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The Socio-Economic Crisis and Human Rights in Greece: The Role of Social Work

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THEORY

PRACTICE

RESEARCH

Human rights are violated on a daily basis both voluntarily and involuntarily. This proves that they are not guaranteed and applied through legal procedures, rules and regulations. We need to create a society of citizens and public bodies who promote human rights around the world and will fight for the prevention of injustice, oppression and discrimination. This will build a global culture, the keystone of which is respect for human rights. To achieve this vision, the contribution of the field of human rights education is seen as necessary, as this direction can effectively lead to the building of a global culture of human rights and help develop human rights competence. One of the professional groups on which human rights education focuses is that of social workers.

The current social and economic conditions in Greece call for action on the part of the social work profession. Social workers are now required to overcome methodologically and politically many of the conservative 'theories' that they have been nurtured with and seek new forms of action, utilising many elements from social pedagogy. This direction will contribute to the emergence of a new social work which is politically active and socially sensitive.

Key words: *human rights, human rights education, social work, social workers' competence.*

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Introduction

The relationship between social pedagogy and social work has been thoroughly discussed (Mühlum, 1981; Mylonakou-Keke, 2003). A growing number of studies has clarified the distinction between social pedagogy and social work as to the objectives, content, epistemological identity, methodological approaches, scope and way of application, priorities, orientations and abilities whilst overlooking the fact that there are many common aspirations (Hämäläinen, 2003; Mylonakou-Keke, 2013). This paper focuses on social work.

Social work is based on humanitarian and democratic ideals founded in respect for the equality and dignity of all people. Human rights and social justice are the motivation for action in the field of social work. Professional social work seeks to contribute to the reduction of poverty, to free socially excluded and oppressed people, to recognize people's potential and to promote their integration into society. Issues of social work such as social problems and solutions cannot be treated in our times within narrow national and cultural boundaries. Mass poverty, immigration, economic globalization and the increasing environmental degradation constitute dimensions of a global society. Also, cross-border problems demand cross-border solutions. Therefore, it is necessary to develop international or intercultural understanding and cooperation processes that are orientated towards the values and needs of all people.

This paper explores the relationship between human rights and social work. The following question is in the background: Is social work a human rights profession? Why is it important to develop human rights competence in Greek social workers, particularly during this period of social and economic crisis? What content should be disseminated?

This paper aims to analyse the relationship between human rights and social work while the question arises: What does this science pursue, what do Greek social workers pursue when documenting their actions in accordance with human rights? It seeks to address the issue through various approaches and submit concerns.

Human rights in a global society

Since December 10, 1948, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the protection of human rights has become an integral component of the international legal order. It is estimated that over 250 international documents which have been signed since then address the issue of human rights (individually or collectively, politically, culturally, socially and economically).

Human rights are inextricably linked to the goal of equitable and sustainable development for a decent life, especially in the era of globalization. Civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural human rights justify the claims of all people to a self-determined life free from oppression, violence, humiliation, exploitation and social degradation while imposing on individual states as well as the international community the obligation to respect, protect and guarantee all human rights. There must be a consistent policy concerning the protection of human rights on the part of every state as it concerns both its foreign policy and internal affairs. There are states that recognize human rights, but in practice they show hesitation. There are other states that also recognize human rights but serve other purposes and objectives when, for example, they waive their right to freedom or sovereignty of their national territory because of torture. A third category is that of countries who do not accept human rights in the classic European sense but adopt their own rights emerging from their own culture. A fourth category consists of countries that recognize human rights as such only under certain conditions or not at all. But even those states that have accepted human rights in principle and make efforts to safeguard them are not always willing to recognize

what is attributed to them by other states or international bodies, such as what the 'correct' human rights are or how these could be safeguarded, and they are often reluctant to submit to international inspections (Steiger, 1999). Moreover, although the same texts on human rights are accepted, their relevant application is not guaranteed in any way.

