

THE SUCCESS OF THE SOCIAL WORK APPARATUS IN THE BANAT REGION

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Rezumat

Lucrarea de față își propune să prezinte o descriere a particularităților asistenței sociale din trei județe ale României care fac parte din provincia Banat (Timiș, Caraș Severin și Arad). Sunt descrise rezultatele unor analize calitative din perspectiva a patru categorii de entități din domeniu (instituții publice, organizații nonguvernamentale, instituții de învățământ universitar și organizații profesionale) pentru perioada 1990-2013. Sunt luate în considerare repere diacronice obținute atât din consultarea unor informații de arhivă, lucrări de specialitate, surse din internet, ghiduri sociale, etc. Se va alocă un spațiu în această lucrare și elementelor de identitate profesională în asistența socială din Banat de după 1990. S-a încercat și o inventariere a dificultăților asistenților sociali realizate în baza unei evaluări efectuate de Asociația Asistenților Sociali din Banat și de sucursala Timiș a Colegiului Național al Asistenților Sociali din România. De asemenea, trebuie precizat că se va ține seama și de rolul autorului ca practicant în asistență socială, cadru didactic universitar în domeniu și președinte a două organizații profesionale din județul Timiș. Lucrarea își propune să fie parte dintr-o cercetare națională care se va realiza în anul 2014, analizându-se particularitățile serviciilor sociale, ale organizațiilor profesionale și universităților care pregătesc viitorii asistenți sociali.

Cuvinte cheie: identitate profesională, istoria asistenței sociale din Banat, servicii sociale, organizații profesionale

Abstract

The present study intends to analyze the current situation of social work in three Romanian counties, which constitute the Banat region of Romania (Timis, Caras Severin and Arad counties). The qualitative analysis was completed from the perspective of four fields (the activities of the public institutions, nongovernmental organizations, university education institutions and professional organizations) over the span of time 1990 - 2013. The diachronic markers were obtained after consulting archives, different Internet resources, social guides etc. A special part of the present paper is dedicated to elements of professional identity in the field of social work in Banat, following 1990. We have also attempted to sum up the issues addressed by social workers based on assessments realized by the Social Workers Association from Banat and by the Timis Branch of the National College of Social Workers from Romania. Also, the author's role as an actively practicing social worker, academic and president of two professional organizations in Timis county are being considered. This paper wishes to be part of a national research planned to be

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implemented in 2014, analyzing the particularities of the social services, professional organizations and universities.

Keywords: professional identity, history of the social work, social services, professional organizations.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à présenter la situation du travail sociale dans trois comtés de la Roumanie, qui font partie du région Banat (Timis, Caras-Severin et Arad). A été utilise une méthodologie qualitative qui a analysé les quatre catégories suivantes d'institutions: les institutions publiques, les organisations non gouvernementales, les institutions éducatives et universitaires et les organisations professionnelles) pour la période 1990-2013. Les éléments utiles d'analyse diachronique ont été utilisés par la consultation des documents d'archives, des guides sociales et des ouvrages, pour obtenir des données sur les institutions de travail social du Banat entre 1990-2013. Sont inventoriés aussi des difficultés de la communauté professionnelle du Banat, et l'étude fait partie d'une recherche qui étendra dans toute le pays de 2014.

Mots clés: identité professionnelle, l'histoire du travail social, les services sociaux et les organisations professionnelles.

1. Introduction

According to the diachronic analysis, the social work system in Romania will be structured as follows:

- 1800-1920 - structuring the bases of the social work system;
- 1920-1945 - institutional diversifying and maturing of the social work system;
- 1945-1989 - the fall of the social work system;
- 1989-2013- restructuring and modernization of the social work system (Livadă-Cadeschi, p. 61, 2002)

The epicentral academic target is focused on the period 1989-2013. In 1990 Romania was free of the communist regime and was facing serious social issues. We specially refer to the situation of the institutionalized children and of the disabled people. The Banat region was no exception despite the fact that it is part of a geographic area considered more prosperous from an economic point of view. Nevertheless it still had the same common issue as the other regions of the country, namely the lack of trained social workers.

