

Līga Aboltina

University of Latvia

Riga, Latvia

E-Mail: liga@attistiba.lv

Implementation of Feedback in the Process of Supervision of Social Workers

Researching the development of social work supervision in Latvia, every specialist of the supporting profession recognizes that now we are situated in a stage which could be called preparedness to start to work accordingly to the professional standards developed, Latvian normatives as well as continuously changing practice of social problems. The situation in the development of the profession provides a new perspective upon ensuring professional needs thus guaranteeing greater stability for specialists in everyday practice and giving the possibility to improve professionalism independently. This is based upon the following facts:

- Experience of 15 years since social work proclaimed itself in Latvia;
- Social work as profession has been recognized and accepted in society;
- The development of educational programs in several higher educational establishments takes place;
- The basis of legislative documents is being improved.

Nevertheless, analyzing the tendencies of education in social work and the real situation several imperfections can be noticed. Data show a dynamic increase in persons having received education, but there is also a continuous strong contradiction between the presence of educated and qualified social work specialists in the country.

The number of qualified social work specialists is evidently insufficient. Social work specialists include social workers, social rehabilitators, social assistance organizers and social careers. In 2006 more than 1704 social work specialists worked in municipalities (one social worker per 1347 inhabitants, but the legislation provides for at least one social work specialist per every 1000 inhabitants in every municipality). Besides, the legislation states that beginning with January 1st 2008 respective education [1] is obligatory. The number of social workers increases continuously but in many municipalities it is still insufficient. Growingly big number of social work specialists work in health care institutions, State Probation service and other institutions. It means that the work load does not decrease, and the amount of work of social work specialists exceeds the norms set in legislation.

Summarizing the topicality of the theme mentioned, the following problematic spheres appear:

- Disproportionate responsibility and overload is put on the shoulders of social work specialists. Therefore unconscious risks for social service quality and personality resources of social workers appear, creating continuously increased level of stress and foundation of “burn out” syndrome.
- 15 years long experience in the development of profession prove real readiness for professional work, but there is no supervision, control and support mechanism necessary for every profession,

and it is the task of supervision to promote continuous improvement of professionals and their stability in everyday practice.

- The supervision process can be evaluated basing on start positions in Latvia. It is insufficiently developed, unprofessional, and very often the dominating support for specialists finishes just in emotional level, excluding the goals of organization learning which do not create a safe and long-term basis for development of professional competency [2.]

This situation shows an actual necessity to research learning contents of the supervision process, develop theoretically sound constructive usage of feedback function which would promote the development of professional competency in the context of supervision.

The pedagogical, psychological, philosophical and sociological topicality of the research determined the choice of the promotion paper – Creation of feedback in the process of supervision of social workers.

Such a basis of supervision practice does not include the specifics of modern social work supervision: goals, tasks and methods, therefore it is necessary to research possibilities how a social work specialist can reach improve professionally during supervision, using the mechanism of feedback constructively. Therefore the problem is twofold – how to professionalize the process of social work supervision and how to develop the skills of social workers to improve professionally in the process of work life learning.

Methodological basis of the research are made by:

- Practice-based approach being in the basis of insight learning theory. (Dewey, J. 1916/1997; Lewin, K.; Klafki, W.1989, 1992; Roger, C. 1969; Proctor, B. 1987; Lave, J. & Wenger, E. 1991; Nicolini, D., Gherardi, S., & Yanow, D. 2003.)
- Organizational learning: (Elkjaer, B. 2004; Argyris, C. & Schön, D. A. 1996);
- Basis of supervision term and strategies in the context of learning: (Burton, H.W. & Brueckner, J. L. 1955; Waite, D. 1995; Epstein, D., Boden, R. & Kenway, J. 2005)
- Theoretical basis of social work supervision: (Richmond, M. E. 1899, 1917, 1922; Dawson, J. B. 1926; Munson, C.E.1985; Hawkins, P. & Shohet, R. 1989; Gardiners, D. 1989; Kadushin, A. 1992; Page, S. & Wosket, V. 1994; Brown, A.& Bourne, I. 1995)
- Theoretical approaches to communicative competency: (Wittgenstein, L. 1953; Askew, S., Lodge, K., Hargreaves, E., Clarke, S. & Carnell, S. 2000; Goffman, E. 1956; Lyotard, J.F. 1979; Habermas, J. 1973, Garfinkel, H. 1999)
- Grounded theory: Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A. 1967; Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. 1998; Flick, U. 2006; Silverman, D. 2006)

References

1.“Law on Social Services and Social Assistance”

<http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?mode=DOC&id=68488> (05.06.08.) 2. Liots, Ž, F. (2008)
"Postmodernais stāvoklis. Pārskats par zināšanu" - Rīga:
Laikmeta un Mākslas centrs