International treaties on human rights, fundamental guarantees of the European Union and the constitutions of most countries require full respect for human rights and fundamental rights. The right to asylum is an integral part of the protection of human rights. Persecuted people should be protected under the Geneva Convention. Protection from deportation, respect for family life and protection against unlawful detention must be observed. Protection against discrimination and racism is another challenge for the realization of human rights.

The concept of universality is of central importance to human rights and especially to women's rights. The longstanding struggle of women for equality led many countries to legally enshrine gender equality. However, there has never been full equality in many areas of social, cultural, economic and political life, and discrimination against women continues to be a reality.

The community of states and the international 'development community' (Seitz, 2002) are obliged, in accordance with human rights and the principles of social justice, to provide assistance while taking precautionary measures to prevent future disasters attributable to hunger – otherwise global society will fail to live up to the values of human rights and social justice.

The realization of human rights depends not only on governments and institutions, but also on each individual. No one is small or weak. Everyone can prioritize human rights in their daily lives.

Human rights education

Although there is no single definition of human rights education (Müller, 2001; Flowers, 2004), there is a wide acceptance of its importance internationally. This is depicted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Article 26, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996) Article 13, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 29, the Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) Article 7, the Declaration of the Vienna Congress (1978) and the international agenda (The United Nations decade of education in human rights and action plan for the decade). The purpose of human rights education is to build a culture of human rights in the transmission of knowledge and the development of competencies and skills as well as norms and attitudes. This culture of human rights seeks to develop greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This is the full development of human personality and the development of a sense of human dignity, the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, ethnic and cultural groups, religions and languages. This will effectively involve everybody in a free society and promote the activities of the United Nations peacekeeping (UN General Assembly, 1996). Special attention is also given to the fact that human rights education does not only seek the simple transmission of knowledge but rather a change in attitude (Alefsen, 2004).

Human rights education not only seeks to make the citizens of a country aware of the constitution and laws, which could in theory change with every change of government, be made inoperative or be ignored. It mainly aims to cultivate the moral concept of human legal guarantees of freedom in the conscience of man as well as preserving an unquenchable interest in human dignity (Bielefeldt, 2004) whilst also familiarizing people with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

Human rights education contains social and economic as well as political and individual human rights and appeals to all people, regardless of profession, age, origin, nationality or ethnicity. This mission is entrusted not only to school, but to all sectors of education and ultimately refers to the

whole domain of social and political culture. It seeks to educate and train politicians, lawyers, doctors, students, teachers, social workers, members of minority groups and immigrants. Human rights education is lifelong learning. It does not exclude any group, which means that educational programmes must be designed accordingly. All women, men, children and teenagers must know and understand their human rights and understand their importance in order to fulfil their aspirations. Understanding the principles and procedures of human rights makes people able to participate in all decisions affecting their lives. Human rights education contributes to the resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace, which is guided by human rights, and is a particularly useful strategy for individual, social and economic development (Alefsen, 2004; Pantazis, 2013).

Human rights education should – according to the prevailing political, social and cultural conditions in each country – be adapted to people’s needs, understand and focus on their problems in order to safeguard human rights. In this sense we should consider, teach and make clear the holistic principle of human rights (Mihir, 2005). For example, a member of a minority group or community should not only know their ‘own’ minority rights and claim them for themselves but also respect the human rights of other groups in a society, whether they are social or political. In fact, human rights education is not only a request – ‘a human right to human rights education’ – worldwide. The forms of classification into themes are also important. Human rights and human rights education need to become a subject of study in order to have an effective influence.

Social work

Social work is a contemporary social science and a profession that seeks social change, social justice and social welfare, just as social pedagogy does. It is an applied social science with a worldwide application. Its theoretical background is founded on humanities, philosophy, medicine, psychology, sociology, social anthropology, social policy, law and economics. Social work emerged from the need to address the problems of survival faced by individuals and groups due to temporary or permanent events in the conditions of their lives (war, environmental disasters, urbanization, industrialization) which could not be dealt with by most of the primary providers of assistance (family, relatives, neighbourhood).

