

Mihaela Cozarescu, Adrian Dan

Faculty of Social Work and Sociology
University of Bucharest

mihaela.cozarescu@yahoo.com, dan_adrian3@yahoo.com

TO BE YOURSELF OR TO BE LIKE THE OTHERS?

The professional social work domain in Romania is trying to develop after a period when it was neglected during the communist regime. Social work in Romania has a tight bond with the Romanian sociology school and is struggling to define its identity within an economical crisis situation. This struggle, the fight between historical validated tradition and the takeover of foreign patterns, can be compared with the identity crisis that teenagers experience, as defined by Erikson the fight between identity and roles diffusion. This identity crisis has become more obvious during the last 20 years with dramatic accents and periods of development that provide the false feeling of surpassing this crisis. What are the symptoms?

The development of Romanian social work after '89 has been strongly influenced by external pressures by overtaking foreign models and trying to live up to the expectations of the "western parents". Europe's guidelines for the integration of Romania in the EU have unleashed a series of reforms with contradictory effects, for example the deinstitutionalization of children from the communist institutions had the positive effect of integrating them back into their families but also a negative effect as a part of them returned in social services institutions: maternal centers, homeless shelters.

Most of the reforms were imposed from a high level or from the exterior of Romanian Society, this is also the situation nowadays: the strategic programs for reforming the State, Services, Education, Human Resources and so on, financed from UE funds, are imposing criteria set by the governmental institutions. These programs are implemented by experts, with only technical background. They use a technical vocabulary when communicating with the beneficiaries and this is leading to the lack of genuine dialogue. But what are these programs based upon? What is their ethical foundation based upon? To what extent, while lacking a global plan, the local projects' multiplication (school, district, area) might lead to the producing and multiplication of partial cohesions?

This might lead to a sort of technicality of the social field, caused by an abuse of pragmatic argumentations or of expertise, which doesn't allow the question of value to become transparent at the level of the society, as a whole. How could the action become coherent in a context characterized by everyday life's plurality, globalization, regionalization, migration and mediating?

How to obtain a general agreement without it being a model imposed to the other?

The answer might be very simple one: through a willingness to revive the democratic debate on the society plan, and not just on some punctual measures, see "the Action Plan for improvement of Roma people's access to social welfare services, health and homes" and the barriers met in "At the border of the society- Roma people and the Romanian public services" (Ina Zoon, 2000)

Maybe these questions are linked to the ongoing process of globalization, Romania is also experiencing an identity crises at the level of social work as a profession and at the level of social workers as professionals. This crisis expresses itself through the marginalization of the social work domain, non-existence of procedures and methods and through the reduction of the activities to only administrative aspects.