Development of Social Work and Core Subjects of Social Work Education in Three European Countries

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Introduction

The chief sources of social work were practical human activities. Only around 20th century this important area of human activities identified itself as a profession. In this work I will try to focus on two problems: historical development of social work, and the curricula of social work education.

Historical development of social work in each country is related to political, economical, social situation and has its own stages. By knowing more about how social work had emerged and developed in Greece, Germany and Lithuania it might be easier for us to understand different welfare systems of the present day. All the three countries represent different parts of Europe, therefore it seems that the differences comparing Mediterranean, Central, and East European (post-communist) countries will be quite tangible. On the other hand, some commonalities might emerge.

However, social work is understood as many-faceted studies, and the social work curricula are related not only to social work but also to many various sciences (i.e. sociology, psychology, politics, etc). Many students studying for their undergraduate or even graduate degree think about their studies at European universities via some programmes (i.e. Erasmus/Socrates), which support the mobility of students during their studies at the home country. A student can choose either to participate in those programmes or to go abroad by him/herself in order to study at a foreign university. Either way the issue of education curricula, including social work curricula, emerges (are the curricula quite the same in different countries?). I try to focus on the university level studies, and its curricula, omitting vocational training or colleges.

Comparative research methodology:

1) Cross-national analysis of the development of social work in the three countries is considered in this paper in the *historical dimension*[*]: the origin of social work and its education, foundation of first schools, and their creators, further development of education, etc.

Firstly, I am going to present the development of social work in Germany, Greece and Lithuania, and then these countries will be compared according to particular stages. The comparison will be made based on some stages described by Jurkuviene (2003): the development of charity organizations; the beginning of social work education; the legalization of associations of social workers; the introduction of formal schools of social work; the formalization of educational standards; the introduction of master's programmes; the accreditation of bachelor's programmes; and the specialization of social work education.

2) The second issue is analysed according to the *formal dimension*[**]: levels and duration of social work education, credits system, the core subjects of studies, practical work and speciali-

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[*]   the dimension is selected according to Kantowicz (2005), p. 6.
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zations. Germany, Greece and Lithuania will be compared to particular aspects outright, without presenting each educational system individually.

KEY WORDS: social work development, social work education, social work curricula, core subjects.

1. Development of Social Work

Social Work in Germany emerged with the social changes of the 19th century (the industrialisation, the foundation of the German Reich in 1871, the workers' movement, the bourgeois women's movement, the social security acts) (G. J. Friesenhahn & G. Ehlert, 2004). The responsibility for helping poor people belonged to churches in the middle ages. After the Reformation, it shifted to the local authorities and that resulted in great changes in terms of considering poor people and their needed support (the education intervention became the main objective of poor programmes). Through the Bismarckian reforms "the character of social work changed during this period, from primarily financial assistance towards psychological, social and educational support" (G. J. Friesenhahn & G. Ehlert, 2004:83).

The changes in the society and complexity of social problems led to understanding that providers of social services have to obtain a proper professional training. Thus, in 1899 a one-year course for professional training for women in social welfare services was established in Berlin. The very first school was the Women's School for Social Welfare, which later became the model training course. It opened in 1908 under the direction of Alice Salomon and offered a two-year programme for women only (men were accepted from 1927 in some selected Schools for Social Welfare) (K. Skaarhoj, 1998). Social work development had been destroyed in 1933 and after the time of Nazism and the Second World War it started again in both German states. At the end of the 1950s in West Germany the Schools of Social Work upgraded their status and were transformed into higher vocational schools and academies for social work, with two/three year courses and an additional probationary year. As Friesenhahn and Ehlert (2004) mentioned, in 1969, new four year fully academic diploma courses were established at the university level. In 1971 the higher vocational schools and academies for social work were transformed into Fachhochschulen, later re-named as Universities of Applied Sciences, and integrated into the system of higher education, with three/four years with an integrated practice/probation period. According to the Bologna Declaration Germany established to run master's programmes.

In the German Democratic Republic social work was determined by a centralised state which guaranteed social security on an elementary level of work, housing and income. There have been several social and educational professions which were taught below university level. Social work and social pedagogy in terms of profession did not exist. After the reunification the system of West Germany was adopted in East Germany.

THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN GREECE first appeared after the Second World War and the Civil War, at a time of great financial, political and social change. The church role was significant not only in middle Ages, but also in 1941: the church organized messes all over Greece, provided people with food and medicine, created centres for child and maternal care, for single mothers and for orphans (nowadays the role of the Orthodox Church is important as well). At the same time the National Red Cross helped starving people, besides in 1940 it established an association called Greek War Relief (since then its work being particularly evident in services

for children, the elderly, and people with financial problems). Second World War, the Civil War, dictatorship, as well as earthquakes resulted in a great need for new social services (especially for widows, disabled, and orphans) in the governmental level. From 1967, country remained under dictatorship and during that time process of developing welfare state was held up. After Constitution was adopted 1975, the welfare state started to improve.

The first trained social workers in Greece came from the USA and it is no wonder that education of social work was strongly influenced by the U.S. American system. The very first School of Social Welfare in Greece functioned from 1937 to 1939; however, professional social workers were not of great importance until after the Second World War, when "Pierce, a female American college, organized a department of social work which ran from 1945 to 1975" (M. Papathanasiuo, 2004:96). The Greek Young Men's Christian Association established a one year School of Social Work in Athens in 1948. The duration of the studies there was increased to two years in 1950, and to three years in 1954. The recognition of the profession was granted when the Presidential Decree about the "Institutional Role of Social Worker" was published in 1959 (Decree 4018/1959). In 1961, the second most important decree was published concerning issues related to the practice of social work. The major step was made when in 1962 the government decided that the state alone would be responsible for providing social work education. Consequently, in 1963 a Royal Decree instituted a three year education for high school graduates and, at the same time, a post-graduate course for university graduates. From 1985, legislation has established departments of social work at Technological Educational Institution (four year courses including practical training).

In LITHUANIA, until 1992 **social work** had never existed as a profession. From the creation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania until 1940 (during the period of Tsarist occupation and the interwar independence) these activities were regulated by churches, charities, and secular philanthropic organizations, weak NGOs and, to a minor degree, by the state. Natural family-type support was dominant. From 1940 to 1990 the role of the church was minimized as social services were nationalized and social welfare was widely distributed. Despite this all-embracing Soviet social support system, social work was absent, and social services were provided by trade unions, medical institutions, executive committees, and the social sections of major institutions instead. Under Soviet rule, neither social nor personal problems could be dealt with as such, and the most elemental realities were viewed in a political context. Many social problems, such as children with disabilities, were largely hidden away in institutions (L. M. Healy etc., 2003). After Lithuania's independence in 1990 an all-embracing system of social security was initiated, and this prompted the demand for decentralized professional social work. There were a number of reforms, the most important being the liberalisation of economic life and the attendant privatisation. New social problems arose, namely unemployment, homelessness, prostitution, poverty, crime, and great and visible disparities of wealth. There was an urgent and immediate need to change the ineffective discordant social support system into an effective European one. There was an acute demand for social work in its widest sense (A. Bagdonas, 2001).

In 1990–1991 the first social worker of Lithuanian origin from the USA arrived. First workshops for medical people were organised, consultations were given to the staff members of Vilnius' and Vytautas Magnus Universities, and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. In 1992, the notion of *social worker* was recognized officially. First social work study programs were prepared. The professionalisation of social work started in 1992 with the beginning of training of

TABLE 1. Social work development in Germany, Greece and Lithuania

Stage of development	Germany	Greece	Lithuania
Development of charity organizations	Middle Ages	Middle Ages	Middle Ages
Beginning of social work education	1899	1937	1992
Introduction of formal schools of social work	1908 1950 upgraded	1937 1948 upgraded	1992
Recognition of the profession	The beginning of XX century	1959	1992
Higher education of social work	1950	1963	1992
Introduction of Master's programmes	2005*	1963	1993

* "Bachelor's and Master's programmes are largely still in the process of being set up in Germany" (DAAD, 2000).

social workers in universities/college (4 year courses with integrated practical training). In 1993, Master's degree was approved (2 year courses) (L. M. Healy etc., 2003). Some circumstances favourable to social work developed rapidly (except, perhaps, economic conditions): legal basis developed and evolved, the infrastructure of social support changed rapidly. Support from Western countries flowed to the social area not only in the form of financial projects but also in the form of theoretic and practical training. In the years 1992 to 2002 the Lithuanian Social Workers' Association was formed and further developed.

After the brief presentation of historical context of Germany, Greece and Lithuania, some aspects of social work development in these countries are introduced in Table 1. This table shows when a particular stage of development occurred in each country.