The definition of social work adopted in Montreal is a one-page document. It begins with a short definition followed by a commentary of four paragraphs: the first expands on the definition itself, and the remaining three focus respectively on the values, theory and practice of social work. The core definition reads as follows: ‘The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. 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’ (Adopted by the IFSW General Meeting, 26 July 2000, Montreal, Canada; Hare, 2004). This international definition of the social work profession replaces the IFSW definition adopted in 1982. It is understood that social work in the 21st century is a dynamic and evolving field, and therefore no definition should be regarded as exhaustive.

Social problems are born at an interpersonal level, within the economy and politics of a state, or as global problems in the form of immigration, persecution and civil wars. There are also intensely observed social problems in global society such as poverty, poor living conditions, socialization, conflict within the family, conflicts within groups and society, taking the law into one's hand, dependence on drugs and marginalization of the elderly or disabled. Social work deals with all these social issues affecting individuals, families and groups in their social relationships (Mylonakou-Keke, 2013). For example, social work is interested in whether social workers

contribute to the solution of conflicts, whether citizens are supported with allowances for housing and living expenses or if they themselves are used in order to integrate people with disabilities into their communities.

Social work makes available the offers through which people are supported in terms of socialization and delegation of duties as well as whether the requirements exceed their capabilities, whether problems that have arisen during the lifelong process of socialization could not be faced by the primary networks, such as the family, friendships, neighbourhoods and collegial relationships. This happens for example in social and pedagogical family assistance, work with children and teenagers, people with disabilities, elderly people residing in old peoples' homes, and the reintegration of ex-convicts. Social work thus aims to help and ensure that these objectives have an appeal.

Social work contributes to the realization of the right to education and has developed into subsectors for a thoroughly self-reliant degree of training and socialization, such as in basic education, in work with teenagers or the creation of a family.

Social work is orientated towards the perceptions, ideas and basic values of freedom, equality, social justice, solidarity and the deconstruction of excessive exercise of power by society. It also focuses on making feasible a shift in social attitudes and social relationships.

Social workers are often involved in situations characterized by conflicting interests, such as the need for assistance and the demand for control and discipline, the need for a free development of the personality and the need to adapt to law because of patterns of action, rights and needs of individuals and the limitation of economic opportunities. Social work often stands between the different attitudes in life and interests of groups, families, institutions and the community and must deal with a 'double message', that of opposing the Institution that promises employment and politicians on the one hand and focusing on people with whom they work on the other. Social work is juxtaposed with conflicts among different cultures. It is therefore a matter of putting the relationship on a different footing with new perspectives.

While social work and social pedagogy have had a long tradition in the 'North' and are currently characterized by a high degree of specialization, in the 'South' they do not show a comparable tradition, recognition and utilization. Social pedagogical institutions in the countries of the South were established with the financial assistance and expertise of international organizations working with local organizations and initiatives. Such institutions are restricted to mostly local programmes (projects). Lenhart (1993) distinguishes five types of social work: a) single individual help, b) open social work with children, adolescents, women, c) classic social-educational institutions, d) new socio-educational institutions (such as institutions for women or projects in the field of AIDS/HIV) and e) development programmes on behalf of the community (e.g. in areas such as water or health care). Especially in the areas of child labour and social work with street children, great emphasis is being given to the North-South cooperation and international social pedagogical theory, practice and training (Liebel et al., 1998). Apart from these areas, in the South one can also see forms of social work dealing with extreme poverty and deprivation, for instance with regards to nutrition, hygiene and health care or education and entertainment.

Social work and human rights

Social work is based on the fundamental principles of human rights. At the same time, social work is also based on those human rights that are defined as social in the charter of human rights and are recognized poorly or are incompletely expressed, while kept by the welfare state. These rights find direct representation in social legislation and in the basic aims of social work. Social work aims to secure people with the means for a decent living. As a profession, social work is committed to helping preserve the human dignity of socially excluded groups.