From a historical point of view, Social Work in Banat had common and different elements in the period 1880-1945. We have identified as common targets the initiative of social work associated with charity of religious institutions. The major difference lay in certain elements of administrative organization specific for the Austro-Hungarian domination (up to 1.12.1918), which remained conservative in the following period, as well. An inventory completed in 1936 shows a number

of 24 social work institutions in the Banat region, out of these 4 were financed by the region, 9 by the state, 3 by community resources, 7 by the county and 1 had private funding (Manuilă, 1938).

Coming back to the year 1990 we must mention that Banat indeed was an area of opening towards (*see table no 1*). Western influences and it had a larger number of social work institutions, mainly NGOs, but also important public institutions such as orphanages, State Inspectorates for disabled people, or Departments for child protection. See **table no 1**.

Table no 1. Inventory of social work institutions in Banat
(Source: *Ghidul Social al Banatului*, Edit Aprilia Print, 2000, pp.187-199)

County	Timis	Arad	Caras Severin
Number of institutions	117	93	45

2. Discussions

As follows, we will provide a description of the evolution of the social work institutions in Banat over the period 1990-2013, in the following fields:

Public organizations, NGOs, educational institutions and professional organizations.

2.1. Public organizations

The development of social work governmental institutions saw a rapid evolution and diversification as a result of the existing social problems, quite severe in the then Romania. Firstly, we must underline that a thorough reshuffling of the existing institutions (inherited from the Communist regime) followed, for example the centers for elderly people (“camine de batrani”) present both in urban areas (Timisoara, Arad, Jimbolia, Resita, Caransebes etc) as well as in rural areas (Comlosul Mare). Orphanages (“centre de plasament”) in urban areas (Arad, Resita, Timisoara, Lugoj) and in rural areas (Recas, Gavojdia, Santana, etc.) should be considered in the same category. The institutional development of the public organizations focused on the development of services for the disabled, the Territorial Inspectorate for Disabled People (“Inspectoratul de stat teritorial pt. persoane cu handicap”) present in all county centers of the region (Timisoara, Arad, Resita). In the middle of the 1990s the main cities developed public social services which became public community services of social work in 2002. Over the last decade, rural area community services have also been developed, usually with

the support of the rural mayors' offices (SCPAS – “Servicii publice de asistenta sociala comunitara”). Considering the child’s and the adult’s protection, separate institutions functioned in 2003-2004: each of these 3 counties housed a General Headquarter for the Protection of Children’s Rights (“Directia Generala de Protectie a Drepturilor Copilului”) and a General Headquarter for Labour and Social Protection (“Directia Generala de Munca si Protectie Sociala”). After 2004-2005 the Department for Social Work and Child Protection (“Directiile Generale de Asistenta Sociala si Protectie a Copilului”) was also founded.

Along with the development of social work as a profession and through Law No. 466/2004, professionals in this field found employment in other public institutions (*see table no 2*).

Over the last 24 years Banat has witnessed an intense dynamics of its institutions and of the public services of social care. Here we shall also consider Social Inspection. We must add that according to the present legal frame these institutions work in continuous partnership with the NGOs of the Timis, Arad and Caras Severin counties.

Table no 2. Tabel representing the social work oriented public institutions others DGASPC, DPS and SCPAS (The present graph belongs to the author.)

No	Field	Examples of institutions
1	Health	The county hospitals from Timisoara, Arad, Resita; the psychiatric hospitals from Jebel, Gataia, The Early Diagnosis Center and Medical Recovery – Radu Dunareanu from Timisoara, the Eduard Pamfil psychiatric clinic
2	Delinquency	Penitentiaries from Timsioara, Arad, the Probation service from Timisoara, Arad, Resita, the Center for Minors from Buzias etc
3	Unemployment	The county Agencies for integrating on the labour market (AJOFM)

2.2. NGOs

We will now present some particularities of the NGOs in the Banat area. The most significant source of charity and of social services after 1990 was the NGOs' sector. Their occurrence was the result of the urgent need to answer the crises faced by the post-communist society confronted itself. Most of them aimed to aid children and disabled people, leading to those NGOs of the present days which offer integrating services onto the labour market (Elena Zamfir, 2000).

