



A Generalist Approach in Social Work Education in Turkey

Işıl Bulut, Başkent University

Introduction

A global review of social work education reveals considerable similarity among countries as well as significant differences. Historically, programs of social work education are informed by humanistic values and encompass knowledge of social problems, an understanding of individuals and their environment in interaction, and method of intervention into social and human difficulties. At the same time, structure of social work within the educational system and the length of training vary considerably from country to country. There is no serious international standards' setting for social work education, programs, educators and students around the world. Education programs exist at differing levels of education and for differing periods of time. There are no worldwide data on the number and qualifications of teachers of social work, the number and characteristics of social work students, variations in curricula and type of practicum (Hokeenstad and Kendall 2001; Hokenstad and Midgley 1998).

North American and European models have had a major influence on social work educational programs in most parts of the world, especially developing countries. Still, the amount of western influence on social work education in developing countries is an issue that continues to be discussed (Hockenstad, Khinduka and Midgley 1992; Frumkin and Lloyd 2001).

The programs in practice in Europe and North America have influenced the implementation of social work education programs. In recent years this influence has had a big part in the acceptance of the generalist approach. It is very important that social work education programs must be planned in accordance with the social structure and the development process of the society.

Because of this, information on the social indicators and social welfare services will be given first then social work education will be stressed upon.

Basic Indicators of Turkey

Turkey occupies a surface area of 774 815km². About three percent of the total area lies in the South-eastern Europe and the remainder in South-western Asia. Turkey has borders with Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Georgia, Armenia and Nahcivan (Azerbaijan). In 1972, Turkey's population was 13.6 million according to the census, which was conducted four years after the establishment of the Republic. According to the results of the census conducted in 2000 the population of Turkey was 67- 8 million. The latest estimate of population growth rate was 15.1 per thousand for the 1990 – 2000 period. According to the projections, the population of Turkey was expected to reach 76 million by the year 2000 (Turkish Demographic and Health Survey 1998).

As a result of the high fertility and growth rates of the recent past Turkey has a young population structure. Recent decades have witnessed dramatic declines especially in fertility

rates. The total fertility rate was around 5 children per woman in the early 1970ies; it declined down to 2.57 children in 2000 (Ulusal Eylem Planı Taslağı 2003).

The latest estimates put life expectancy at 66 years for males and 71 for females and infant mortality rate 41.9 per thousand.

The population of Turkey has undergone and intensive processes of urbanization, especially from the 1950ies onwards. According to the 2000 population census 65 percent of the population in Turkey are living in urban settlements (province and district centres). The rate of urbanization has been 59.2 during the last ten years period (Ulusal Eylem Planı taslağı 2003).

The process of urbanization has inevitably caused problems in the provision of services and emergence of large areas of squatter housing in unplanned cities.

Social Services in Turkey

Social services have a deep rooted past in the history of Turkey. The Ottomans religious foundations and some professional organizations performed active work in this field. After the Republic was founded in 1923, the public institutions conducted social services.

Turkey is in a period of rapid social and economic development, and social welfare services provided to socially or economically disadvantaged citizens. Social services legal definition is as follows:

“Social services are systematic, programmed services with the objective of helping individuals of families deprived through no fault of their own but on account of their environment to avoid and solve material, moral and social inadequacies and social problems and to improve their living conditions” (General Directorate and Social Services Agency 1983).

It is important to add that social services are not only concerned with the removal of problems caused by the poverty. In Turkey, as elsewhere, there are people who, although not actually poor, but are unable to enjoy the living standards of society and need to adopt. The mentally and physically handicapped, the aged and lonely people etc. The concept of social services in Turkey includes both types of services:

- People whose living conditions are bad due to their economic situation
- People who don't face economic problems but who are in need of professional services.

Social Services and child Protection Agency is responsible from these services by the law 2828 (Fehim 1988).

The General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency is the largest social assistance organization of Turkey, with its provisional directorates in 80 provinces. It provides support to children, adolescents, aged and disabled persons and families. In this context, service is provided through 295 establishments including the children homes, educational homes, homes for elderly, rehabilitation centres, day care centres, women's guesthouses, youth homes, foster families, adoption services and assistance in cash and kind to needy persons and families (Social Services and Child Protection Agency 1998).

The Social Services and Child Protection Agency owned social services has the power and authority to give guidance to other public centre organizations and to assist privately owned social services institutions in their work, to issue permits and conduct supervisory services. The agency gives special importance and support to the cooperation with non-governmental organization (NGOs) and local administrations, includes various regulations aiming at the community participation.

