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Social Work Research in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

History of research in social work

Social work research in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic since 1993) has been connected to social work education from the early beginning. The University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague with its Faculty of Social Studies was established in 1945, followed in 1947 by the establishment of the University of Social Sciences in Brno. In both of them, an eight-semester social work program was provided.

Research departments named Social Clinics were an important part of both universities. Quoting the press of that time:

Scientific institutes, laboratories and research institutes are an essential part of any higher education institution that provides its students with research and training opportunities. It goes without saying that it was also necessary to establish social clinics at the Faculty of Social Studies as part of the University of Political and Social Sciences. This helped to lay the basis for the theoretical and scientific elaboration of social work methods (Janoušek 1947, p. 84).

The Social Clinics at the University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague were chaired by Marie Krakešová. The results of her research were published in two books: *Psychogenesis of Social Cases* (Krakešová-Došková 1946) and *Introduction into Practice at Social Clinics* (Krakešová 1948). In these monographs, she defines the theoretical background and methods of educational social therapy as a case work.

In 1953, as a result of the 1948 Communist coup, both universities were closed down, because of the belief that there are no social problems in socialism and therefore no social workers are needed. From 1953 until 1989, there were several types of social work education and training. In the 1950s, there was even

secondary school level social work education in Prague completed with a school-leaving examination. Until 1968, the Prague school was the only institution educating social workers also in a two-year post-secondary study programme. In 1968, a secondary social and law school was established with a two-year post-secondary study programme in Ostrava and a year later, in Brno (Chytil, Popelková 2002).

In the 1950s and early 1960s, social workers acted only in the area of social care for children and youth and in the institutions for the older and disabled people. In this period, social work was virtually disposed of (Chytil, Popelková 2002).

The most important incentive for the development of social work in Czechoslovakia was in 1968. One of the results of the Prague Spring was the recognition that social problems exist even under socialism, which led to the creation of a new social policy concept. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was re-established and, based on experience gained in Western European countries, programmes of social work with families and children, with older and disabled people, with persons having been incarcerated, and with homeless people were conceived. Social work was developed in enterprises, educational, health, and prison facilities, as well as in social care institutions (Chytil, Popelková 2002).

After the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops and political repressions in the early 1970s, many university-educated workers were forced to leave their jobs. These were mainly university teachers, psychologists, sociologists, and lawyers. It is surprising that these people were allowed to start working as social workers, which was of great importance for the development of social work in Czechoslovakia. These people enriched social work with skills that helped conceive new social programmes, introduce new methods of social work, and carry out research (Chytil 1996).

The dissolution of university education in social work in the 1950s should have logically lead to a loss of interest in the development of social work research and the development of theoretical concepts. Yet, paradoxically, there was no such development in Czechoslovakia. The development of social work as a practical discipline after 1968 resulted in a requirement for a theoretical reflection of practice. The characteristic feature of Czechoslovak social work of that era is that it was not satisfied with mere pragmatism, but sought answers to questions of which methods to work with clients and which theoretical concepts of social work should be the grounds for these methods (Chytil 1998).

Research is important for the development of social work as a scientific discipline and for the development of theories and methods. The social work research in the 1970s and 1980s was organised by the Czechoslovak Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs. It was of such great importance for the development of social work that also graduates of the University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague and the University of Social Sciences in Brno worked

at this research centre. The research mainly focused on analysis of social needs of specific target groups, i.e. old and disabled citizens, families with children, the Roma minority and persons released from prison. In addition to this research, there was additional research carried out on the effectiveness of social work methods with the above target groups (Dunovský, Kučera, Zelenková 1974; Schimmerlingová 1977; Junková, Čermáková 1979; Pavlok, Douchová, Vyšín 1984). Other research institutes, such as the Criminal Science Research Institute, also touched upon social work in their research. This institute focused on the effectiveness of social work methods in terms of prevention of juvenile delinquency and adult crime. Other organisations, for example the Penological Research Institute, inquired into social work methods in the prison system.

In addition to research carried out by research institutions, some specialized social work centres had organised research. For example from 1986 to 1989, a post-penitentiary centre in Ostrava (dealing with social work with persons released from prison) conducted research, in collaboration with the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University in Olomouc, on a 1200 client sample, which identified subjective and objective factors affecting the social worker – client relationship (Chytil 1991).