Due to the ample social problems faced by children, we have observed that in the three counties of the Banat region there were organizations specialized exclusively on child protection, with their activity clearly focused on:

- abandoned children
- homeless children
- disabled children or children with chronic diseases
- abused children
- children from economically disadvantaged families

The majority of these NGOs were established without having trained social workers as their employees (Mănoiu 1996), yet in time, as services became more professional, a progressive translation from charity to specialized social work took place (see **table no 3** and **table no 4**). In accordance with the current laws, NGOs have active partnerships with public institutions implementing important financial resources from the European Commission or from the Romanian state (Iovita D.C. 2012).

Table no 3. The list of NGOs according to the category of their funding members
(The present graph belongs to the author.)

Category after type of founding members	Ex. from Timis county	Ex. from Arad county	Ex. from Caras Severin county
Branches of religious organizations	Asociatia Evanghelica si de caritate ISR, Asociatia Umanitar crestina Calea lui Hristos, Asociatia Filantropia	Diakonia evanghelica, Asociatia tineret pt Cristos, Asociatia de caritate Maranata, Asociatia ortodoxa romana Buna Vestire	Fundatia Humanitas Pro Deo, Asociatia Baptista caritabila Casa Dorca
Branches of national organizations	Salvati Copiii, Crucea rosie, Asociatia nevazatorilor din Romania, Comunitatea Nationala a Aloolicilor Anonimi	Salvati copiii, crucea rosie, Comunitatea Nationala a Aloolicilor Anonimi	Salvati copiii, Crucea rosie, Comunitatea Nationala a Aloolicilor Anonimi
Branches of large international organizations	Caritas Timisoara, Serviciul de ajutor maltez, Fundatia Bethany, Fundatia Kolping	Caritas Arad, Serviciul de ajutor maltez Dorobant, Fundatia Mondo Umano,	Federatia Caritas a Diecezei Caransebes, World Vision
Initiatives of local community members	Asociatia Armonia, Fundatia Pentru Voi, Fundatia Timisoara 89, Fundatia SCOP	Asociatia Morar Ioan, Asociatia Andrei, Asociatia Hora copiilor	Asociatia Humanitas, Asociatia pentru fiecare copil o familie, Asociatia umanitara Minerva.

Table no 4. Tabel representing a list of NGOs according to their category of beneficiaries (The present graph belongs to the author.)

Category of beneficiaries	Timis	Arad	Caras Severin
Children in difficulty	Salvati Copiii Timisoara, Fundatia Bethany, Fundatia SCOP, Fundatia Rudolf Walter	Asociatia Morar Ioan, Asociatia Andrei, Asociatia Adobe Romania, Santana	Fundatia Humanitas Pro Deo, Organizatia Salvati Copiii, Asociatia Umanitara Speranta
Disabled persons	Asociatia Podul cel Lung, Fundatia Pentru Voi, Asociatia handicapatilor locomotori,	Asociatia distroficilor muscular, Fundatia BRITT, Asociatia nevazatorilor filiala Arad	Fundatia umanitara Maria, Asociatia Humanitas, Asociatia handicapatilor neuromotor Caransebes
Elderly people	Serviciul de ajutor maltez, Fundatia Adam Muller Guttenbrunn, Federatia Caritas	Serviciul de ajutor maltez Dorobanti, Asociatia Caritas Banat Sanctus Gerhardus	Centrul de ingrijire si asistenta Sacu, Federatia Caritas, Asociatia Humanitas Resita
People released from detention	Asociatia umnaitara Sfantul Petru si Pavel,	Asociatia de binefacere Europa pentru Europa	Asociatia Sfanta Maria, Resita
Women in difficulty	Asociatia pentru promovarea femeii, Fundatia Estera, Fundatia Scop	Asociatia Oaza, Fundatia Bobul de grau, Fundatia crestina Betesda,	Asociatia umanitara Minerva, Resita
Ethnic groups	Asociatia Social-culturala a romilor din Banat, Asociatia femeilor tiganci	Forumul Democrat al Germanilor din Arad, Asociatia Tineret pentru Cristos	Asociatia Romilor din judetul Caras Severin

2.3. The Educational Institutions in the Social work field from the Banat area

The seriousness and the high number of social problems after 1990 triggered emerging interest towards social work. The profession was banned by the communist regime, this lead to the fact that the great majority of the employees in this field were unqualified. The desperate need of specialists also encouraged short term courses organized by foreign NGOs, which met the necessities of the moment (Elena Zamfir, 2000). In time, they were replaced by university study programs,

the only who respected the criteria of Law 466 / 2004, which stipulates a BA degree as an eligibility criterion to practice in social work. The most important university in the region, the West University of Timisoara, started to prepare and qualify social workers in 1992. The need to have graduate specialists lead to the extension of the social work studies to the state universities from Resita and Arad, but also to the private universities in the Banat area.