In the administrative structure of Turkey, governors are top officials responsible for the administration in the provinces. Governors are in charge of the implementation and coordination of the social services in the provinces. In this field, there are Social Services Advisory Councils in the provinces whose members include mayor, representatives from people and public institutions and the governors head these councils. Additionally there are non-governmental organizations like associations and foundations under all social service institutions (First National Report of the Convention on the Right of the Child 2000).

There are on going protocols between non-governmental organizations and the agency with the purpose of using resources more effectively and encouraging the volunteering people and organizations into the social services.

The major organizations of the social security today are,

- The social insurance organization
- The social security fund for civil servants
- The social security agency for artisans and self employed.

The History of Social Work Education in Turkey

Following the second world war the United nations were effective in increasing social services especially in the developing countries and founding schools to educate social workers. In our country the United Nations gave much support to the founding and development of our social services schools.

Following the arrival of the United Nations Social Welfare Consultants, meetings were held with representatives of relevant ministries, public, private and volunteer organizations in 1957. The social services institute was founded in Turkey in 1959.

In the regulations of the social services institutes responsibilities were stated as follows:

- Reasons for poverty must be investigated and necessary social work must be determined.
- To avoid social deviations the necessary steps must be investigated.
- Normal and handicapped children must be protected and educated during the pre school years as well as during the school years.
- Children, teenagers and adults must be socially and economically supported.
- Work programmes of the rehabilitation organizations must be assisted.

- From the social services points of view cooperation must be established between all relevant organizations.
- Coordination must be established among volunteer organizations.
- Statistical data must be collated on social services.
- The aims of social services must be introduced to the public (Koşan and Tufan 1999).
- To be able to realize all these aims schools in the form of a “Social Service Academy” need to be established to train the future social workers. It was decided to give four years training to the high school (lise) graduates. The first Academy was founded in 1961 with the objectives:
 1. To train social workers to have knowledge of social work methods and professional skills.
 2. To train social workers who are able to participate effectively in social policy and planning at various levels and who are able to plan, organize, administer, practice and undertake research in a variety of social welfare settings (Hacettepe University, School of Social Work 1993).

These trained social workers were to work in various situations:

- The welfare of the family and children,
- Medical and psychiatric health,
- Welfare of the poor,
- Geriatric and underprivileged care,
- Rehabilitation of physically disabled,
- Counselling for criminal offenders,
- Arranging spare time activities, social services and community organizations for students, to improve the life style of the community (Uluğtekin and Others 1999).

During the foundation process of the “Social Services Schools” the first group of Turkish teachers were joined by American social work educators with grants from the United Nations and the U.S. Fullbright programme. Members of the “Dutch technical Aid Commission” and the “Fullbright Commission” were also welcomed as advisors and teachers. Organizations such as Cento, the “Dutch Technical Aid Commission” gave and Fullbright Commission gave Turkish trainees grants to study social work abroad, on their return they took responsibility for training of others.

The first students of the Turkish “Social Services Academy” graduated in 1965. According to the research assistant regulations; examinations were held and those successful were admitted to be trained as lecturers. At this time as the “Social Service Academy” was not attached to a

university, the students who wanted to do postgraduate studies had to obtain their degrees either from the relevant Departments of the universities here or from the universities abroad. The academy was joined to the Hacettepe University in 1983 and acquired the name “School of Social work”, and then the students were able to do master and doctorate studies on social work here in Turkey.

Until 2002 Hacettepe University, School of Social work continued to be the only university giving social work training. In 2001 one year of English training was added to the curriculum making it a five years course. Since 1983 more than 3000 students have graduated as social workers from Hacettepe University but this number is insufficient to cover the growing needs of Turkey in this field. It is very important that more universities and schools are opened and the social services profession becomes more popular so that a sufficient number of graduates can fulfil the needs of the country.

In 2002 a private university the Başkent University in Ankara initiated a Department of Social work attached to the Health Sciences Department. This was the first step to realize this mission. This Department admits high school graduates for a five years course commencing with one year of English language.

Başkent University, School of social work has applied for admission to the International Association of School of Social work (IASSW). Hacettepe University, School of Social work has been a member of (IASSW) since 1965.

The Generalistic Approach in Social Work

As social work has developed as a profession, there have been many new approaches to practice. In recent years the most familiar methods were case work, group work and community organization. Practitioners were educated primarily in one skill area (e.g. children and families or policy and administration). A generalist practitioner needs competency in a wide variety of areas instead of being limited to a single track (Ashman and Hull 1999).