The lack of university-qualified social workers was addressed by graduates in psychology, sociology and educational sciences in the 1970s and 1980s. It was the students of the listed fields who showed an interest in social work who conducted research on various aspects of social work as part of their diploma theses (Chytil 1998).

Research in social work after 1989

The development of research in social work after 1989 is closely linked to the renewal of university education in social work. University education in social work in the Czech Republic is offered at three levels: a three-year Bachelor's, a two-year follow-up Master's and a four-year doctoral degree.

Some of the authors who have long been involved in research in social work have been trying to investigate the role and position of social work research in the Czech Republic. One of the founders of research in social work, Ivana Loučková, notes in the publication *Research Methods in Social Work*:

The need for knowledge and understanding of matters, phenomena, processes and any other areas worthy of people's interest is the core of activities defined as 'research'. We can ask ourselves what the role of research in social work is. Is it sufficient to limit ourselves to the interaction and communication of sets of knowledge and skills, when social work is in essence about dealing with people? (Loučková 2014, p. 21).

Professor Baum, who has also been long involved in social work research, replies to Loučková as follows:

What is important in social work is to take into consideration while conducting research, to what extent the clients of social work are 'researched' as research objects and, on the other hand, to what extent are encouraged to become co-creators activated during research and given a chance to co-create the research process in a totally different way than it is common in other research approaches of empirical social research. Social work needs specific approaches and methods of empirical social research, while the search for research questions is governed by the requirements stemming from the social function of social work (Baum, Gojová (eds) 2014, p. 11).

Content analysis carried out in “The Journal of Czech and Slovak Social Work”, issues 2014–2018

“The Journal of Czech and Slovak Social Work” (“Sociální práce/Sociálna práca”) is the only Czech and Slovak professional periodical in the field of social work that is indexed in SCOPUS. Quantitative content analysis of the texts published in this journal was used to gain insight into social work research in both countries. According to Berelson (1952) it is a research technique for an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Quantitative content analysis according to Hendl and Remr (2017) begins with defining a research question and deciding on the selection of data for analysis. In our research we ask the question: “What research in the field of social work was published in the journal between 2014–2018?”.

The reason for the selection of texts from the period 2014–2018 was to analyse the state of research in social work over the last five years. The basic unit of quantitative content analysis was the individual articles we chose based on the criterion of empirical research in social work. Another criterion was the subject areas: historical research in social work, research with social workers being the main research object, and research with clients of social work being the main object. The categories set for implementation of content analysis were a mutually exclusive system with clearly defined indicators. We compiled the following categories: history of social work, social work with families, the conditions for performance of social work activities, social workers in health care, professionalization of social work, methods used by social workers, dilemmas in social work, social workers active in social and legal protection of children, social work with persons with intellectual disabilities, burnout syndrome, supervision, informatisation of social work, social work with asylum seekers and aliens, critical social work, clients evicted from housing, socially excluded clients, children and youth, clients with multiple problems. Quantitative content analysis resulted in the quantification of categories and the description of each research included in

any category. Research reliability was ensured by two encoders who contributed to the compilation of different categories.

Based on the quantitative content analysis (Hendl, Remr 2017) of research works carried out by Czech and Slovak authors published in “The Journal of Czech and Slovak Social Work” between 2014–2018, we found that out of a total of 103 scientific articles, 30 contained the published results of research in social work. Of the above 30 articles, three dealt with the subject area of historical research in social work.

Historical research in social work, which is based on analysis of available resources such as period publications, journals, archival materials, or memories of direct participants, must stem from the methodology of historical research. Historical research based on work in the archives takes time, and this is probably the reason why only three historical research results were published in the period monitored.

Marie Špiláčková’s research aimed to describe the history of corporate social work in Bohemia and Moravia in 1921–1992. She concluded that the development of corporate social work in the former Czechoslovakia was similar to that of developed industrial countries in Europe. Unfortunately, the corporate social work in the Czech Republic was discontinued in 1992 (Špiláčková 2018).

