

DISABILITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

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Abstract

Nowadays, disability is one of the most discussed issues in the area of social services. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006) promotes, among others, the principle of the full and effective participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. It is important to mobilize and support people with a disability in order to optimize participation in the life of their local community. The social services aim to build the community's capacity to provide support to people with a disability and also to offer support to their families, in order to enhance their capacity to provide relevant and appropriate supports in the community. In this way, persons with disability can take different benefits from the social services and human service practitioner. The main goal in this paper is to analyse the concept of social services in general and, in this context, the disability and social services. The method used in this study is qualitative method and it is based on the literature review. There are treated the notions of "Human Services", "The human service practitioner", and "disability services". Furthermore, this study aims to highlight the fact that globalization has impact on the disability, as well as to point the main directions of this impact. Research shows the importance of the human dimension of social services towards people with disabilities and the benefits from the social services. The study, also, highlights the fact that in our country have been realized great efforts to give to the disability a human dimension, as it is in all European countries and other countries in the world.

Keywords: *disability services, human dimension, human service practitioner, benefits*

Introduction

Disability studies examine disability as a social, cultural, historical, and political phenomenon rather than focusing on its clinical, medical, or therapeutic aspects.¹ In the past, disabled people's general perception of medical and social care professionals has been one of the powerful, domineering gatekeepers of resources - sometimes vital resources - which could

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improve the quality of life and facilitate equality of human rights and citizenship (Lindow and Morris, 1995).²

“A society for all” will also be fit for us when we grow old “We human beings are all different. We have different needs, and different qualifications, different strengths and different weaknesses. Therefore, the society in which we live should never be formed on the basis of special demands by the few. The society must be formed in such a way that it will suit all. The needs of disabled persons must influence the planning of our societies as much as the needs of nondisabled persons, not because we must pay special attention to the disabled, but because they are citizens of the society as everyone else. Therefore, their needs must be included in the building of the society as a matter of course.”³

According to the social model, identifying disability consists of examining the participation levels of people with different functional statuses. Disability is not an “all or nothing” concept, but instead people with disability may be classified according to a detailed description of their functioning capacity within various domains, with the perspective that disability arises when barriers exist to participation.⁴

The social model of disability is not a traditional diagrammatic model like many psychological and sociological models, but a progressive political concept that opposes the medical model commonly used in the health professions. The Social model of disability makes an important distinction between the terms impairment and disability.

- Impairment – Lacking part or all of a limb or having a deflective limb, organ or mechanism of the body (including psychological mechanisms).
- Disability – The restrictions caused by the organization of society which does not take into account individuals with physical or psychological impairments. (UPAIS, 1976)⁵

According to Handicap International, in most of the countries of South East Europe, the reform of the gate keeping system represents one of the most important priorities, contributing significantly to ensure full participation of persons with disabilities to social and economic life. Access to services for people with disabilities has been based on a medical approach in which the user has no control of service provision. To move towards a needs-based and rights-based system of service provision, based on choice and options for users, reform and development of new gate-keeping systems must be introduced (Chiriacescu, D. 2006).⁶

Tobis (2000) emphasizes that the sentiment in favor of residential institutions is widespread, but not universal. In Albania, for example, residential institutions were not provided by the government or desired by the community; as in many other countries in the region, the extended family or neighbors helped individuals when they had problems. Families in Albania today do not consider residential institutions to be a solution to their economic or social problems or a way to care for children, people with disabilities, or the elderly.⁷

² Woodward J.E., (2002). pg.1.

³ Centre for Welfare and Health.(1996). pg.31.

⁴ Online available: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEV/Resources/3177394-1175102311639/3615048-1175607868848/SA-Disability-Chapter-1.pdf>. pg.5

⁵ Online available: <http://www.brainhe.com/TheSocialModelofDisabilityText.html>

⁶ Chiriacescu, D., (2006). pg.29-30.

⁷ Tobis, D., (2000), pg.23.

