



Social Work in Modern Russian Society

Evdokiya Kholostova

Dr. of History, Professor, Director of Institute of Professional Development of Social Sphere Employees of Moscow Department of Social Protection of Population

1st Basmanniy lane,10, 105066, Moscow, the Russian Federation

Phone: 7 495 607 50 65

Email: ipk@mos.ru

Website: www.soc-education.ru

Social Work in Russian Society is going through a complicated yet interesting period. Firstly, the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of official introduction of social work profession. Secondly, from retrospective point of view, we recognize different forms of state, community and individual social support which can be traced during last millennium. Thirdly, social work passes the large-scale comprehensive transformation, aimed to change the social service system in general, as well as the social service practice and contribution of each social worker.

What is the reason for the changes? 25 years ago the introduction of professional social work in Russia was the necessary and emergent decision. At that time the citizens of the Russian Federation experienced, not only deepest social-economic crisis, but significant psychological shock, civilization shock, initiated by the demolition of a former formation and beginning of a new one. The creation of social work system definitely saved the lives of hundred thousand people who had lost the previous forms of institutional and psychological support. This system was generally based on paternalistic foundation, fulfilling its emergent mission.

In the past the structures of the new socio-economic order were formed in general. The extreme poverty level decreased and the quality of life of population improved. The needs of people in context of social work have changed. The first row of priorities was occupied by other social work tasks and these reasons pushed forward radical change.

Social services production is integrated into the system of economic relations typical for a market society. It gives promise that the quantity of rendered services, variability and quality will constantly rise. Non-government and private social services are in the process of development, contributing to the formation of the social service market. It means that the population enjoys the opportunity to choose social service providers. Social service production is integrated in the system of economic relations aimed to form a self-support model, to mobilize internal resources to cope with problems, to avoid paternalism and dependence.

Within the process of initialization the expansion of the practice system and theoretical conceptions on the core of assistance and support for vulnerable groups has taken place. In modern society social work is recognized as a scientific discipline, as a process

of practice and as professional education sphere. It is the basis for state social policy, and its main goal is to provide comfortable conditions for people living, social cohesion and solidarity in society.

The developing Russian Social Work model is perfectly integrated in an International model, addressing to social development, human rights and social justice.

The Modern World is not homogeneous. Its diversity is caused by different levels of socio-economic development existing between countries as well as cultural diversity. At the same time, we understand that powerful integrative processes uniting the nations of mother Earth act in the World. The World becomes global; and social work is implemented in the frame of globalization.

Within the theoretical issues the special place is occupied by the problems of society demographic problems, poverty, ageing of population, socio-cultural environment and cultural diversity protection, formation of tolerance and development of spiritual and moral values.

Russian scientists have published hundreds of scientific monographs, encyclopedias, manuals, scientific textbooks on issues of social work development in society. The continued considering of social processes encourages modernization of social institutions and structures. Talking about practical activities, it is necessary to point out that rather branched social service network rendering social services to different categories of population was established in the Russian Federation. Nowadays this network is under modernization, the development of innovative social work technologies is increased. For example, community based technologies, self-help in mutual aid, home based care, social contract etc.

Moscow is the biggest megalopolis in Russia and Europe, it has a population above 12 million. Currently every fourth Moscow citizen is older the employment age. Around 13% of Moscow population are children. The number of poor families with children has considerably decreased; but the tasks on social support of families and children are still acute. One in ten Moscow citizens has special needs. Around one million people are retired and there are 30 thousand children with disabilities in Moscow. For all the above categories of citizens and others who need social services, 200 state social service establishments are now functioning.

Around 135 thousand elderly and disabled people receive home based care – home delivery of food baskets, drugs and newspapers, cooking services. More than 60 thousand elderly and disabled people who are able to move independently attend centers of social services and participate in different events. These “Universities of Third Age” deliver training on computer skills, healthy life style courses, social clubs etc. Above 14 thousand elderly and disabled people who are not able to live independently, stay in residential care establishments for veterans of labour and psycho-neurological institutions, where they receive comprehensive care and medical treatment.

In the sphere of social support to the elderly new social technologies aimed to compensate limited number of places in residential care are applied to practice. Practice of purchasing residential care services from nongovernmental social organizations are introduced in Moscow. The other perspective direction is rendering complex home based care to dependent elderly people.

For disabled veterans of the Second World War, sanatorium at home is available delivering services free of charge. The unique practice is now being approbated – foster care for the elderly persons. Citizens who desire to adopt lonely elderly persons, take them in their families, providing care and support and treat them like biological relatives.

Patronage of elderly citizens with mental retardation is introduced in every day practice. Teams of professionals from psycho-neurological institutions visit them regularly at home and provide rehabilitative sessions.

Ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People by Russia has pushed forward the great changes in legislation and social work practice. New professional specialization such as personal assistant and integrative consultant is introduced

to provide comprehensive care for disabled people, particularly, families with children with disabilities.

Inclusive care and education practice for children with disabilities is expanded. Professionals of social protection are involved in provision of professional education and creation of occupational places for people with disabilities.

Social work transforms into profession with clear requirements to professional education and set of obligatory functions and skills. Introduction of professional standards and standards of social services regulates the background of social worker’s activities. The great efforts in the area of raising the social work image are aimed at a complete transformation of these activities from informal charity based help to the structural professional activity, which is implemented by specially educated staff.

In order to achieve this goal the Institute of Professional Development of Social Sphere Employees of Moscow was established. It is the first organization in Russia which implements the modern approach to social work: life-long education. Our task is to provide contemporary level of knowledge, skills and professional qualification of 50 thousand Moscow social workers. We train professionals from more than 26 subjects of the Russian Federation. Our trainees go for study tours in 15 countries of the World. In cooperation with Global Institute of Social Work last year International School of Social Work was established on the basis of the Institute. Now Russian social workers have an opportunity to listen to professional lectures given by professors of social work departments from different universities round the World.

Social work in Russia is rather young. It made significant steps towards social prosperity in Russia. New realities of social development in Russia put challenge to highly qualified professionals.