Generalist efforts are focused on understanding the individual and whole international system including its demands, supports and interrelationships. The generalist orientation allows the social worker to respond not only to an immediate problem of the individual, but also the conditions in the community and society that present barriers. The generalist social worker might work with the individual to meet individual needs and at the same time to work with agencies, organizations, institutions or the community to change conditions that created obstacles for that individual. It uses holistic assessment rather than driven by predetermined methods (Gibbs, Locke and Lohmann 1990).

Generalist social work is one way of viewing practice that is a perspective focusing on the interface between systems with equal emphasis on the goals of social justice, humanizing systems and improving the well being of people. The initial level of generalist practice consists of five elements:

- Multilevel problem-solving methodology;
- A multiple theoretical orientation including an ecological system model;
- A knowledge, value and skill base that is transferable;

- Selection of strategies or roles for intervention (Schatz, Jenkins and Sheafor 1990)

According to Miley, O'Melia and DuBais (1998), the generalist approach to social work practice rests on four major premises:

- First, human behaviour is connected to the social and physical environment.
- Second, based on this linkage among persons and environments, opportunities for enhancing the functioning of any human system includes changing the system itself, modifying its interactions with the environment and altering other systems within its environment. Generalist practitioners implement multilevel assessments and multi method interventions in response to these possible changes.
- Third, work with any level of human system-from individual to the society- uses similar social work processes.
- Finally, generalist practitioners have responsibilities also to work on social policies and to conduct and apply research.

For these reasons, in generalist approach all social workers need to develop essential social work skills and also interventive activity is based first on the needs of the client system.

The social work process mentioned above is based largely on a scientific model and is strongly dependent on systems theory. There is a dynamic interplay of the phases of this process. Most theorists seem to agree that, the following phases are included in the process:

- (1) Initiating of the situation or problem,
- (2) Assessment of the situation or problem,
- (3) Goal setting and determination of task,
- (4) Action phase-task performed according to planned change strategies,
- (5) Termination,
- (6) Evaluation of the phase changed effort (Eastern Kentucky University 1998).

Although the agency setting is important to determine boundaries of work, the generalist worker must possess skills effective in dealing with any size client system. He/she must be prepared to deal with private troubles as well as public issues. It is the aim of the generalist practitioner, from a holistic frame of reference, to deal with a client system in a manner most relevant to the client's needs and with the client's participation in the process (Eastern Kentucky University 1998).

As a summary, generalist social worker is a professional who has the tools to work in various settings with a variety of client groups, addressing a range of personal and social problems and using skills to intervene at practice levels ranging from the individual to the community (Schatz, Jenkins and Sheafor 1990).

Social Work Education in Turkey and Generalist Approach

Social work education from 1961-1995 continued using the traditional methodology approach. But during this time three syllabus changes were made but still retaining the same approach. Changes were made where necessary according to the needs of the community, new courses were incorporated and numbers of organizations where practical work could be conducted were increased.

After 1980 social work educating groups following international scientific publications noticed a change in ideas and a more generalist outlook in social work care in North America and in Europe and they were influenced by this approach. On the other hand in Turkey it was noticed in times that structure of the social services was not in accord with the education given and students who took case work, group work and community organization separately had difficulties when practicing. Because in many cases needs of the clients, which could be an individual, or a group of people or a society, cannot be solved by applying one single method therefore the social workers are the professionals who must work in every field and must be able to put their professional skill and gains into practice. In Turkey Structure of the social work organizations shows that there is no need for the social work profession to be specialized.

It is an undisputed reality that the duties of the social workers in the society determine the coverage of social work education. With this reality at hand a study has been initiated to determine a new suitable education approach to meet the needs of the society.

With this purpose a survey was conducted in 1999 to learn the views of the social workers in Turkey on the social work education. A questionnaire was posted to 276 social workers in 38 provinces only 97 were returned answered. But the reason for this was probably that the disastrous earthquake that year meant those social workers were continuously working in turn in the earthquake stricken areas.

The results of the questionnaire showed that social work methods were not effectively used in the field. The most frequently used method of work was casework (76.3%). The least used method of work was group work (58.8%). A large proportion of social workers stated that they found it difficult to decide which method to use for each client or group.

Other problems noted were lack of supervision or support from more experienced colleagues and the profession's not has been widely known by the public.

