

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK THEORIES

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the stages of development and methodological foundations of social work theories. It examines the process of the formation and development of social work, as well as its socio-historical necessity.

Keywords

methodology, problem, approach, theory, psychology of social work, theoretical approaches.

Introduction. The methodological foundations of social work theory represent a system of principles, approaches, and methods that make it possible to conduct research and implement practical activities in social work. Methodological foundations reflect the technologies and guidelines for the proper organization of the social work process, and they help social workers to carry out effective social measures. There are several key methodological aspects of social work theory.

Discussion and results. Interdisciplinary approach. Social work is based on theoretical knowledge drawn from various disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, law, and medicine. This enables social workers to understand complex social problems and develop comprehensive solutions using different theoretical and practical tools.

System approach. This approach views the individual as part of a broader system that includes family, community, and society. It emphasizes that in order to address social problems, it is necessary to consider not only individual factors (individual or group) but also the interactions between different elements of the system.

Eco-social approach. This methodology focuses on the study of the relationship between the individual and their social environment. The eco-social approach analyzes how various factors (economic, cultural, ecological) influence the quality of life and behavior of the population.

Client-centered approach. This approach places the client at the center of the social work process. It is based on respecting the client's values, beliefs, and needs, as well as ensuring their active participation in the decision-making process. Social workers act as supportive leaders, helping clients to develop their own internal resources.

Research and evaluation. The methodology of social work includes systems for assessing clients' needs, evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, and analyzing social problems. This involves the use of surveys, interviews, observations, and analysis of existing data.

Theory of change. Change theories, such as transformational learning theory and behavior change models (for example, the Transtheoretical Model), provide an understanding of the processes clients go through when seeking changes in their lives. These theories help to identify the steps and strategies necessary for successful transformation.

Social policy and human rights. The methodological foundations of social work theory also include the study of social policy and human rights. This ensures that social work practice is carried out within the framework of protecting human dignity and promoting social justice.

Social workers must be aware of the context in which they operate and be able to defend the rights of their clients, especially those from vulnerable groups.

Critical thinking. This skill encourages social workers to analyze their own activities from a critical perspective and to address mistakes or shortcomings in their practice. In working with clients, it helps them develop the ability to control their behavior both emotionally and intellectually. Critical thinking is an essential component of social work methodology, as it requires social workers to constantly reflect on their actions, evaluate them objectively, and remain committed to social justice, honesty, and integrity under all circumstances. The methodological foundations of social work theory combine various approaches and strategies, which enable specialists to address complex social problems more effectively. Methodology helps social workers acquire the skills needed to apply theories in real life and professional practice. As A.S. Kravtsev emphasizes, methodology is the theory of human cognitive activity. Similarly, A.A. Gritsanov notes that methodology is the doctrine of the ways in which human theoretical and practical activity is organized and implemented. Organizing social work is carried out on the basis of various theories, approaches, and methods.

When studying social work, a professional must possess theoretical concepts, knowledge, practical skills, and competencies at a high level.

The dialectics of approaches in social work refers to the interaction, development, and potential influence of differences between methods and approaches within social work practice. In the process of social work, in order to better understand and respond to complex social problems, it is sometimes necessary to examine contradictions and conflicts that arise between different approaches and theories.

The need to resolve such issues arises. From this perspective, several aspects of the dialectics of approaches in social work can be distinguished:

Contradictions between individual and structural approaches. Social work can be directed toward solving the problems of individual clients (individual approach) or toward changing socio-economic and political structures (structural approach). The dialectic between these approaches helps practitioners understand how to connect personal problems with social conditions and inequalities. Social work often uses elements of different theoretical models, synthesizing theories.

The dialectical interrelation of theory and practice. Social work theory develops in response to changes in practice and vice versa. Practice may also shape new paths for research.

Conflict resolution aspect of social work. This emerges when contradictions arise between different interests – clients, institutions, communities, and government agencies. A dialectical approach helps reveal the essence of these contradictions, determine their causes, and identify effective methods to address them. The aspect of ethical dilemmas. Social workers often encounter ethical dilemmas that reflect conflicting values and interests. In such situations, the dialectical approach allows for analyzing these dilemmas, discussing different viewpoints, and finding compromises. An ethical dilemma is a situation without a good choice, where any decision implies a violation of moral or ethical standards. This, like fashionable entertainment during a time of fatigue with ordinary amusements, may at first seem useful and interesting. Personal and professional development aspect of social workers. This reflects the dialectic between self-awareness and professional requirements, enabling the improvement of both personal qualities and professional skills. Such an approach helps social workers better understand their responsibilities, values, and commitment to impartiality.