The International Federation of Social Workers (ISFW) defines social work as follows: 'Social work is a profession whose purpose is to bring about social changes in society in general and in its individual forms of development' (Centre for Human Rights and Social Work, 1994).

Beyond the principle concerning its essential orientation towards social justice, human rights constitute a second organizing principle of the social work occupation: 'More than many professionals, social work educators and practitioners are conscious that their concerns are closely linked to respect for human rights. [...] Human rights are inseparable from social work theory, values and ethics as well as practice. Rights corresponding to human needs have to be upheld and fostered, and they embody the justification and motivation for social work action. Advocacy of such rights must therefore be an integral part of social work, even if in countries living under authoritarian regimes such advocacy can have serious consequences for social work professionals' (Centre for Human Rights and Social Work, 1994, p. 5).

Bernasconi (1998) perceives human rights as 'a response to fundamental and universal human basic needs' (Walz, 1999, p. 4) and differentiates basic biological, social-emotional and environmental needs, which can be scientifically observed and justified. 'Thus arises a theoretical scientific basis for human rights as well as the emerging issue of social work as a fair profession' (Walz, 1999, p. 5).

Walz sees the reinforcement of a fundamental orientation to basic needs as a primary aim of social work before its functional orientation, a requirement which goes back to the traditional theory of science. Staub-Bernasconi also turns against a pessimistic attitude, which wants to credit social work only with a 'firefighting mode'. Social workers contribute to social change and do not act only as 'reflexes without force' within the social forces. Cooperation in the development of a global culture of human rights is included in the issues of social work (Lohrenscheit, 2004).

The activities of social workers address the assertion and enforcement of rights, namely human rights, as well as claims of people for training to be realized in modern reality. Specifically, social workers assume a supporting role when there are human rights violations, impart knowledge and develop skills and life skills and human capabilities in the confusion of the modern social system. They also bring to the surface the argument of social work and legal controversy. This happens, for example, in order to provide treatment to people dependent on drugs and ensure the acceptance of children who have been abused. Social work must protect human rights as a true collaborator integrated into the relationship between power and the exercise of power on people, such as in homes, in homeless shelters, in psychiatry, in youth justice institutions and social services, in the increasing marginalization and discrimination (both from the state and socio-cultural perspectives) of immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe.

Long ago, due to problems caused by the economic crisis, particularly globalization, social work assumed an international dimension concerning human rights issues.

The socio-economic crisis and human rights in Greece

Within the economic adjustment framework, which forms an integral part of the credit received from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank (ECB), Greece went ahead with economic and political structural changes at an unprecedented rate regarding their application within a very short time and within a very difficult international situation. The agreed programme is accompanied by strict conditions, which are the prerequisite for the disbursement of the loan.

The social and economic consequences of this austerity have had a hard impact on workers, pensioners and taxpayers, who are deprived of their rights in many ways (Lanara, 2012). At its

meeting in November 2012, the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association stated that, in the implementation of austerity measures in Greece, there is a profound lack of social dialogue with the social partners. This, according to the ILO, has highlighted more than ever before the need to strengthen the institutional framework concerning fundamental rights at work (ILO, 2012).

The Greek Association for Human Rights presented briefly the situation of social rights in Greece during the crisis period (HLHR, 2012). Some of the general points that have been made are:

- ✦ The first blow felt by Greek workers was the rapid decline in wages, pensions, allowances and overtime in both the private and the public sector, which reached 50%. The significant reduction of the state budget led to significant cuts in social welfare, health and pharmaceutical care.
- ✦ The imposed direct and indirect taxes are unaffordable for the majority of taxpayers.
- ✦ The unemployment rate has significantly increased, reaching 26% in September 2012, while more than 30% of the population lives below the poverty line.
- ✦ The economic crisis is bound to cause a crisis in the social welfare and health care of the homeless, the unemployed, the lowly paid pensioners. Severe shortages in medical supplies to hospitals have been recorded, and pharmaceutical companies have discontinued their drug supplies because of the debts of healthcare units. The suicide rate has increased.
- ✦ The Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organization is amongst the organizations that condemn the policies of the government and the troika through their reports, e.g. for violations of the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, to the burgeoning unemployment and the abolition of minimum wages.

