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THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Lenka Divoka

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of social work in the Czech Republic from the perspective of the sociology of the professions. Social work has been described as a semi-profession by many authors and social workers often feel they are viewed as second-rate professionals. In the Czech Republic, social work also has negative associations with the previous communist regime. The research examines such views, using a conceptual framework which combines elements of neo-Weberian, neo-institutional and traits theories. An extensive historical review of the development of the social work profession provides the background to the current professionalisation of social work and its search for recognition as a fully-fledged profession. There are two main research questions: how do social workers describe the current state of their profession, and how do they describe the pathways to enhanced professionalisation? The design of the research is a case study focusing on the field of child protection. Data from participant observation and semi-structured interviews is used to understand the policy-making process in the transformation of the current child protection system. Causal stories narrated by social work inter-professional groups reveal the main strategies of professionalisation. The results show that social work in the Czech Republic has not accomplished the autonomy of the established professions because of the restricted character of the social service market and political significance of social problems. Nevertheless, the profession has acquired some important advantages in the labour market, including a degree of market closure as described in the neo-Weberian theory of professionalisation. However, it is also fragmented into different inter-professional groups that pursue diverse strategies of professionalisation according to their institutional setting and market opportunities. Contrary to the general perspective of the authors in the sociology of social work, social work in the Czech Republic is found to be a fast-developing and flexible profession responsive to the current economic, social and political conditions of the country. The important conclusion is that social work is a profession that balances its economic interests with professional objectives within the institutional frame of social work employing organizations.

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Glossary

ASWE	Association of Social Work Educators
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
HREOP	Human Resources and Employment Operational Program
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
MLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MPSV	Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí (MLSA)
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OSW	Organisation of Social Workers

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis studies the development of social work in the Czech Republic from the perspective of the sociology of the professions. Drawing on interviews with social work professionals, observation and historical review, the thesis strives to answer the questions about the current state of the profession, and the key factors and strategies of professionalisation. The main theories of the sociology of the professions set the conceptual framework of general analysis of the professional development in terms of professionalisation. The concept of causal stories is used to analyse data from interviews with social work professionals and to understand the policy-making processes of the current child protection system transformation. Causal stories narrated by social work inter-professional groups reveal the main strategies of professionalisation when observed from the perspective of the main theories of the sociology, namely the neo-Weberian theory, the neo-institutional theory and the traits theory.

The thesis aims to challenge the prevailing critical views on social work that refer to the low status of the profession or to the professional failure resulting from the incompetence of social work professionals to fulfil their professional objectives. In fact, the thesis shows that the social work profession has significantly improved its position on the labour market as well as in the social welfare system. It also suggests that the social work profession should be conceived of as a coalition of particular inter-professional groups, who each time more or less adeptly respond to the organisational, political and economic conditions of the social welfare system in order to strengthen their professional position.

The first section of this chapter briefly presents the background of social work professionalisation in the Czech Republic, and then outlines the objectives and scope of the research. The following part provides key definitions of terms used in the thesis, and the last section outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.1   Background

It is important to consider the historical development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic within the political, economic and societal context of the country. The

major social work professional achievements occurred within the post-communist period (1989-2012), when neo-liberal policies allowed the profession to establish itself in the educational and the legal systems as well as the social welfare structure. Nonetheless, voices of concern and criticism about the credibility of the profession and the 'unprofessionalism' of social workers have been arising, and increasingly so from the state and council authorities, as well as from the media and within social work's own occupational ranks. Previous research on the professional trajectory of social work in the Czech Republic is limited and only a few authors have studied the strategies of professionalisation from the perspective of the sociology of the professions.

There is now some recognition that the Anglo-American theoretical and empirical tradition in the sociology of the professions has its limitations when applied to processes of professionalisation in other regions. Recently, sociologists from Continental Europe have contributed to the discussion with consideration of the closer relationship between the state and the professions that is historically embedded in European countries. Interestingly, Czech academic debate about the social work profession, although also very limited, takes neither the perspective of neo-Weberian theory nor neo-institutional theory, but of post-modernism or late modernism. This reflects the preoccupation of Czech sociologists with the substantial societal changes that came with the process of democratisation. In light of this, the conceptual framework does not relate to only one theory of the professions but encompasses several main theories, the neo-Weberian, neo-institutional theories and the traits theory, in order to understand the case of complex social work professionalisation in the Czech Republic.