As a result of analyzing the history of social work theory, the following approaches have been identified:

1. The causal-functional approach in social work This is based on analyzing the causes of social problems and their functions in the lives of society and individuals. This approach highlights the dialectical interrelation of causes and consequences,

showing how social phenomena fulfill specific functions for individuals and social structures.

The main focus of the causal-functional approach is on analyzing causes, meaning a systematic study of the factors that influence the emergence of social problems. These factors can be both individual (psychological, biological) and social (economic, cultural, political). Understanding causes helps social workers diagnose problems more effectively and choose appropriate intervention methods.

Identifying the functions of social phenomena makes it possible to better understand their role in the social system and to design measures that take these functions into account. Attention is also given to how social problems may result from certain causes while at the same time influencing those very causes in return.

Thus, the causal-functional approach helps specialists gain a deeper understanding of social problems, their origins, and consequences. It also contributes to the development of analytical skills in social workers.

2. The psychosocial approach in social work This emphasizes working with clients by considering both their psychological and social dimensions. Its main principles and essence include:

Integrative principle: Combines the psychological and social aspects of helping a client. It considers not only the individual's psychological characteristics but also their socio-cultural background. Systemic principle: Views the client as part of a social system that includes family, community, and environment. This allows understanding the client's problems in the context of their social relations and environment, also taking into account ecological factors affecting their life and well-being.

The psychosocial approach considers the client's psychological, social, and economic needs. The social worker helps the client develop skills to identify and use personal resources and creates an action plan to meet these needs.

3. The systems approach in social work This is a methodology based on the idea of the human being and environment as interrelated systems. Its key elements include:

Interconnectedness and mutual influence: The person is viewed within the context of their relationships with family, community, and other systems they are part of. It examines how changes in one part of the system may affect other parts.

Wholeness of the system: The system is more than the sum of its parts – it is an interconnected whole. Therefore, decisions and changes must consider their impact on the entire system. Feedback: The systems approach considers feedback between system elements, meaning changes in one part can provoke reactions in

others. Understanding these reactions helps anticipate possible consequences of actions. Emergent properties: Systems may develop new qualities that are not inherent to individual parts but arise from their interactions. Levels of analysis: The systems approach studies micro, meso, and macro levels, helping to understand different aspects of human life and its relation to the environment. By applying the systems approach, social workers can better understand the essence of clients' problems, their interaction with the environment, and develop more effective technologies for assistance.

4. The role of psychology in social work

Psychology plays an important role in understanding the behavior, emotional, and cognitive aspects of individuals facing problems and difficulties. Its main functions include:

Diagnosis and assessment: Using psychological methods to determine clients' needs, capacities, and mental state. **Psychological counseling and support:** Helping clients understand and cope with problems, manage emotions, overcome barriers, and make life-affirming decisions.

Rehabilitation: Restoring psychological balance, helping clients see the positive aspects of life, and increasing interest in living.

Education and training: Using psychological knowledge to develop self-management skills and positive character traits through programs, trainings, and psycho-education. **Collaboration and coordination:** Psychologists work with other specialists (social workers, medical professionals, lawyers) to ensure comprehensive solutions to clients' problems. Thus, psychology in social work contributes to creating effective mechanisms for support and assistance based on clients' psychological needs and characteristics.

5. The functional approach in social work. This is based on the concept of social functions, where each social phenomenon or institution is examined in terms of its contribution to maintaining the stability and integration of society. It studies how different aspects (such as institutions, norms, values) help meet the needs of individuals and groups. This approach views social work as part of broader social systems that interact with each other. From this perspective, it shows how social workers can contribute to and influence existing structures to improve social welfare.

One of its key tasks is maintaining social stability and integrity. Social workers using this approach intervene in dysfunctional situations such as crises or problems threatening harmony and order in society. It pays special attention to the norms and values that regulate behavior. Social workers help clients adapt to these norms and also work to change dysfunctional norms that may cause problems. The

functional approach is not only about solving existing problems but also about prevention. Social workers use this approach to identify potential problems and develop preventive strategies. It also stresses the importance of inter-agency cooperation – including collaboration with medical, educational, and legal institutions – for addressing social issues comprehensively.

Conclusion. The essence of the functional theoretical approach in social work is analyzing the social functions and interrelations that affect the lives of individuals and communities. This approach helps social workers understand how their work contributes to social stability, prevents problems, and improves people's quality of life, making it an important tool in social work practice.

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