Additionally, the Greek Association for Human Rights notes with respect to immigrants in times of crisis in Greece:

- ✦ The current anti-immigrant and racist discourse is on the rise, supported by the government and directed indiscriminately towards all categories of immigrants.
- ✦ The government launched 'Operation Xenios Zeus' (from August to December 2012) under which about 60,000 foreigners were taken into custody, of which fewer than 10% were 'undocumented' and were therefore herded into detention centres and summarily deported from the country.
- ✦ By order of the Health Department and by an Act of April 2012 measures were introduced to protect public health from the elevation of 'flare' diseases and epidemics (AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis). These measures made special provisions for the detention of foreigners or even their expulsion because they are a danger to public health or only because of their country of origin or because they prostitute themselves or live in places without basic sanitation.
- ✦ With regards to the right to enjoyment of health, in accordance with applicable regulations, immigrants who have medical coverage enjoy the same rights to health services as Greek citizens. Immigrants who do not have legal documents remain entitled to hospitalization only in emergencies until their health is stabilized. Free medical care and hospitalization is offered to recognized refugees, asylum seekers, recognized victims of trafficking and all minors.
- ✦ There is a lack of a clear and comprehensive legal framework for immigration (from 2005). Many foreigners have lost the right to renew their residence permit either because they lack the legally necessary number of employment stamps or because of insufficient family income.
- ✦ The detention of immigrants under difficult conditions, the convictions by the ECHR and denunciatory reports by international and European bodies or organizations (CPT, Commissioner for Immigrant Rights, etc.)

The *Greek Association for the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* reports that the curtailment of social rights is the method chosen to overcome the current financial crisis (HLHR, 2012). It also expresses the view that, although these rights are documented in the Constitution and in international treaties to which Greece is legally bound, they should be revoked in view of the public interest concerning the reduction of the budget deficit and the 'exit from the crisis'. This also puts forward

the following question: Can we really accept that budgetary circumstances constitute a reason for reducing binding rights, entrenched historically and established legally, such as social rights? And to what extent?

The response from the *Greek Association for the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* focuses on the fact that it is commonplace that (civil, political, social) rights are interrelated and indivisible in the sense that it is a relationship of mutual establishment. The weakening of an individual or group right weakens the other, and vice versa. An established democracy is inconceivable without an adequate level of protection of all rights, equally divided. There is no way a liberal-democratic policy constitutionally called 'welfare state' can invoke the freedom of expression, for example, and be indifferent towards the right to education, work or a generally decent livelihood, not to mention the rights of the most vulnerable groups. The significant violations that the latter has suffered because of the recent budgetary measures are, among others, a blow to the quality of democracy. In this sense, the guarantee of a right to material social security, i.e. access to those goods that are necessary for the standard formation of everyone's life is not a matter of policy, morality or charity, but a constitutional order.

The profession of social worker in Greece before and during the financial crisis

In Greece there is no autonomous faculty or department of social pedagogy. Social pedagogy is being taught as a separate subject at undergraduate and postgraduate level in the school of behavioural sciences, whose graduates will be educators in primary education. On the other hand, there are autonomous Departments of Social Work offering 4 years of study in the Technological Educational Institutes (TEI) (Thoidis, 2002).

The profession of social work in Greece has a relatively short history. The emergence of social work coincides with the economic, political and social conditions and historical circumstances that emerged after World War II and the civil war that followed (Ioakimidis, 2010). The methodology and delivery of social work in Greece as it has been formulated for decades by official bodies makes it seemingly incapable of reacting to the social and economic conditions of social conflict, especially in the recent years of the socio-economic crisis.