The choice of proposing such a broad view on services with a social function (hereafter in this report called social services) for discussion in this report is based on the fact that there is a range of services in communities impacting the lives of persons with disabilities. In this sense, services are considered to be of particular importance to society as a whole and the personal interaction between service providers and users plays a key role in its delivery such as health, education, labor integration and livelihood opportunities, social protection and in many cases, cultural services (Munday, B. I., 2007).⁸

Methodology of preparation and development of this paper

The paper is based on the use of literature in Albanian and foreign languages, the use of documentation and interviews with mental health professionals. The purpose of the paper is to highlight the fact that globalization has impact on the disability, as well as to point the main directions of this impact. Another aim of the paper is to highlight the fact that in our country there are making great efforts to give to the disability a new dimension, the human dimension, as it is in all European countries and other countries in the world.

Theoretical treatment

Oliver (1990) clarify that the issue of disability and the experiences of disabled people have been given scant consideration in academic circles. Both the issue and the experience have been marginalized and only in the disciplines of medicine and psychology has disability been afforded an important place. Unfortunately this has, itself, been counterproductive because it has resulted in the issue of disability being seen as essentially a medical one and the experience of disability as being contingent upon a variety of psychological adjustment processes. Hence there is an urgent need for other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, politics and social administration to take these matters seriously rather than to merely offer descriptive and a theoretical accounts which leave medical and psychological approaches unchallenged.⁹

Human Services are those jobs which provide a Service to Society, particularly in times of crisis. Human Services are designed to help people navigate through crisis or chronic situations where the person feels they need external help and guidance to move forward with their life and rediscover their personal power and self-sufficiency.¹⁰

Human Services are supportive, developmental or educational services provided to the public that are designed to enhance the quality of life and well-being of people and communities. Such services are an essential component of the region and an integral part of regional planning. Needs addressed by Human Services include, but are not limited to: personal health (both physical and mental), social relations, and maintaining or growing personal or community capacity (such as child care, education, disabilities, aging, etc) (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2008)¹¹

Encyclopedia Britannica define social service as any of numerous publicly or privately provided services intended to aid disadvantaged, distressed, or vulnerable persons or groups.

⁸ Handicap International and CBM , pg.42.

⁹ Oliver, M., (1990), pg.11

¹⁰ Online available: <http://www.humanservicesedu.org/definition-human-services.html>

¹¹ Pietrowiak, R., (2008).

The term social service also denotes the profession engaged in rendering such services. The social services have flourished in the 20th century as ideas of social responsibility have developed and spread.¹²

Recently, the newly formed Social Perspectives Network defined a 'modern social model' for the connected area of mental health. Key factors included the need to understand and relate to the complexity of human health and well-being, and how social and biological factors interact in the construction of health (Duggan et al., 2002). British Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics points out, 'principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work' (BASW, 2002).¹³

Social workers provide counseling/therapy at mental health centers. There are several kinds of therapy including individual therapy, family therapy, home based family therapy, behavior therapy, or group therapy.¹⁴

The main goal of a social services system is to ensure the availability of services for all citizens who need them. In order to avoid overlaps, a surplus of certain types of services or, contrarily, a lack of needed ones, these procedures are essential for the design of the whole system. Then, the gate keeping system is equally responsible for guaranteeing and facilitating the access of persons with disabilities to social services, according to their choice and needs: the assessment of individual situations, the access criteria and procedures, as well as the concrete orientation to services must be conceived in a manner that respects the principles of universality and accessibility to the services. (Chiriacescu, D., 2006).¹⁵

There are many ways in which Human Services are provided to the public. The one of the three main distinctions are the providing of basic needs and services for those in crisis who are seeking shelter, food and a safe environment such as the homeless, children in abusive households or a family in need of food. The other primary distinction is those people who are having chronic problems in their life such as someone seeking mental health treatment, substance abuse counseling or medical treatments for chronic conditions. A third distinction is those who work at the Macro level to improve public health, safety and economic conditions for their community.¹⁶

The human service practitioner is a professional who acts as an agent to assist and or empower individuals, groups, families and communities to prevent, alleviate or better cope with crisis, change and stress to enable them to function more effectively in all areas of life and living. The goal of the human service Practitioner is to enable people to live more satisfying, more autonomous, and more productive lives, through the utilization of society's knowledge, resources, and technical innovations (The Lincoln University Center for Graduate and Continuing Education Programs).¹⁷

¹² Online available: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/551426/social-service>

¹³ Online available: <http://www.intellectualdisability.info/changing-values/social-care-services-and-the-social-perspective>

¹⁴ Online available: <http://www.helpstartshere.org/health-and-wellness/disabilities/how-do-social-workers-help-the-families-of-children-with-disabilities.html>

¹⁵ Chiriacescu, D., (2006), pg. 29-30.