The abovementioned universities are authorized to prepare social workers at a BA and at an MA level, except for the private ones in Timis county (*see table no 5*). The West University of Timisoara and the Vasile Goldis Univeristy are enabled to prepare social workers in the system of long distance learning. Also, the West University of Timisoara has received the permission to offer PhD level studies with topics in social work.

Table no 5. Tabel representing the Universities offering BA degrees in social work, the graph belongs to the author (The present graph belongs to the author.)

Type of university	Timis	Arad	Caras Severin
Public	West University of Timisoara	Aurel Vlaicu University	Eftimie Murgu University
Private	Mihai Eminescu University, Banatul University	Vasile Goldis University	A branch of Spiru Haret University

Concerning the curricula of these universities they have been adapted from models of long tradition universities from the UK and the USA, in the 1990s. After the year 2000 the Education Ministry has imposed certain uniformity of the curricula at a national level, through its field commissions. The field practice represented an important place in the curricula of social work.

We will now consider the actors involved in the educational process in the field of social work. Our academic staff from the early 1990s was selected from specialists in the fields of sociology and psychology or they were professors from the USA. At the end of the 1990s a part of the graduates of the social work courses remained in the higher education system, continuing their MA and PhD studies either in the Romania or abroad. They elevated the quality of education in this field.

Up to the implementation of the Bologna system students' BA program lasted for 4 years. This was reduced to a period of 3 years' time.

The social work graduates in the Banat region are active on the Romanian labor market, but also abroad, in countries from Western Europe (UK, England or France) or in North America (Canada and USA). For instance, an analysis of the 2007 alumni shows that 1/3 of them are social workers in North America.

The social work departments are in a continuous partnership with the organizations which offer services for the preparing of specialists, initiating and implementing research and intervention projects but also for organizing national and international conferences.

3. The professional organization from the Banat region

Starting with the year 1996, when the first generation of graduates in social works graduated the bachelor studies, the necessity occurred to form associations to support their rights. All these steps remained at an informal level in the 1990s, for example every Thursday an evening of the social workers was organized. Starting with the year 2000 in Timisoara a group of 24 people founded the Association of Social Workers from Banat, as an organization with juridical status, was meant to represent the interests of the group. This association created a number of opportunities for the social workers to develop projects and activities in the interest of the professional community (<http://www.aasbanat.ro/activitati.php>). Afterwards, in 2001 the Association of Social Workers from Banat became the founding member of the National Federation of Social Workers from Romania. The representatives of this professional organization extended their communication with social workers from other regions of the country and after a series of work meetings, they succeeded to implement the Law of the Social Workers / 2004 and implicitly the National College of the Social Workers from Romania. In 2007 a branch of this college was constituted in Caras Severin and another one was founded in Arad in 2012.

During an inventory of the issues of the social workers' community in Timis county, completed by 160 members of the CNASR, the following has been concluded: the social workers' dissatisfaction with their salaries; the lack of professional supervising; the presence of burn-out due to the high level and long term stress exposure; the lack of authority in multidisciplinary teams; willingness of the employers to hire unqualified personnel, without university degrees in this field. The members of the professional associations from Banat can be divided in two categories:

1. Social workers who are involved in the professional organizations' activities (work committees, debates, meetings, conferences) apart from their direct professional duties (Goian 2013 pp. 59-60).
2. Social workers who choose to not get involved in other activities besides their regular job.

At present the professional organization in Banat are active through the following activities:

- publishing an monthly online journal, which presents the activities of the social workers in Banat

- a group of online discussions active since 2001, with over 200 subscribed professionals
- a festive meeting starting in November 2013 where awards are offered to social workers and their projects.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, social work in Banat has had a development that may be considered a professional identity encompassing activities of public organizations, NGOs, universities and professional organizations. The aforementioned success creates the premises that social work is a developed field in the Romanian social space. The difficulties described above as well as those which we could not analyze in the present paper should not discourage us. Let us consider the social work system in the USA, which gained its maturity after approximately half a century since its birth.

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