Pavla Kodymová described the history of the interconnection of American and Czechoslovak social work in Czech lands between 1918 and 1936 thanks to the activities of Alice Masaryková. The research results help social workers understand the period of transition from non-professional social work to professional work in the context of key factors determining its initial form in Czechoslovakia (Kodymová 2018).

The aim of Jana Levická’s historical research was to collect information on the events related to the establishment and development of the M.R. Štefánik Institute with its activities contributed to the beginning of social work education in Slovakia. The author gathered information on educational goals, curricula of social and medical school founded in 1924 as part of the M.R. Štefánik Institute in Turčanský Svätý Martin, and also on some personalities who participated in the establishment of the institute. This research delivered important information on the history of Slovakian social work (Levická 2018).

Research focused on social workers

An important subject area of research in 20 articles were social workers. We have identified research that was classified into the following pre-defined categories: social work with families, conditions for performance of social work activities, social workers in health care, professionalization of social work, methods used

by social workers, dilemmas in social work, social workers in social and legal protection of children, social work with persons with intellectual disabilities, burnout syndrome, supervision, informatization of social work, social work with asylum seekers and foreign nationals, critical social work.

1. Social work with families (3 research works)

Qualitative research based on the Constructivist Grounded Theory by Kathy Charmaz implemented by Barbora Gřundělová concerns critical reflection on the construction of motherhood and fatherhood in social work with families. The result of her research is the finding that both female and male social workers primarily construct mothers as carers and fathers as breadwinners. This traditional model of gender roles in the family is considered natural and functional by social workers, and is not critically reflected (Gřundělová 2018).

Other qualitative research by Barbora Gřundělová is based on a Phenomenological approach. The aim of the investigation was to find out how the gender constructions of social workers regarding the image of mothers-clients and fathers-clients influence their ideas of possible solutions to work-family conflict experienced by their clients. The author concluded that there were fundamental differences in the perception of mothers-clients and fathers-clients by male and female social workers. Due to the frequently unreflected stereotypical perception of the family, helping professionals do not realize the need of mothers-clients and fathers-clients to solve problem situations of interactions between work and family areas at all (Gřundělová 2015).

In the third research work, Eva Mydlíková analysed three models of family therapy using quantitative content analysis. Subsequently, by using qualitative research, the author identified key indicators of family social dysfunction applied by social workers active in social and legal protection of children in Slovakia and compared them with the main indicators of family functioning according to selected family therapy models. Research results can help to assess the social risk rate of families by social workers employed in departments of social and legal protection of children (Mydlíková 2017).

2. Conditions for performance of social work activities (3 research works)

The aim of quantitative research by Eva Hejzlarová and Miriam Kotrusová was to monitor the impact of social reform in 2011/2012 on the conditions of social work performance. The social reform has transferred the system of financial and material benefits from municipalities to employment offices in large cities.

The authors concluded that the municipalities negatively perceived the loss of competence in provision of benefits in material need, which was considered an important tool for social work with persons in adverse social situations (Hejzlarová, Kotrusová 2016).

The qualitative research implemented by Alice Gojová and Kateřina Glumbíková aimed to identify possible roots of the helplessness of a social worker. The authors, applying the Grounded Theory by Strauss and Corbin, reflected the structural influences that affect activities of a social worker. The researchers wanted to understand the mechanism of how social workers recognise the role and goals of social work, its clients, problems and possible solutions. One of the research conclusions is that interviewed social workers believe that social work has limited possibilities to respond to the problems of its clients and that this belief causes them to experience feelings of helplessness and despair (Gojová, Glumbíková 2015).

Applying the Grounded Theory Method of Strauss and Corbin, Michaela Hiekischová in her qualitative research dealt with the consequences of social reform in 2012 concerning social work and specifically, the provision and distribution of benefits as regards material needs at the Employment Office of the Czech Republic and examined whether the reform affected the experience of helplessness by social workers in this regard. She concluded that the helplessness of social workers was primarily due to the awareness that, as a result of the politicization and economization of social work, they did not have the time to pursue their profession to the extent and in the way they were used to, imagined it, and/or were trained to do. None of the respondents perceived social work as a “mere” payment of social benefits, rather the opposite. They showed a desire to play a role of a professional worker, not a bureaucrat (Hiekischová 2015).