¹⁶ Online available: <http://www.humanservicesedu.org/definition-human-services.html>

¹⁷ Online available: <http://www.lincoln.edu/mhs/define.html>

So then, the definition of Human Services is a service that is provided to people in order to help them stabilize their life and find self-sufficiency through guidance, counseling, treatment and the providing for of basic needs. This can take many forms from a Psychologist, to an Eligibility Worker helping a family get government assistance or a Substance Abuse Counselor.¹⁸

The concepts of “equalization of opportunities” and “a society for all” have been used by the disabled people’s community since the early 1970’s. Now these strategic concepts have gained wider currency and applicability, for instance in the “Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development” and “Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development”. “The aim of social integration is to create ‘a society for all’, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious diversity, social justice and the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, democratic participation and the rule of law (Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (A/CONF.166/9), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I and II).¹⁹

The World Bank defines inclusive development as the result of a combination of principles and processes that should be considered when States engage in sectoral reform. These principles include:

- Inclusion: persons with disabilities should be accepted as equal partners in development and included as full participants in all development activities.
- Equity: persons with disabilities should enjoy equitable access to the benefits resulting from development activities, which should promote non-discrimination and provide them with equal opportunities to participate in every facet of life – civil, political, economic, social and cultural.
- Access: persons with disabilities should enjoy rights of entry and use to the built environment, transportation, information, and communications infrastructure, so they can participate in all aspects of life and thus enjoy the full range of human rights (Handicap International and CBM, 2009).²⁰

Person centered is one of the common key features and corresponding criteria for quality of social services to people with disabilities. This criteria is focused on social services of general interest to people with disabilities should tackle the needs of each individual with the aim to improve the quality of life and equality of opportunities of the persons concerned. In line with the social model of disability, the physical and social environment of the person served should be taken into account. (Handicap Angle, 2006-2007).²¹

People with disabilities cannot be denied access to services because of their disabilities, or because the services aren’t physically accessible. If the services can’t be made physically accessible, there has to be an alternative provided that’s equivalent to the basic service. This issue often arises for human service organizations, but may also be a factor for community institutions such as libraries, and for such businesses as hairdressers and insurance agencies. In cases where accessibility isn’t economically feasible, services can be provided in an accessible part of the building, for instance, or brought to the person in his home. Rules, such

¹⁸ Online available: <http://www.humanservicesedu.org/definition-human-services.html>

¹⁹ Online available: http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/FF-DisabilityDim0103_b1.pdf

²⁰ Handicap International and CBM . pg.47. ocialServicesDMI2009.pdf

²¹ Handicap Angle, Quality of Social Services of General Interest, pg.5-6

as those referred to earlier that affect service animals, can be changed or disregarded to enable people with disabilities to take advantage of the service.²²

Albanian context

The modernization of the services sector has a specific impact and accent in the disability field. The major transformation during the last decades is related with a change of paradigm regarding disability: from a medical and protective model to a social and inclusive one, focusing on rights, equal opportunities and full participation of people with disabilities in the social and economic life of the community. The promotion of an enabling system becomes the key aspect for achieving these goals.²³

The Social Protection Sector Strategy 2007-2013 gaved the notion of social services for people with disabilities, which states that "Children born with disabilities or become disabled in childhood benefit public services in residential centres and in 3 day care centres. According to the administrative statistics, 335 children with disabilities live in residential institutions. There have been established for the last few years the community services for disabled people by various NGOs and associations that defend and represent their rights and interests in Tirana, Shkodra and Elbasan, in which over 250 people with disabilities receive services. For people with disabilities there have been created the community services by the Project "The distribution of social services in the community", funded by the World Bank. In the first and the second phase of this project were set up 14 community services, such as day centers, home services for people with disabilities, in 8 districts and two counties. Also in Berat, with the support of the Association "ASED" there has been created a complex of services for people with disabilities: a day center, a working studio and two protected apartments, in order to provide complementary support for the integration of people with disabilities in the community life".²⁴