A large part of sociological research dedicated to the professions consists of macro-analytical inquiry into occupational professionalisation in the context of a particular country using policy and document analysis. More recently, the sociology of organisations has entered the field with analysis of professional organisations and institutions focusing on processes of professionalisation within the organisational framework and incorporating broader use of qualitative research methods. Nonetheless, only a limited amount of research on the professions has been conducted from the perspectives of professionals. Researchers have paid little attention to the experience and views of professionals in order to help explain the development of the social work profession. However, this thesis presumes that social workers constantly create and reproduce the structures and practices

of their profession, and simultaneously are restricted or enabled by its structure and autonomy.

Social workers in the Czech Republic are striving to catch up with their colleagues from other countries in respect of the level of training, growing volume of social work knowledge, and scope of activities performed as social services. They encounter similar issues to their European colleagues resulting from bureaucratisation of work, introduction of market principles into social services, negative media presentation, and Europeanisation of social welfare policy. However, a number of specific factors, such as the Communist heritage, the ambiguous relationship between the Czech majority and the Roma community, traditionally strong positions of council authorities, rapid changes of family behaviour in a society, and the emergence of "new" social problems, present particular conditions for the professionalisation of social work in the Czech Republic.

1.2   Aims and Objectives

The paramount aim of this research is to observe the current state of development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic. It seeks to identify the current achievements and issues facing the profession, and understand the significant strategies that social work professions employ in order to enhance their professional position within the system of child protection.

The research also aims to draw on the perspectives of social work professionals, and to that end it considers their experience of everyday working life as a valid account of the reality of the profession. In order to achieve this, a conceptual framework is developed, combining concepts from the current approaches of the sociology of the professions and from Stone's policy-making concept of causal stories, which allows for interpreting the accounts of social work professionals in relation to the professionalisation of social work.

1.3   Scope

The social work profession generally embraces a diverse range of activities, fields and positions. Therefore, in order to undertake research within a more clearly defined area, this thesis researches a case study of social work in the field of child protection in the Czech Republic. However, it is believed due to the interconnected and interdependent character of

social work activities, social work organizations and the welfare system, certain findings may be applied to the social work profession as a whole.

The sample of social work professionals in this study intentionally consists of participants from various welfare organisations who hold social work positions at different professional levels, ranging from front-line social workers in local authority departments to child protection reform co-ordinators at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Although they are not officially organised as a cohesive professional entity, and often individual social work professionals do not feel they are members of a single profession, in this research project they are considered as representatives of the social work profession and regarded as 'social workers' or 'social work professionals'.

As this study is concerned with the trajectory of the social work profession, it reviews social work development from its first attempts at professionalisation after the formation of the independent country of Czechoslovakia in 1918 until the present. In this historical period certain political, economic, and social events, discourses and individuals are more significant to the formation of the profession than others, and these are mentioned in the review. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise here that the main goal of this study is to understand the current state of the profession and recent developments in the Czech Republic, particularly since the country joined the European Union in 2004. Therefore, the analysis of the historical course of social work professionalisation serves to set the background context to the current state of the profession and the experience of present-day social workers.

The research employs a case study approach, attempting to exploit the capacity of a case study design to examine an object of study from various angles. The aim of the study is to acquire a detailed picture and deeper insight into social work professionalisation, and therefore the qualitative approach is applied. The research process consists of two parts: the first part is an analysis of the historical professional development, based mainly on a literature review, documentary analysis of policy, and other official documents; the second part is an analysis of social workers' experience based on observation and interviews.

The conceptual framework is presented in detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 3), and it explains how the theoretical concepts are organised in order to conduct the research interviews and to analyse and interpret the data collected. As mentioned above, the

conceptual framework presented is derived from the theories of the sociology of the professions and causal stories, and it aims to provide guidance in linking social work professionals' narratives and the development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic.

1.4   Definitions

In this study, the term *social work* is understood according to the definition of the International Federation of Social Workers (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004): *"Social work promotes social change, problem-solving in interpersonal relationships and the strengthening and liberation of people to meet their personal well-being. Using theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes where people come into contact with their environment. For social work the key principles are human rights and social justice."*

The terms *social work profession* and *social workers* or *social work professionals* are the most frequently used terms in the thesis. The term *social work profession* is used as a general term that refers to the professional project of social work. Where the discussion requires, the terms *occupation*, *semi-profession* and *profession* are differentiated and used according to context. The terms *social workers* and *social work professionals* are used interchangeably and include a wide range of employees of social service and child protection organizations and institutions such as field social workers, social work managers, social work policymakers and social work lecturers. However, where appropriate, particular social work positions are also distinguished and discussed with relevance to context.