3. Social workers employed in health care (2 research works)

Two qualitative research based articles deal with social work in the health care system. The first very unique research by Iva Kuzníková is on the practice of social work in health care facilities. Based on the case study results, the author recommends to supporting and developing the professional autonomy of health and social worker as an equal member of a multidisciplinary team at health care facilities (Kuzníková 2017).

The role of a social worker in working with parents of children with enuresis was investigated through case studies by Michaela Vaško. She concluded that the role of a social worker in this field includes motivational, counseling, activating, supporting and supervision activities (Vaško 2018).

4. Professionalization of social work (2 research works)

In her qualitative case study, Lenka Divoká explores how social workers describe the current state of their profession. She deals with the issue of the professionalization of social work in the field of social and legal children protection. Social workers reported the lack a professional organisation in the field of social work (Divoká 2017).

A possible explanation of why this is the case can be found in the second of the two research works on the professionalization of social work. His author Roman Baláž, applying qualitative research strategy, explores how social workers construct the professionalism of their activity. The research is based on an interpretative analysis of meaning which methodically and conceptually draws on the combination of critical discursive psychology and post-structuralist discursive analysis. He concludes that we cannot assume that social workers would take some joint action in the name of professionalization of social work in the Czech Republic. Research participants' ideas on the professionalization of social work are so heterogeneous and so conflicting that their joint professional action is out of the question, according to the author (Baláž 2017).

5. Methods used by social workers (2 research works)

In their quantitative research, Eva Nedomová and Marie Špiláčková analysed the use of the task-oriented approach by social workers who work in outpatient fields and residential social services within the Ostrava area. The result of the survey showed that social workers do not apply this approach in their practice, but it is possible to identify some elements of the method. Mostly, it was cooperation with the client in the definition of his/her problems, the goals to be achieved, as well as in the formulation of tasks to be completed within a certain time frame, evaluation of the progress in solving the problem (Nedomová, Špiláčková 2014).

Qualitative research (case study) implemented by Libor Musil, Olga Hubíková, and Jana Havlíková deals with the question of whether social workers understand assisting people in regard to their material needs, as “compensation for personal deficits” or “mediation of problem interaction”. The compensation is based on the idea that the problem to be addressed by social work is the failure to meet individual's needs. Personal deficits are understood by the authors to mean health related, psychological or personal, economic, qualification and other problems or deficiencies that prevent an individual from satisfying his/her needs in different areas of his/her life. The second type of understanding of social work is aimed at mediation or perhaps facilitation of problematic interactions between clients and their social environment, for example with their relatives, gambling company

owners, authorities, banks, energy suppliers, social and health service providers, etc. The researchers reconstructed the both above-mentioned understandings of social work. In addition, they identified mixed variations that consist of a combination of both types of understanding of social work (Musil, Hubíková, Havlíková 2014).

6. Dilemmas in social work (1 research)

The topic of qualitative research by Radka Janebová, Marcela Hudečková, Romana Zapadlová and Jana Musilová was the dilemmas of social workers. The authors perceived the dilemma as a situation where a social worker faces two mutually incompatible options from which to choose. In the research, using the Grounded Theory method by Straus and Corbin, they focused on the dilemmas between the perception of the need to assert clients' rights and the demands of contracting authorities that were in conflict with clients' rights. The authors considered elected representatives and persons delegated by the representatives to be the contracting authorities who were to assume responsibility for solving adverse situations of citizens and to promote public interests while complying with valid legislation. The research shows that the situation of social workers in asserting of clients' rights in the Czech Republic is characterized by uncertainty and extortion and is significantly influenced by the politicization of social work (Janebová *et al.* 2015).