The current social and economic conditions in Greece call for action on the part of the profession of social work. Social workers are now required to overcome methodologically and politically many of the conservative 'theories' that they have been nurtured with and seek new forms of action. They must therefore contribute to the emergence of a new social work, functionalized politically and socially sensitive.

In Greece, human rights are obviously given secondary importance as part of the training of social workers. The causes of this lack of references to the Greek dialogue may be that the people in charge of teaching and research professionals, as well as those who exercise the profession in practice, consider the preservation of human rights in Greece as basically 'guaranteed'. Greece has received intense criticism with regards to the fulfilment of human rights, mainly in recent years. The economic crisis that has hit Greece has had serious implications for the protection of human rights, particularly of vulnerable groups. In Greece, national committees have seen their budgets cut or their staff reduced, so they cannot cope effectively with the widespread violation of human rights of vulnerable groups.

However, the questioning of human rights concerns the daily practice of the profession much more than what appears in deterministic field publications. The rights specified by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights on the right to education and on human rights education constitute professional knowledge for workers in the field of social work, while the articles of the

International Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to child labour or refugee children concern the work of social workers much more due to the Greek crisis. However, how many professionals know that Greece violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to the so-called unaccompanied refugee children?

While in Greece this issue is given reduced importance within the field of education and work experience, a lively dialogue is conducted simultaneously at an international level. Its main body is the International Federation of Social Workers, an international umbrella association of the profession, which is working closely with union institutions. The organization regularly updates a separate site in relation to questions about human rights, which, among other things, contains appeals equivalent to those of Amnesty International to send letters defending people who have suffered violations of their human rights. It also provides information on the Union's interventions in international organizations and state government agencies (International Federation, 2001).

But the most important work of the International Association of Social Work as well as the aforementioned International Association of Educational Institutions of Social Work in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights in the service of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been the publication of a training manual (Centre for Human Rights, 1994). The text reveals both the scientific influence and professional ethics of the organization. The aim of the publication is to make human rights and their potential conservation and enforcement an obvious component of the knowledge base and the tools of social workers. This is therefore the integration of a theoretical and practical training in the field of social work and a corresponding training of social workers already practicing their profession.

Upon entering, the integration of the human rights agenda in the professional field of social work is outlined at planning stage. The first section consists of an overview of the historical development of human rights standards and the philosophical-ethical values that support them, accompanied by a detailed analysis of the major texts of human rights (e.g. the Convention on political, social and cultural rights) and the global and regional mechanisms which safeguard them. Regarding Europe, reference is made not only to the European Convention on Human Rights by the European Court of Human Rights as an enforcer, but also to the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe 1961 (*ibid*, pp. 1-26).

In order to implement the norms of human rights in professional practice, the steps of defining the problem are given – what human rights are violated in each case and how the violation is positioned socially – together with the necessary actions in solving the problem. In both cases, a dichotomous raster analysis is presented as a tool, which was designed with the criterion of its applicability to specific situations and which is based only to a certain extent on research and pedagogical theory. The acquisition of professional knowledge and skills in this area takes place through the successive negotiation of key issues: poverty, discrimination based on sex (including sexual orientation), racism, religion, environment and development. It also examines particularly vulnerable groups: children, women, the elderly, disabled, prisoners (including people under restriction), refugees, immigrants. Dilemma situations derived from practical experience, which contain either the collision of different norms of human rights or the rights of the persons involved or even a conflict between the norm and the social context, are demonstrated in practice contexts (*ibid*, pp. 27-43).

The last section is subject to the characteristics of the organization of educational and training activities, where in addition to questions about teaching, problems are also mentioned, such as the mobilization of potential support groups (when dealing with a problematic situation on human rights outside the campus) or evaluation (of both an educational programme and an incident handled in practice). As a follow-up after the training, it is suggested to activate social workers within groups or organizations protecting human rights. The risks to which workers in the social

pedagogical field are potentially exposed in defence of human rights are not played down (ibid, pp. 44-49). The text concludes with case studies, which are used as scenario exercises (ibid, pp. 48-51).

