

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Reyhan Atasü Topçuoğlu*, Özge Özgür Sayar*, Aslıhan Burcu Öztürk*

INTRODUCTION

According to IASSW and IFSW's jointly agreed definition;

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. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work...Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex transactions between people and their environments. Its mission is to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice.

Generally programs of social work education are based humanistic values and understanding of social problems, individuals and their environment in interaction, and methods of intervention. At the same time, structure of social work within the educational system and the length of training vary considerably from country to country. Therefore social work education has its own history.

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN TURKEY

-
- * Research Assistant at Hacettepe University School of Social Work
 - * Research Assistant at Hacettepe University School of Social Work
 - * Research Assistant at Hacettepe University School of Social Work

Following the second world war the United nations were effective in increasing social services especially in the developing countries and founding schools to educate social workers. In our country the United Nations gave much support to the founding and development of our social services schools. Following the arrival of the United Nations Social Welfare Consultants, meetings were held with representatives of relevant ministries, public, private and volunteer organizations in 1957. The social services institute was founded in Turkey in 1959. In the regulations of the social services institutes responsibilities were stated as follows:

- Reasons for poverty must be investigated and necessary social work must be determined.
- To avoid social deviations the necessary steps must be investigated.
- Normal and handicapped children must be protected and educated during the pre school years as well as during the school years.
- Children, teenagers and adults must be socially and economically supported.
- Work programmes of the rehabilitation organizations must be assisted.
- From the social services points of view cooperation must be established between all relevant organizations.
- Coordination must be established among volunteer organizations.
- Statistical data must be collated on social services.
- The aims of social services must be introduced to the public (Koşar, Tufan,1999)¹.

To be able to realize all these aims schools in the form of a “Social Service Academy” need to be established to train the future social workers. It was decided to give four years training to the high school (lise) graduates. The first Academy was founded in 1961 with the objectives:

¹ Koşar, N., Tufan, B. (1999). “ Sosyal Hizmetler Yüksek Okulu Tarihçesine Genel Bir Bakış”, Yaşam Boyu Sosyal Hizmet, Ed. N. Koşar, Ankara: HÜ SHYO Yayını, No:004.

- To train social workers to have knowledge of social work methods and professional skills.
- To train social workers who are able to participate effectively in social policy and planning at various levels and who are able to plan, organize, administer, practice and undertake research in a variety of social welfare settings.

These trained social workers were to work in various situations:

- The welfare of the family and children
- Medical and psychiatric health
- Welfare of the poor
- Geriatric and underprivileged care
- Rehabilitation of physically disabled
- Counselling for criminal offenders
- Arranging spare time activities, social services and community organizations for students, to improve the life style of the community (Uluğtekin and Others, 1999)².

During the foundation process of the “Social Services Schools” the first group of Turkish teachers were joined by American social work educators with grants from the United Nations and the U.S. Fullbright programme. Members of the “Dutch technical Aid Commission” and the “Fullbright Commission” were also welcomed as advisors and teachers. Organizations such as Cento, the “Dutch Technical Aid Commission” gave and Fullbright Commission gave Turkish trainees grants to study social work abroad, on their return they took responsibility for training of others.

² Uluğtekin, S. ve Diğerleri, (2002) “Akademik Yönden yeniden Yapılanma “Önerisi”, Sosyal Hizmetler Eğitiminde yeniden Yapılanma 1, Ed. K. Karataş, S.İ.L, Ankara: SHYO Yayınları, No: 012.

The first facility for the education of social workers in Turkey, the academy for social work (Sosyal Hizmetler Akademisi) was founded in Ankara under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare in 1961. Several foreign and international organizations (UNICEF, AID, UNESCO etc.) provided advice and financial support for the foundation of the Academy of Social Work.

The first students of the Turkish "Social Services Academy" graduated in 1965. According to the research assistant regulations; examinations were held and those successful were admitted to be trained as lecturers. At this time as the "Social Service Academy" was not attached to a university, the students who wanted to do postgraduate studies had to obtain their degrees either from the relevant Departments of the universities here or from the universities abroad. "Social Services Academy" continued operations until its institutional reorganization in 1982.