7. Social workers activities in the social and legal protection of children (1 research work)

The aim of the qualitative research of Kateřina Glumbíková, Soňa Vávrová and Dana Nedělníková which applied qualitative content analysis was to identify, describe and analyse the optics used by social workers in their assessment of the social and legal protection of children. In the research, the two assessment perspectives identified were *nomothetic* and *idiographic*. The nomothetic optics of the work with a client assumes that it is necessary to look at it from a legal perspective and the typology of life situations, which create standards for assessment of clients and cases and the subsequent application of objectified solutions. Social workers showed a lack of identification with nomothetic optics. Research participants reported that they became enforcers of the client's obligations and collectors of evidence against the client. On the other hand, idiographic optics emphasises uniqueness and an individual approach. The authors of the research note that workers in the social and legal protection of children emphasise the need to create space in the 'jungle of regulations' for the use of idiographic optics in client assessment (Glumbíková, Vávrová, Nedělníková 2018).

8. Social work with persons with intellectual (learning) disabilities (1 research)

Using qualitative content analysis, authors Zdeňka Adamčíková, Jana Bernoldová and Iva Strnadová investigated the existing system of formal support for parents with intellectual disabilities and the readiness of social workers to work with this group of parents. The authors found that social workers often acted intuitively with the parents with intellectual disabilities without any broader knowledge of appropriate work techniques and methods. At the same time, they found out that the setting of the social services system does not correspond to the needs of their clients; both suitable residential and in particular field services are missing (Adamčíková, Bernoldová, Strnadová 2018).

9. Burnout syndrome (1 research work)

Tatiana Žiaková and Lenka Lukáčová used quantitative research techniques to investigate the prevalence of burnout syndrome in social work with people with intellectual disabilities in Slovakian social care facilities. The findings of the survey reveal that social workers who come into a daily contact with a higher number of clients with intellectual disability are in the highest risk group (Žiaková, Lukáčová 2017).

10. Supervision (1 research work)

Veronika Benešová and Edita Šmidmajerová in their qualitative research presented supervision as a tool for prevention of a burnout syndrome using a sample of field social workers. Applying the Grounded Theory, the authors found that all research participants were trying to prevent burnout syndrome, whether they were those who had already experienced the syndrome, or those who had not. Supervision was deemed to be an effective tool for the prevention of burnout (Benešová, Šmidmajerová 2018).

11. Informatisation of social work (1 research work)

The qualitative research of Adéla Recmanová and Soňa Vávrová using the modified method of Grounded Theory by Hood is focused on the reflection of social workers on the informatisation of Czech social work in social activation services for families with children. The research results showed that social workers

are very intensely aware of the process of informatisation, and they consider three areas to be the most affected by this process:

(1) The method of conducting interventions (which is any professional intervention of a social worker for the benefit of a service user). For example, it is the use of information and communication technologies to communicate with institutions, and/or the search for information.

(2) The form of communication between a social worker and a social service user. Within the framework of information and communication technologies, many tools such as a mobile phone and/or email can be used for communication that facilitates the transfer of information and mutual cooperation, or agreement with the client.

(3) The relationship between a social worker and a service user. If the social worker chooses not to use information and communication technologies in their fieldwork, there may be more frequent contact with the service user. That is why some social workers do not consider information and communication technologies an appropriate tool to facilitate finding the solution to a service user's situation, but rather see personal contact as a more suitable basis for this. (Recmanová, Vávrová 2017).

12. Social work with asylum seekers and aliens (1 research work)

In Slovakia, Martina Žáková and Daniela Strýčková analysed social workers' reflections on two non-governmental organisations working with asylum seekers and aliens who had been granted additional international protection. Additional protection is granted to aliens who do not have the right to seek asylum but need international protection. According to the authors' findings, social workers feel vulnerable while performing their duties. They are forced to defend their work, to deal with bureaucratic systems and to fight for the very survival of projects (Žáková, Strýčková 2017). The authors note that they used a qualitative research strategy, but did not describe the specified method, only the technique – open coding – has been described.

13. Critical social work (1 research work)

Radka Janebová and Barbora Celá investigated how organisations and representatives of organisations that in their opinion carry out critical social work, perceive their activities in relation to social work in general terms as well as to critical social work. According to the authors, the attributes of critical social work include, in particular: a commitment to defend the oppressed and powerless,

a participatory approach to clients, criticism of a domineering ideology, the transfer of structural or other systemic causes of problems at individual level, and an emphasis on the empowerment of oppressed people to take collective action in order to achieve social change. The authors discovered that methods of social work that could be described as critical are implemented in the Czech Republic, but they are not declared to be critical social work by organisations (Janebová, Celá 2016). A qualitative research strategy using the techniques of semi-standardised interview and document analysis is mentioned in the text. However, it does not list the qualitative research method used.

