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### **DIFFERENT POSITIONS AMONG SWEDISH SOCIAL WORKERS IN SOCIAL SERVICES – ONE OR SEVERAL "PROFESSIONS"**

Social work is executed in organizations and all kinds of social work are performed in organized practices (Lundström & Sunesson, 2006). Assessments and judgments appear in the intersection between the public and the private sphere and have a strong political character. The work is mainly carried out in human service organizations that are governed by political decisions and values (Jordan & Parton, 2004) and is in this way a normative practice (Svensson, Johnsson, & Laanemets, 2008). Some of the political decisions are formed as law and guidelines, but in many aspects, all the wide area of how people live their lives cannot be met by law and guidelines. Therefore certain discretion is needed (Lipsky 1980).

Social workers are both representatives of organizations and human beings meeting other humans. Michael Lipsky (1980) described this as "frontlinjebyråkratens dilemma", where the dilemma is to manage professional discretion and to meet another person face to face. The encounter takes the form of a hearing at which people who need help or support negotiating with the social worker, which in turn makes an assessment of the client's situation and possible intervention. The assessment may be more or less a routine, partly dependent on the organization of work, partly because of how the social worker uses his/hers knowledge and discretion.

The aim of organizations is achieving its goals and an ideal is that the form of organization should facilitate this enterprise. Abbott (1988) claims the existence of a tension between organizations and professions, since organizations and its inner structure constructs specific tasks for professions and this activities set bounds and limit the professional project. Changes in the workplace create conditions for the emergence of new expert groups, with implications for existing professions / occupations. It may be the accumulation of (new) knowledge, technical innovation and organizational conditions. Changes of these types will also have consequences for the professional group and risk fragmentation and division. A key issue is how the profession as a collective entity succeeds accommodate those individuals who threaten to "break the boundaries" by usurping new positions, in the form of becoming managers or to accumulate valuable knowledge, eg on new methods and procedures, which assessed to useful for the organization they work within.

In Swedish social services works mainly social workers. Since the organizations are often bureaucratic and hierarchically organized with differentiated tasks social workers may be at different levels as well as working with various tasks and clientele. Based on a recent survey of social workers, I want to discuss similarities and differences between managers, middle managers, method developers / coordinators and social workers concerning their views on social work and appropriate skills for social workers. Are there any key differences and if so how these differences could be understood in the light of the idea about social work as one profession with one goal?

## **References**

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