The Code of Ethics for social workers in the Czech Republic was drawn up by the Association of Social Workers in the Czech Republic and outlines the basic principles of the social work profession. It delineates the ethical responsibilities of social workers towards clients, employers, colleagues, the profession and the public. Social work ethics are discussed in the thesis in terms of this definition.

The Code is comprehensive and extensive, and therefore only its fundamental principles are described here. Social workers should support a client's sense of their responsibility, treat her with respect and understand her persona and situation within the context of her

family, community and social environment. The client is encouraged to participate in solving her problems. Social workers should be aware of their professional limitations and refer the client to another form of assistance if necessary.

The Code states that social workers should influence social policy and employing organisations in order to provide the best quality services to clients. They should also respect the knowledge and experience of their colleagues or other professionals, and initiate discussion with them about ethical conduct. In addition, social workers should strive to increase the prestige of their profession and constantly improve their expertise. Social workers should actively work towards improving social justice and equality in society, and improving living conditions of disadvantaged and disabled individuals (Association of Social Workers in the Czech Republic 2000).

1.5   Outline of the Study

To achieve the aims set out above, Chapter 2 (Literature Review) presents the main theories of the sociology of professions and literature related to social work professionalisation. Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) explains an extended case study used as the research project design, and the techniques of data collection and analysis employed, as well as outlining the conceptual framework of the thesis. Chapter 4 (Tracing the Development of the Czech Social work and Child Protection) describes the approach applied in the review of social work development, and follows this with a description of the trajectory of the profession in three significant historical periods. In addition, it looks at the current child protection system reformation and the position of the social work profession within it. Next, Chapter 5 (The Contemporary Social Work Profession – Interview Analysis) shows the findings of the interview analysis in the context of the current child protection transformation. Findings are presented in the form of casual stories defined by the professional groups within the profession: policy-makers, child protection social workers, NGO social workers and social work lecturers.

Chapter 6 (Discussion) discusses the findings from both parts of the research in relation to the theories of the sociology of the professions, and answers the main research questions of the thesis. Final conclusions are drawn in Chapter 7 (Conclusion).

Literature Review

This chapter reviews theoretical approaches that deal with the analysis of the professions, and examines the literature on sociological analysis applied to the social work profession. The review of theoretical concepts of the professions is divided into two separate parts: the first part focuses on relevant theories of the sociology of the professions and the latter part elaborates on issues important to social work professionalisation. The chapter aims to overview the main theoretical concepts and empirical studies related to social work professionalisation, and to compose a conceptual framework that explains the experience of Czech social work professionals.

Firstly, the theories of macro-level analysis are discussed from the three main perspectives prevailing in the sociology of the professions: the traits approach, the neo-Weberian approach and the neo-institutional approach. The structure of the review follows the progressive course of theoretical arguments that have endeavoured to explain the development of the professions, with focus on each theory's strengths and limitations in analysing professions. The following part deals with the causal story analysis of public policy as a possible approach to mezzo-level analysis of the professions.

The second part of the Literature Review overviews the key topics in the professionalisation of social work, including professional knowledge, bureaucracy, professional associations, marketplace position, and its relation to social policy-making. From the perspective of the sociology of the professions, these dimensions determine the boundaries of social work professionalisation.

The field of study for this thesis does not contain a very large number of existing research studies, and there are very few which directly address the main research question regarding the current development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic. Theoretical and empirical studies of professionalisation in social work in other countries are more numerous; hence this literature review focuses on an examination of the corpus of theory in regard to the sociology of the professions and the social work profession. It aims to review and synthesise representative theoretical concepts on the topic, and to establish their relevance for analysing and explaining the development of the social work profession in

the Czech Republic. It also includes empirical studies which have a primary focus on professionalisation of social work.

The literature review is motivated by the research question regarding the current development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic, and it therefore strives to explain the key existing theories of sociology of the professions, the main topics of debate in the sociology of the professions in social work, and where the literature refers to the Czech social work profession. It needs to be emphasised that theoretical and qualitative research is a dynamic, reflexive and non-linear process, so the research question and the literature were revisited in the process of data collection and data interpretation.