Research focused on clients of social work

Clients of social work were the subject area of research in seven articles. Extensive research that was included in the following predetermined categories has been identified: clients evicted from their housing, socially excluded clients, children and youth, clients with multiple issues.

1. Clients excluded from housing (3 research works)

Eliška Černá and Lenka Polánková investigated what type of knowledge about “social housing” is being produced by people with this experience and what strategies they propose to employ. A qualitative research strategy, specifically empowering action research and its method of oppressed theatre was used. The theatre production identified a key phenomenon: “business with poverty in housing” (short-term lease or sub-lease contracts, forced evictions, poor quality of rental flats, and flats in socially excluded localities). As part of the three cases together with participants (i.e. people excluded from housing), the researchers formed strategies for dealing with profiting from poverty in housing, namely: accommodation in one’s family or neighbour flat, social worker support, rental deposit return request, an eviction blockade, living in a tent in the street, and collective negotiations with an owner. The decision not to give up, solidarity, and publicity are shown to be key issues in these strategies (Černá, Polánková 2018).

The authors of subsequent research by Kateřina Glumbíková, Barbora Grundělová, Ivana Kaniová, Anna Krausová, Kateřina Lukešová, Zuzana Stanková, and Marie Špiláčková sought an answer to the research question: “How do homeless shelter residents perceive their health and health services?”. And also “How do topics of health and health services manifest in their narratives?”. The data obtained through the semi-structured interview was analysed using the

Constructivist Grounded Theory by Charmaz. The research finding is that the residents of homeless shelters have specific needs in the area of mental health and well-being, the fulfillment of which they most often seek in the social workers' practice (Glumbíková *et al.* 2017).

Kateřina Glumbíková and Soňa Vávrová explored the possibility of using the concept of hope and a desirable future as a tool for reducing instrumental responsibility in individual planning in shelters across the Czech Republic. Instrumental responsibility means the reduction of social work to a measurable outcome. Instrumental responsibility limits the autonomy of a social worker and the scope for his/her decision-making. The researchers used a qualitative research strategy – the Grounded Theory by Clark. The data was collected through in-depth interviews focused on the desired future. On the basis of the research, the authors concluded that the concept of hope and a desirable future could be considered a potential tool for reducing instrumental responsibility in individual planning in shelters as well as the concept of recovery and focus on individuals' strengths (Glumbíková, Vávrová 2018).

2. Socially excluded clients (2 research works)

In their qualitative research based on Social Constructivism and interpretative paradigm, Zuzana Stanková and Alice Gojová used a case study method to investigate the possibilities of using community work in a socially excluded locality as viewed by the residents of the excluded locality. One of the research results is that clients are empowered in the process of community work thus acquire new competences. The social exclusion can be mitigated by strengthening the relationship between members of a socially excluded locality, using the help of community work (Stanková, Gojová 2018).

The research by Monika Bjelončíková and Vendula Gojová in a socially excluded locality was focused on identification and analysis of the needs of its residents and residents of a neighbouring area. Qualitative research was carried out using the participatory research method arising from the community. The authors concluded that the label “socially excluded locality” in the investigated district led to the situation that the part of the population perceived themselves as socially excluded, which could be also reflected in their life strategies. Some of the neighbours of residents from a socially excluded locality feel stigmatized. On the one hand, tension is growing between the two groups, and on the other, an alliance based on a jointly shared stigma is created (Bjelončíková, Gojová 2016).

3. Children and youth (1 research work)

In a qualitative case study, Anna Krchňavá explored the possibilities of using a participatory approach as a possible solution to the problems of children and youth from a socially excluded locality in the city. Based on the research results, the author states that the participatory approach is used in a low-threshold centre for these children and youth, especially in the following areas: setting of personal goals, reconstruction of the facility interior, preparation of activities for a low-threshold centre. The case study results showed that the involvement of children and youngsters in this centre in the participation process proved successful, but that the participatory approach used has not been anchored in methodology. The research results also show that according to social workers there are other areas where the participatory approach can be used, for example in rule setting, the opening hours of the low-threshold centre, and the determination of clients' rights (Krchňavá 2014).