Findings:

The common feature is that in all the three countries the roots of social work as a profession stretched back to the Middle Ages, when begging and almsgiving was socially organized. Certainly, almsgiving could not be called social work. The first stage of social work development could be associated with the appearance of charity organizations. Churches had significant involvement in providing help for those who are in poverty. "The Greek Orthodox Church has been the main provider of residential care for elderly people" (M. Papathanasiuo, 2004) in Greece, in Germany "poor relief was originally the preserve of the church and was dispensed in hospitals, poor houses, and orphanages" (G. J. Friesenhahn & G. Ehlert, 2004), and in Lithuania, with the first asylums and philanthropic activities established by the Church, serious changes in the area of supporting people started (A. Bagdonas, 2001).

Social support and social work in the three countries were closely related to social transformations. Later social services where nationalised in all the three countries: in Germany the changes were related to the foundation of German Reich in 1871 (after the Reformation responsibilities shifted to local authorities), in Greece the need for social services at a governmental level occurred in 1950, after the Second World War and the Civil War, and in Lithuania, it was connected to the end of Soviet occupation. All these great changes brought more complex social problems and the new attitude towards social services. Besides it has to be mentioned, that under the undemocratic regimes (Nazism in Germany, dictatorship in Greece, and Soviet occupation in Lithuania) development of social systems was held up or perverted.

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One more common thing for Greece and Lithuania is the influence of the USA on social work education and its curricula, as in both countries, the first trained social workers came from the USA.

The differences are: the time when the social work profession emerged. In Germany and Greece this profession was recognized at the end of XIX or the beginning of XX century, whereas in Lithuania it became in use only in 1992. Besides, social work education development in Germany as well as in Greece started with a one year course, and then developed to two, three and later to four years of education. Schools of Social Work have eventually been integrated into the higher education system there, meanwhile in Lithuania with regaining the independence this profession promptly gathered acceleration and appeared as a four years of education at the university level. What took for almost a century to develop in Greece and in Germany, took only few years in Lithuania. Of course some criticise that system, because the absence of social work tutors was substituted with the specialists from other related disciplines or visiting social work professors.

2. The core subjects of Social Work education

Social work education in each of the countries has its own roots. However, despite the observable assimilation it may differ nowadays as well. The **social work studies at the university level** are organised in Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Greece as well as in Lithuania. Undergraduate degree can be obtained after four years of studying (8 semesters), while graduate – after two years (4 semesters). The exception is Germany, where students currently enrolled in social work finish their four years of studies with a Diploma degree. According to the Bologna Declaration (L. Schewe, 2005), from 2005 the programs started to change, and the studies will take only 7 semesters and will be finished with a Bachelor's degree, in order to be comparable in the European job market. It means there will be no differences in the levels of education anymore, and the common system will be based on two cycles (undergraduate and graduate).

THE SYSTEMS OF CREDITS differed among these countries. In Lithuania an academic year consists of two semesters and a student has to earn 40 credits, 20 credits during each. Vilnius University credit is one study week and requires an input of approximately 40 hours of work for the student. One VU credit = 1,5 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) (VU, 1999). Thus Lithuanian students have to earn 60 ECTS per year. Although Lithuania has not changed its credit system to ECTS, the graduates are awarded with Diploma Supplement since 2005. In Greece there were no credits but hours of a lecture instead (i.e. if the course "Introduction to Social Work" is taught for 3 hours per week, there are 3 credits for this course), but in 2004 this system has changed, and since then, during four studying years a student will earn 240 ECTS – average of 30 credits per semester. In Germany, Alice Salmon Fachhochschule, credits are handed out in form of marks, not worse than 4 (1 is the best, 6 is the worst); at the end, if the student has collected all the credits, he/she is allowed to write a diploma-work-paper. Although attempts have been made, the introduction of ECTS in Germany has failed yet (L. Schewe, 2005).

THE CORE SUBJECTS of social work in all the three countries are more or less the same, only selective or optional courses differ. Introduction to social work (Basics of social work in Germany), methods of social work (In Greece and Lithuania there are additional courses in methods with community, with groups), social policy, history of social work, counselling, sociology are taught in all the countries. It is not difficult to notice, however, that social work studies in Greece include many courses in sociology (of family, of divergence, of education, etc.) and in psycholo-

gy (introduction into psychology, evolutionary, clinical, social psychology) and lack disciplines in economics as well as in law. By contrast, these courses are taught at German and Lithuanian universities (basics of economics, management law, work law, and so on). It has to be mentioned that studies in Germany consist of basic studies (pre-diploma) (that last for the first 3 semesters) and main studies (the next 8 semesters). Basic theoretical seminars are taught in the first part while the second is more practically oriented. In summary, all the curricula include enough similar core courses and are manifold in terms of disciplines held. "Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice" (M. Papathanasiuo, 2004).

