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CONTROL OF RESOURCES VS. CLIENT'S NEEDS WITHIN GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The paper presents discussion about contradiction between control of resources vs. client's needs within gerontological social work practice. Discussion is based on the study which aims to reveal the nature of gerontological social work discourse in Lithuania based on accounts by gerontological social workers about the process of entering clienthood in permanent care, home help and day care services for the elderly (Naujaniene, 2007). In Lithuania, the older people's access to social services is far from universal and based on strict definition of needs for care regarding to official documents. Usually, real practice is not simply application of rules and laws but is much more complicated. Contextual social construction is used herein as the theoretical background of the study. Theoretical assumption of the study is that social work as a profession is socially constructed and can be seen as a discourse which defines what a client is, what a social worker is and the rules for how they are to interact. Social work as an activity is always carried out in the relationship between a client and a social worker. This argument confirms the idea that the process through which a client is constructed is itself socially constructed. The research material consists of 20 research interviews, conducted with five gerontological social workers in a processual manner. The method of active interviewing was used in disclosing meanings which social workers prescribe to their professional experience. By 'theoretical sampling' from the total content of transcripts were selected excerpts of interviews in which explicitly or implicitly entering clienthood have been presented. For the analysis of constructions of entering clienthood six stages of Foucauldian Discourse analysis developed by Carla Willig (2001) were applied. The analysis of discursive contexts in which entering clienthood emerges during the research interviews revealed that ignorance of the "grey mass" clienthood relates with a reluctance to talk about the formal ways of entering clienthood. All the service provision settings under analysis reveal the tendency to simulate formal requirements of entering clienthood presented into official documents of Lithuania. Control of resources vs. client's needs was revealed as a dominant contradiction in home help services and in day care for the elderly settings. The social worker, as a gatekeeper, acts in practice which is defined mainly in the terminology of "managerial enterprise". The market of social services provision operates in way that those who have a strong financial situation have better access to services while those who have a poor financial situation experience isolation and insecurity. Elimination of clients who are unable to pay for services and efforts by social workers to justify this emerges as a consequence when the priority is to provide services for people who are able to pay for service. While those people who are not able to participate in such a "quasi-market competition" (Heffernan 2006, 141) are excluded. The role of social workers as gatekeepers

relates with controlling the access to services and recourses. Another of consequences leads to such practice which can name social work as “moral enterprise”, when client is seen as morally weak and the social worker visits the client, provides moral guidance and tries to return “the responsibility to the individual as soon as possible” (Gregory & Holloway, 2005, 46). Positions of client and positions of social worker within contradiction between control of resources vs. client’s needs are constructed by certain practices which lead to ethical aspects of social work practice.

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