sent: November-08-13 10:37 AM

Conclusive Questions

27

- Are we as social workers/socialwork educators lost and trapped in the existing, neoliberal framework?
- How can social sciences/socialwork theory open up a space that offers potentiality for the criticism of power and space for social imagination?



Reflexive professionals

- Traditional and critical theory (1937)

Critical thinking is the function neither of the isolated individual nor of a sum-total of individuals. Its subject is rather a definite individual in his real relation to other individuals and groups, in his conflict with a particular class, and, finally, in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature

- Analysing the links between (scientific) knowledge and (political) power
- Which knowledge is used by whom to reach/justify what?
- “Criticism” means both the ability to distinguish and also the taking of an oppositional position.



Critical Social work

29

- a recognition that large scale social processes, particularly those associated with class, race and gender, contribute fundamentally to the personal and social issues social workers encounter in their practice;
- the adoption of a self-reflexive and critical stance to the often contradictory effects of social work practice and social policies;
- a commitment to co-participatory rather than authoritarian practice relations. This involves workers and service users, as well as academic, practitioners and service users as co-participants engaged with, but still distinct from, one another;
- working with and for oppressed populations to achieve social transformation.

Critical science and reflexive professionals

30

- Systematic work of generating insights and analytic tools
- Ability to make judgements and achieve positioning.
- Ability to oppose' on the part of members of society
- Ability to take a “counter-position”.

Social Work in Europe

31

Tensions and competing demands between

- State and community,
- Social service providers, service users,
- Statutory sector and NGOs,
- Front-line workers and academic scholars

Social Work is an academic discipline and a profession


Acceptance and positioning

32

- Social work cannot realize its aims if its rationality is not understood by those who regard social work from the outside – **political arena**
- Service users must know and accept the service social workers are delivering – **practical demand**
- Use diversity conscious interventions that are congruent with clients reality construction – **conceptual framework**

Demands and hopes

33

- **Self-image**: social work and social work education has to stake in social change and in the creation of a more just society.  **international definition**
- **Critical self-reflection**: acknowledge that social work is not politically strong
- **Hope** : through critical discourses social work education can offer a counterweight to these developments and is able to strengthen social work practice.

Slume ju falenderoje te githve

34



Contact: friesenhahn@hs.koblenz.de