The development of human rights competence in Greek social workers

The holistic principle of human rights education involves: knowledge about human rights, consciousness, perception of injustice and violations of human rights, a common consciousness of human rights (Müller, 2002), which makes individuals capable of participating actively in the struggle for human rights and developing a human rights competence. Human rights competence means that citizens should, according to their own judgment and action, gain awareness of the importance of human rights (Pantazis, 2009). Just as human rights have grown historically in the conscience of mankind, the new emerging individual in a global context must become aware of those conquered and coded human rights, because human rights which remain unknown or incomprehensible cannot develop any momentum.

Human rights education seeks human rights competence. This includes three learning objectives concerning all activities of human rights education:

- ✦ To be able to claim and know 'your' human rights;
- ✦ To know the rights of others and fight for their application;
- ✦ To recognize human rights as values of 'your' ethics and develop action.

These objectives are linked. The first one determines the interest of the person. Knowledge, 'You have the right to ...', is a powerful driving force to consolidate the concept of human rights of each individual. The second one not only relates 'your' rights to the equal rights of others, but also describes the ability of human rights protection through solidarity. The third objective focuses on the moral aspect of human rights. Human rights are vested rights in customary international law and international legal documents, which, in spite of this, also claim to be an expression of a universal ethics (Lenhart, 2006; Pantazis, 2009).

In human rights education, which is implemented across the globe, a typology of three instructional models has been identified, differentiated according to the variables of the frame. These models were designed by Felissa Tibbitts and attempt to contribute to the development of theory and research on what can be considered an emerging educational field. Each of these is addressed at different groups in the population, follows different strategies and is characterized by different learning contents. Thus, human rights education can be practically approached with models for values and awareness, accountability, and transformation (Tibbitts, 2002; Pantazis, 2009).

Model of values and awareness

This is a philosophical-historical approach addressing formal education and campaigns to sensitize the public. Typical issues addressed are: information on the content and history of human rights, information on the institutions and mechanisms of protection, issues concerning the international court, and issues of global rights or international interest (e.g. on child labour, genocide). It is usually open to schools and the general public attending various awareness campaigns. The strategy followed by this model is socialization, cultural consensus, the development of expectations for social change and the recognition of the framework of human rights. According to this model, the main goal of human rights education is to provide a basic awareness of human rights issues and to encourage their integration into the values of the public. It also seeks to pave the way for a world that respects human rights through awareness and commitment to the objectives emerging from the Universal Declaration and other key texts. Content topics that fit within this model include the history of human rights, information on the institutions and mechanisms of protection as well as issues of international interest (e.g. on child labour, genocide).

The model places little emphasis on skills development, such as communication, decisions on conflicts and activism. It can be connected to the context of social change, developing leadership

skills, building cooperation and personal empowerment, but the link is somewhat weak. With this approach, the aims of the framework do not materialise in their entirety, but some individual participants can be encouraged to proceed with further action (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 147).

Model of accountability

The approach of this model is legal and political, and it can be implemented through educational programmes either face-to-face or online via distance learning. The hot topics that it approaches are processes for monitoring, court issues, codes of ethics, issues in the press and general information for participants in the educational programmes. This model of education is addressed to lawyers, human rights defenders, professionals working with vulnerable groups, public officials, medical personnel, journalists, social workers. The strategy followed during the training programme is the use of law and codes of human rights as tools for building legal-social justice and social change, fostering leadership skills and developing an alliance with some occupations and target groups.

This model assumes that learners are directly or indirectly involved in guaranteeing human rights through their professional roles. The human rights education within these groups focuses on ways in which their professional responsibilities include either direct supervision of violations of human rights and their support in collaboration with the appropriate authorities or ensuring, in particular, the protection of rights of those for which they have some responsibility (especially vulnerable populations) (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 147).