4. Clients with multiple issues (1 research work)

In her qualitative research, Markéta Szotáková focuses on the involvement of the helping professionals and their clients in cooperation in "case management" as one of the methods of social work. Based on a multiple case study, she seeks an answer to the question: "How does the active involvement of a client and a helping professional affect the cooperation within case management?". Communication partners in qualitative research were clients with multiple issues (recovery from substance abuse, situation after leaving prison, health problems, psychiatric diagnosis, debts and/or executions, homeless persons, jobless persons, parenting problems and other life-style related difficulties associated with drug abuse) and helping professionals (psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, officials and one physician). In conclusion, the author states that case management is one of the directions that allows (under well-set conditions and rules) the participation and active involvement of clients and helping professionals in solving multiple client problems (Szotáková 2014).

Conclusion

When looking for an answer to the research question: "What research works in the field of social work were published in "The Journal of Czech and Slovak Social Work" in 2014–2018?", we came to interesting conclusions. Out of a total of 103 scientific papers published in this journal during the monitored period, only

30 papers published the results of empirical research in social work. The research included three thematic areas, namely historical research in social work, research where social workers were the research object and research where clients were the research object.

Another interesting finding is that out of 30 research works, only three were carried out using a quantitative research strategy, and 27 works used different qualitative research methods. The predominance of the qualitative approach in research in social work could be due to the fact that empirical research in social work is not only a quantitative representation of the social status of clients or an examination of objectively given conditions of their life. Social work research also includes a qualitative examination of clients' life situations, which means that we are interested in interpretative patterns (Baum, Gojová [eds] 2014).

What we consider striking is that out of twenty research works of social workers only three of them dealt with the conditions for performance of social work. The topic of two works was the consequences of social reform in 2012. Only one research explicitly addressed the conditions of social work performance from the perspective of social workers. This was the research carried out by Gojová and Glumbíková (2015) and titled: *(Helpless) Social Work as a Source of Empowerment?* This research aimed to understand the perception of social work by social workers. The research sample included 22 heads of social care departments and their deputies from municipalities with extended power in the Moravian-Silesian Region. Qualitative research took place at the beginning of 2011, with the use of the Grounded Theory.

The first topic that arose in this research was the failure to establish social work as a profession that ultimately allows political influence on social work. Another consequence of the politicization of social work is the separation of social workers from its design. According to some interviewees, local politicians are not interested in supporting social services (Gojová, Glumbíková 2015).

Another subject area of interviews can be called non-recognition of social work and social work done according to template. The image of social workers in society was viewed as negative by the communication partners. According to them, social workers are legally assigned to work with a client in a certain way, and they lack the institutional tools to do so. Social workers perceive the limitation of their competences by force majeure and interpret it as an expression of lack of trust in their expertise (Gojová, Glumbíková 2015).

The third category within group interviews with social workers was feelings of helplessness in solving social problems. According to the communication partners, the social workers have only few options available to find solutions to problems. It presents the structural causes of problems and at the same time obstacles of a structural nature that hinder or make finding solutions difficult (Gojová, Glumbíková 2015).

The fact that the situation of social workers did not improve in 2018 is evidenced by the statements of social workers in the workshops as part of the research by Glumbíková, Vávrová, and Nedělníková (2018), focused on the assessment optics regarding social and legal child protection. The above-mentioned non-recognition of social work is characterized by the following statement: “Society does not even know what a social worker is doing; people think that we support only those that are socially maladjusted, those dependent on social benefits”.

Only in seven out of 30 research works were the clients of social work the research object. The result of the content analysis is the finding that only some target groups of social work were represented in these works. They were clients excluded from housing, socially excluded clients, children and youth, and clients with multiple issues. In the monitored period, there were no research works dealing with the older people and/or those with health disadvantages nor with other target groups.

We are aware that the submitted overview of research in social work is not complete. Some of the research results have been published abroad, or only in the form of research reports. However, the analysed Journal of Social Work is the only periodical published in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and therefore it should be able to serve as an illustration of research in the field of social work.

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