The section on sociological theories of the professions is organised chronologically according to the development of the key theoretical concepts, following their arguments and different views and opinions about the existence and progress of the professions. The section on social work from the perspective of sociology of the professions is organised thematically and follows arguments specifically relevant to the topics that were identified as significant. In addition, a section on causal stories is included in order to establish an analytical concept for data analysis, and a section on the body of literature which specifically discusses the case of the social work profession in the Czech Republic is added.

The literature search strategy can be described as a multi-stage process that included the initial database search, follow-up searches on specific authors and topics, specialist library visits, and searches for grey literature such as conference proceedings, reports, policy documents and professional codes. The initial literature search strategy used for this literature review is summarised in Table 1 below. It explains the search criteria and the number of results. Additional strategies included hand-searching for particular authors or articles, or records identified through reference lists. Additional minor databases were used, such as the database of the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs, and the database of the Academy of Sciences Library in the Czech Republic.

The initial scope of the database search was from 1990 to 2010. This is the period during which the foundations of the new social work profession were laid following the end of state socialism, and the period in which the research project started. It is mainly the Czech

theoretical discussion on social work that occurs in this period. The timeframe was also chosen so that it could include the current discussion on the sociology of the professions. Additional searches were made beyond this timeframe; however, they were not exhaustive but rather searches for a specific source identified in the initial review. Each of the key terms mentioned in the table was broken down into further subsidiary concepts (listed in Table 1), such as traits theory within the sociology of professions, neo-institutional theory of professions within the neo-Weberian theory of professions, and concepts such as social work knowledge, social work bureaucracy, social work professional associations, social work marketplace, and social work and social policy within the field of social work profession.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature search are also mentioned in Table 1 below. However, it is emphasised that the literature review is not a systematic review in the sense of being representative of all the research studies that have been conducted on the topic of interest. Rather, it strives to establish the main arguments within a broad and relatively unexplored research field, characterised for the most part by a qualitative research approach. The search strategy focused on identifying as many items as possible that were relevant as well as specific, in order to ensure that they were pertinent to the research question.

Table 1 Literature Search Strategy

	Publishing language	English, Czech
Inclusion criteria	Time frame	1990 - 2010
	Type of papers	Theoretical and empirical literature, policy literature
	Subject of interest	Studies that are primarily concerned with the sociology of the professions. Studies that are primarily concerned with social work professionalisation or the professionalisation of the caring professions.
Key terms & sub-categories	sociology of professions [professions, traits theory, neo-institution theory, neo-Weberian theory, professions in Communism] causal story theory [policy-making analysis] social work profession [social work knowledge, social work bureaucracy, social work professional associations, social work marketplace, social work and social policy] Social work profession in the Czech Republic [history of social work in the	

	Czech Republic, social workers in the Czech Republic, child protection in the Czech Republic, transformation of child protection, social work professional act]		
Key terms	sociology of professions, causal story theory, social work profession, social work profession in the Czech Republic		
Database	**Results found**	**Initial selection**	**Final selection**
Bangor Library UNIcat	81	15	9
ScienceDirect	475	72	24
Google Scholar	2165	115	48
Records identified through reference lists	28	28	21
Total	2749	230	102

2.1   Introduction

The sociology of the professions is primarily concerned with the organisation of work and division of labour. It has a long tradition but also has particular relevance to current sociological debates. This is not only due to the formation of new groups claiming professional status with capitalist development (Adler, 2008:359) but also due to the increasing discourse on professionalism and the professionalisation of services and work in general (Evetts, 2005). On the other hand, some authors, mainly from Anglo-American countries, claim that we are witnessing the demise of the professions in terms of a decline in their autonomy and dominance (Freidson, 1986; Macdonald, 1995). Others (Muzio and Kirkpatrick, 2011) describe this phenomenon rather as new strategies of professionalism, and an adaptation of the professions to market conditions. Sociological perspectives on the social work profession have been continuously redefined according to different social theories of the particular period, and thus various features of the profession have been recognised and brought into the discussion. Hugman (1998:178) commented that the professional formation of social work has been influenced by the sociological models of the profession, and conversely, the theoretical concepts have been challenged by the complex development of social work and the caring professions in general.