THE PRACTICE in social work education is one of the most important parts. It is common in Germany, Greece, and Lithuania, that all the undergraduate students have their period of practice. In Germany the study time includes 2 semesters (usually the 5th and the 6th semester) of practical work (internships) in institutions of social work. In Greece, students undertake practical training in social services for four semesters, two days a week. Finally, students have a six month period of practical training during the last semester. In Lithuania, at Vilnius university, the system was very familiar to the mentioned above in 2005, as undergraduate studies included 3 semesters of practical work at various social institutions (varying from one day to five days per week). Since then some changes took place and the period of practice was concentrated into 1 semester per undergraduate studies. During the practice period one can practice in various fields of social work and choose the direction (specialization) of his/her interest for further studies and work in all the three countries.

After the Bachelor or Diploma degree one can continue studies and choose a **specialization of social work** for the Master degree. In all the three countries the variety of fields in social work is reflected in numerous specializations run at universities. Alice Salmon Fachhochschule in Germany offers a Master of Science degree in nursing, intercultural conflict management, social management, social work as a human rights profession, clinical social work, and comparative European social studies (K. Skaarhoj, 1998). In Greece, the Department of Social Work at the Technological Educational Institution does not offer specializations of social work while a student may choose another university. There are specializations in community work, family-counselling, social work, and criminology beside social work with different social groups, etc. Vilnius University may offer clinical social work, social policy and administration, work with children and youth, gender social studies, etc. (VU, 2003). Not all specializations are the same in Germany, Greece, and Lithuania and it may be explained through the specific situation of each country and the demand on particular specialists; nevertheless, the common feature is the variety of specializations offered.

Conclusions

In this paper initial comparative studies proved the possibility to analyse social work in Germany, Greece and Lithuania from two different dimensions. In this particular case the historical development of social work and its formal education (curricula) aspects had been chosen. The findings show that there is a lot of in common, as well as different in the area of social work. Commonalities of social work development were related mostly to each country's social, economical, political transformation that resulted in great changes in terms of the need of professional help and the acceptance of social work profession. Meanwhile differences mainly occured when analysing the time of emergence of a particular stage and the rapidity of development.

Through the analysis of social work education systems it was observed that commonalities in Germany, Greece and Lithuania lie mainly in core subjects of social work, importance of practical training, as well as in numerous specializations offered. Differences come about when looking at the formal system that is based on undergraduate and graduate cycles, and the credits system (in this regard Lithuania and Greece are alike, while Germany differs). However, this distinction is rather relative because the unification of formal social work education across Europe is on its way and according to Bologna Declaration neither main cycles of education, nor credits system will differ.

The paper presented only frames how social work and its education can be analysed and interpreted in aspects of similarities and differences and there are fields for further research. It would be interesting to look at learning and teaching strategies, methods and styles using quantitative and qualitative methods as well.

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Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje siekiama pažvelgti į socialinio darbo kaip profesijos raidą bei socialinio darbo studijų plėtrą skirtingose Europos šalyse: Pietų Europai atstovaujančioje Graikijoje, žemyninėje Vokietijoje ir Rytų Europą reprezentuojančioje Lietuvoje.

Straipsnyje taikoma komparatyvinė tyrimo metodologija: į socialinio darbo raidą žvelgiama iš istorinės perspektyvos. Analizuojamos socialinio darbo ir jo studijų ištakos, pirmųjų mokyklų įkūrimas, tolesnė stu-

dijų plėtra, studijų standartų formalizavimas ir pan. Taip pat lyginama Graikijoje, Vokietijoje ir Lietuvoje organizuojamų socialinio darbo studijų trukmė ir lygiai, kreditų sistema, pagrindiniai studijuojami dalykai, specializacijos.

Visoms trims šalims bendra yra tai, kad socialinio darbo kaip profesijos suvokimui, profesinės pagalbos poreikiui ir apskritai socialinio darbo raidai didžiausią įtaką turėjo šalyse vykusios socialinės, ekonominės, politinės transformacijos. O skirtumai dažniausiai išryškėja, kai analizuojamos socialinio darbo raidos stadijos ir plėtros greitis.

Kalbant apie socialinio darbo studijų organizavimą pastebima, kad visose šalyse pagrindiniai studijų dalykai sutampa, skiriama nemaža dėmesio praktikai, taip pat siūloma gana daug specializacijų. Pagrindinius skirtumus lemia bakalauro ir magistro pakopų išskyrimas ir kreditų sistema. Vis dėlto šie skirtumai yra gana sąlyginiai, kadangi šalys yra pasirašiusios Bolonijos deklaraciją, kurios pagrindu yra siekiama sukurti bendrą aukštojo mokslo erdvę.