The second facility for social work education was the Department of Social Work and Social Services (Sosyal Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bölümü) in the Faculty of Social and Administrative Science at Hacettepe University, Ankara, established in 1967. Both the Social Work Academy and the Department of Social Work and Social Services continued to provide social work education until 1982. In 1981 university law has changed, and the Social Work Academy was affiliated with Hacettepe University, therefore two institutions of social work education were united under the name of School of Social Work (Sosyal Hizmetler Yüksek Okulu) in Hacettepe University.

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Mission

Mission of the School of Social Work is to give social work education in line with universal value; produce science and make it possible to share the scientific knowledge; be in cooperation with community; produce policies and support the produced; contribute to solution; social problems prevailing in society; eliminate the inequalities in society; prevent human rights; and provide human rights in society for everybody.

Vision

Vision of the School of Social Work is to reach a level to illuminate even similar schools in the developed countries with both its graduates and production of scientific knowledge, and its perspective on social events and phenomena for the purpose of contribution to human development, social justice, and democracy keeping national and in the national values of the profession.

Social Work includes a wide variety of activities within many types of settings and with many different people. The main aim of social work is to help individuals, families, groups, and communities improve their capacity to cope with problems, and enhance their social functioning. Professionals of social work try to link clients with the systems in their periphery, and strengthen these systems to support clients. In other words what social work aims is to use any ethical and rational tool to help people in need.

The following are major concerns of the profession:

- Facilitate the inclusion of marginalized, socially excluded, dispossessed, vulnerable and at-risk groups of people.
- Address and challenge barriers, inequalities and injustices that exist in society

- Assist and mobilize individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their well-being and their problem-solving capacities.
- Encourage people to engage in advocacy with regard to pertinent local, national, regional and/or international concerns.
- Advocate for, and/or with people, the formulation and targeted implementation of policies that are consistent with the ethical principles of the profession.
- Advocate for, and/or with people, changes in those structural conditions that maintain people in marginalized, dispossessed and vulnerable positions.
- Work towards the protection of people who are not in a position to do so themselves, for example children in need of care and persons experiencing mental illness or mental retardation within the parameters of accepted and ethically sound legislation.

For the above purposes social work education trains students about theoretical bases and practical implementation of the discipline to maintain psychosocial functioning of society as a whole.

The objectives of the School of Social Work is to train social workers who have a good knowledge and understanding of the essential problems and characteristics of Turkiye as well as a beginning knowledge of social work methods and professional skills, with the ability to practice in a range of rural and urban, governmental and voluntary settings, and who can participate effectively in social policy and planning at various levels as well as with the ability to plan, organise, administer, practice, and undertake research in a variety of social welfare settings. The School is a full member of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (ISSW) and is internationally recognised and has educational contacts with schools of social work in European countries, particularly where there is a Turkish population such as Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and England.

At present nearly 600 students study social work at BA level, up to now there are over 3000 graduates.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In-classroom teaching methods such as lectures, small group discussions, case studies, role playing and work-shops are employed and audio-visual material is used extensively. Fieldwork is conducted in different agencies or in community projects in Ankara and other cities and abroad with small groups of students under close supervision. Applied research is carried out in the same manner and the students have full access to computers.

Careers

Social workers have job opportunities as administrators, practitioners, planners in social work agencies such as children's homes, training institutions, old peoples' homes, rehabilitation centres, juvenile courts, reformatory schools, adult prisons, youth centres, family consultation and community centres. They also have opportunity to work as practitioners, researchers and organisers in medical and psychiatric settings, special educational institutions, in the fields of child and maternity health, family planning, public health, urban and rural community development programmes and projects as well as industrial relations, in State Planning Organisation, Ministries of Health, Education, Labour and Social Security, Family and Women Organisations, and in recent years Social Workers are employed in Metropolitan Municipalities.

Further Study

The School has MA and PhD programmes. Information about MA and PhD programmes are in Annex 1 and Annex 2.