In December 2004 was approved National Strategy of Disabled Persons. There is a new approach regarding the definition of disability, in accordance with international definitions. There is also a new approach regarding the policies to be followed to persons with disabilities. In this strategy are defined the basic principles, the objectives and the main areas of intervention, namely : 1.Living without barriers. 2.Services. 3.Employment, Vocational Training and Education. 4.Capacity Building. 5.Legal and research work. The area of intervention named "Services" is focused on providing custody services at the community level. Particular emphasis will be given to the creation of community-based day care centers and to the creation of services at home, which over time will be the most used types of services for people with disabilities.²⁵

In October 2005 was approved the strategy "The Standards for Social Services in Albania- Tirana, october 2005. There is a new perspective on social services, specifically:a)persons in need are the main focus of social services; b)the main aim of social services is to acheive the appropriate results that their beneficiaries require; c)social services aim at community capacity building; d) the strategy reflects the basic principles of social services; e)social services aim at preventing social problems. There are defined the criteria

²² Online available: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/physical-social-environment/housing-accessibility-disabilities/main>

²³ Chiriacescu, D., (2006), pg.21.

²⁴ Strategjia sektoriale e mbrojtjes sociale 2007-2013, pg.19

²⁵ Strategjia Kombëtare e Personave me Aftësi të Kufizuar,2005, pg.21, 22

and the indicators of the quality of social services. There is a new perspective based on these standards.²⁶

In 2006, the United Nations adopted the first treaty on the rights of people with disabilities. Countries throughout the world also have been developing their own disability laws. So, in Albania, in December 2006 was passed **The Package Disability Law**. In this document there are sanctioned the fundamental rights and freedoms of the persons in general and the personal rights and freedoms of disabled persons. In this document there are also given the laws on the Status of working disabled, the laws on the Status of paraplegic and quadriplegic persons, the laws on the Status of the blind persons, etc.

In April 2007 was approved The Regulation on Mental Health Services, in which are sanctioned the rights of patients, the role of the Community Mental Health Center, the hospitalisation and treatment of patients, the type of residential structures, their purpose, the role of day care centers, the role of services for children and adolescents, the staff duties, etc.²⁷

In August 2007 was approved Social Protection Sector Strategy 2007 to 2013, in which is given a great importance to the social services. The emphasis is on decentralization, on the transfer of residential services to local administration units, on the increasing the diversity of community services, on the coverage of all social groups to basic services in all districts of our country, on the de-institutionalization, on the consolidation of the model homes "home-family " for children and disabled persons, on the expansion of these services for other social groups (youth, elderly persons), on the implementation of service standards and on the improving the quality of services for children, for disabled and the elderly persons.²⁸

In **Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-2013** the emphasis is on de-institutionalization and decentralization of care institutions to local government. "This reform will encourage civil society in ensuring and developing new services to social care in partnership with local authorities".²⁹

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Conclusions

Based on the literature review the paper highlights the importance of the human dimension of social services towards people with disabilities and the benefits received from the social services. Based on the World Bank are given the principles of the organization towards the

²⁶Standardet për Shërbimet Shoqërore në Shqipëri (2005)

²⁷Rregullorja e Shërbimeve të Shëndetit Mendor (2007), pg.13

²⁸Strategjia Sektoriale e Mbrojtjes Sociale 2007-2013

²⁹Strategjia e Përfshirjes Sociale 2007-2013, pg.14

disability services, such as the inclusion, equity and access of the services. The disability services are organized based on different distinction. It is important underling that the concept of “a society for all” is key element for the organization of disability’s social services. The disability’s social services should be organized in order to enhance the quality of life and well-being of people and communities. Based on the concept of human services they should be supportive, developmental and educational. In the Albanian context have been realized great efforts to give to the disability a human dimension, as it is in all European countries and other countries in the world. In our country, the notion of social services for people with disabilities have been included in several national document and strategies such as The Package Disability Law, The Regulation on Mental Health Services, The Employment Sectoral Strategy 2007-2013, Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-2013, National Strategy of Disabled Persons, etc.

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