Transformational model

Its approach is psychological-sociological and can be applied to informal, non-formal and popular education as well as self-help programmes. Typical issues addressed are human rights as part of the development of the women's movement, society's development, economic development and the rights of minorities, aimed primarily at vulnerable populations, victims of abuse and trauma, and post-conflict societies. The strategy followed is aimed at personal empowerment that leads to activism for (personal or social) change, creating activists and developing leadership capacity. It focuses on treatment, but also on the transformation of both individuals and society.

In the transformational model, human rights education is directed towards the empowerment of individuals to recognize the violations of human rights and engage in their prevention. In some cases, entire communities – not just individuals – are treated as a target audience. This model uses pedagogical techniques (based primarily on evolutionary psychology) that include self-reflection and support from the community of learners. This model assumes that learners have some personal experiences that may be considered violations of human rights and that they are predisposed to becoming human rights advocates (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 147).

All models enhance knowledge on human rights, but the last two are clearly more essential for promoting social change. The education and training of social workers that aims to develop human rights competence can be based on the last two models of human rights education, the model of accountability and the transformational model, since they are focused and targeted at specific groups of learners. The third educational model aims at creating human rights activists and requires more complex and long-term reciprocal commitment from everyone involved (Tibbitts, 2002). The approach taken in this model is psychological and sociological. It is oriented with emphasis on the environment of learners and deals with conflicts within societies but also within social systems.

Given that the 'empowerment' of trainees for future social development and change is central to this model, it seems most suitable as a programme of education and training for professional social workers. This is because the model requires that trainee social workers either have personal experience of human rights violations or are able to imagine themselves as potential violators.

The transformational model's effect on learners is very significant, as Tibbitts suggests in the evaluation of the educational programme by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation. The trainees reached a high level of appropriation of the framework for human rights and devoted themselves to its implementation. They also demonstrated increased skills and knowledge that could later be used in future activism and simultaneously boosted their self-esteem as potential activists. The subsequent monitoring of their activity at follow-up showed that the majority of learners actively applied what they had learned (Tibbitts, 2005).

The teaching model of accountability is implemented within educational institutions whose main professional or semi-professional work is defending human rights, focusing on the timeliness issue without indulging in the historical perspective of human rights violations that have occurred in the past. It considers social change necessary at community, regional and national level.

Apart from the above, the important role played by social workers' personal perceptions, attitudes and beliefs must be stressed, as these can be processed only in the long run, provided that there is a will to overcome the hitherto suspending factors against the major principles of human rights.

Conclusion

Social work as a profession is geared towards meeting basic human needs. What is produced for the needs and the relationship between human rights and social work should be seen as a first indication of the definition of social work as a humanistic profession, a system of values based on human rights. Nevertheless, within social work, the training of staff in professional fields related to human rights is inadequate.

In the world of the 21st century, challenged by globalization and a widening gap between rich and poor (Annan, 2001), social work, with its holistic focus on the complexities of people interacting with their environments, has much to offer. However, social workers worldwide must learn more about the global forces affecting societies in various stages of economic development. They must broaden their conceptions of social work's potential contributions to contemporary issues and problems, accepting that social work – with its common nucleus – encompasses a wide range of methodologies, from different interventions with individuals, families and small groups to community-based interventions, policy practice and social development.

The field of human rights education, whether within the university community or in the arena of lifelong learning, provides specific subjects and teaching methodologies and is aimed at social workers, among others, who are characterized by a great variety of individual and collective needs. This particular training is different than any other vocational education and training, not only in content but also in its objectives. The ultimate aim of such an educational process is to motivate social workers, both individually and collectively, to take action in order to promote human rights and ultimately contribute to a future change in the social and political scene.

It is important for social workers to understand that their job is transformative, that they empower the people with whom they work within educational programmes to change their personal lives as well as the communities and institutions around them. These targets are considered self-evident within the framework of social pedagogy and are supported by systematic social pedagogical practices. Social workers must therefore review and revise their experiences and consciously take social action, in accordance with the principles of the field of human rights.

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