The social workers that answered the questionnaire also made various suggestions on the style and content to improve the social service education (Karataş and et al. 2002).

Actually "inconsistent educational experience for students preparing to enter the social work profession and confusion on the part of employing agencies regarding the competencies they can expect from the graduates of these programs are two important subjects for the social workers. If social work education programs are to provide appropriate curricula to prepare graduates for such practice it is essential that professional community generate relevant debate on this matter and arrive at some common understanding" (Schatz, Jenkins and Sheafor 1990).

It must be well understood and be kept in mind that changes to be made in the social work education will affect the social status of the social workers, their roles and functions. So the

social work students in Turkey must receive education suitable to their field of work. To realize this following decisions have been taken on the subject:

- Method based education to be discontinued,
- Problem based education to be extended,
- The curricula should be reorganized according to generalist principles.

Looking at the problem from all sides makes it necessary that social work methods must be functionally used with the structural holistic approach and much closer interdisciplinary relations to be developed (Cılga 2001).

Problem based educational approach makes the students to understand the problem in the international and national scales and makes them to have an idea how these problems will have effects on the individuals, on the families and on the small groups (Uluğtekin et al. 2002).

There is a growing recognition that social workers should be prepared with a broad practice approach. This type of practice starts with assessing client needs and then selecting from a wide repertoire of intervention methods and theoretical perspectives that respond to those needs (Schatz, Jenkins and Sheafor 1990).

In the generalist approach after having put all the methods together professional knowledge and practice take shape according to the general frame. Generalist approach looks at human and society problems holistically and systematically and in practice it focuses on to the problem areas. With this it has an interdisciplinary character.

In the direct and indirect social work applications in Turkey social workers in any case are not working with the “method based approach” but with the “problem based approach”. After having recognized the problem they plan and execute micro, mezzo and macro interventions to eliminate the problem. Because of this by giving education in accord with the practice will improve theory-practice wholeness.

The Structure of Social Work Education in Turkey

Social work education in both schools in Turkey (Hacettepe University, School of Social Work; Başkent University, Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Social Work) is given with the generalist approach. The education after high school, including one year of English is five years. There hasn't been any student yet who has not graduated with this generalist approach. Because of this at present its success in the field is not known.

As future's social worker candidates, personalities of the students are very important. Students are admitted to the school according to the result of the examination held by the “Higher Education Council”. Admitting students with the pre interview system, which was used in the past is not being used now. On the other hand because of some problems involved relating to the examination system, students cannot choose their subject of education quite knowingly. There is an increasing possibility that students come to study social work quite by chance.

Students finish high school at the age of 18. If a student doesn't fail he would finish the social work education at the age of 23. It is quite debatable that if these graduates at the age of 23 have or haven't acquired the maturity which a social worker is expected to have. Because, social work profession needs social and psychological mature personality.

The courses, which form the basis of social work, determined by Schotz, Jenkins and Sheaffer (1990) are also given in the social work schools in this country. These are, liberal arts base; social work knowledge base (biological, socio cultural, psychological, human development, systems and ecological perspective and social work/social welfare history); Social work purpose, focus on person in environment; professionalism; sanction to practice, social work values and philosophy; basic communication skills; Ethnic/diversity, sensitivity; change process directed at problem resolution; understanding human relationships.

The overall purpose of the schools of social work in Turkey is to prepare students for the professional practice of social work at basic and advanced levels.

The educational objectives of the undergraduate course are to enable students to integrate the knowledge, values and skills of the social work profession into competent practice with the client system of various sizes (micro, mezzo, macro) and types in the urban and rural areas; to prepare professional social workers for increased competence in their field of practice or leadership roles in administration, social planning, teaching, consultation, supervision and social research; to prepare graduates who are aware of their responsibility to continue their professional growth and development.

Undergraduate curriculum also includes social and economic justice, social welfare policy and services, social work theory and practice, research, field practicum and project seminars.

Education includes extensive classroom activity as well as direct supervised work with clients-field placement. A variety of teaching and assessment methods are used within the program. Emphasis is given to student participation.

The social workers that graduate from the schools of social work have many varied opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

They work at Prime Ministry, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, The Social Services and Child Protection Agency, Universities, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Local Administration and its related Units, Crises Centres, Non Governmental Organizations and Foundations and in the Private Sector.

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Author's Address:

Prof Dr Işıl Bulut
Başkent University
Health Sciences Faculty, Department of Social work
Ankara/Turkey
Email: ibulut@baskent.edu.tr

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