First, it is important to define what a profession is and how it can be analysed. Many sociological approaches have attempted to encapsulate the reality of the professions and to explain the processes and the circumstances of their emergence and development. The first theory discussed here, the traits approach, is concerned with the attributes that are

inherent to the professions and distinguish a profession from an occupation. The following neo-Weberian and neo-institutional analytical approaches can also be distinguished according to the region of their theoretical origin, such as Anglo-American or Continental. The Anglo-American tradition represents the main stream of the sociology of the professions, and it draws more or less on the Weberian theory of market closure (Saks, 2010). However, the different structures and relationships between the State, the professions and the market in the countries of Continental Europe have challenged the relevance of Anglo-American theoretical concepts, and have led researchers to focus on the role of State institutions in the study of the professionalisation of occupations. Whereas the traits theory assumes that a profession is a state in which a certain occupation has particular traits, the later theories argue that a profession is a rather dynamic evolvement in which certain processes takes place.

The analytical method of causal stories in public policy is mainly an approach to research into public policies; however, it is suggested that this method can also be successfully applied to the study of the professions. It is primarily preoccupied with the process of defining problems and solutions of public concern, which include dealings within and outside a profession. In this way, the analytical method of causal stories enables a closer examination of the social work professional's practice in pursuing changes to the child protection system and accordingly improving their professional position.

The following section deals with the different theoretical concepts and their understanding of the professions.

2.2   *The Traits Approach and the Definition of the Professions*

The term 'profession' in the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) is defined as "*a paid occupation especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification*", and it derives from the Latin word 'profiteri', which means "to profess", but can also have the connotation of making a formal commitment such as a monastic oath (Lester, 2010). This suggests that professionals claim to possess specific knowledge and a certain commitment to a set of values, both of which are attributes assigned to the professions by early sociological studies.

The initial sociological approach defined professions by a number of attributes or traits by which they can be distinguished from general occupations (Hugman, 1996; Popple, 1985). Most of the authors (Durkheim, 1957; Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957) also argued for the crucial position of the professions in modern societies and their positive contribution to social systems. However, according to Burrage and Torstendhal (1990:3-5), the sociology of the professions initially held a marginal status in sociology, as the main subjects of inquiry into the development of modern societies were class, conflict, states and bureaucracy, but not the professions. In fact, as Burrage and Torstendhal state, the professions appeared to be a phenomenon peculiar to the English-speaking countries while French and German scholars did not even consider them as a worthy subject for investigation.

The traits (or attributes) approach to the professions draws on the perspective of functionalism that dominated social theory until the mid-twentieth century. The main focus is on the characteristics of the professions, their position in the social structure, and function in society. Nevertheless, there is little agreement about the core traits of the professions, and according to Millerson (1964), twenty-one authors identified 23 attributes of the professions but not a single attribute was accepted by all of them. Greenwood (1957), as one of the most cited authors of traits theory, defined five substantial attributes of the professions as follows: (1) a systematic body of knowledge, (2) professional authority, (3) community sanction, (4) an ethical code, and (5) a professional culture.

The first attribute suggests that the professions possess a systematic body of knowledge, and that lengthy training is required before becoming a professional. Professions are knowledge-based occupations, and therefore all aspects of knowledge, such as expertise, the socio-cultural evaluation of knowledge, and occupations' strategies for managing knowledge, are significant to them (Macdonald, 1995:160). The inherent idea of professionalism supposes that *"certain work is so specialized as to be inaccessible to those lacking the required training and experience"* and that it cannot be subject to standardisation or rationalisation (Freidson, 2001:17). It is the particular kind of knowledge possessed by the professions that grants them high economic and social status in society. According to Goode (1960:902), three prerequisites underlie professional knowledge: (1) the level of knowledge specialisation is above lay understanding, and therefore outside the scope of non-professionals' control; (2) professionals should be trusted and not controlled by others; and (3) professionals develop their own controlling

mechanisms. This correlates with Greenwood's second and third attributes of professionals, where in other words professional authority means that the client has "*no choice but to accede to professional judgment*" (Greenwood, 1957:48), and the sanction of the professional community is pursued through internal admission to practice, and exclusion in cases of breaching shared standards. This professional control over admission and exclusion was later considered and elaborated on by authors drawing from the Weberian idea of market closure as the key interest of professionals and a substantial element in the professionalisation process. However, it is important to emphasise here the different conceptions of professional knowledge by social theories. While functionalists exalt the positive aspect of expertise – *"the professions occupy a position of importance in our society which is, in any comparable degree of development, unique in history"* (Parsons, 1968, cited in Bertilsson, 1990:114), later theorists perceive professional knowledge as a means of power and control (Larson, 1977; Freidson, 2001; Abbott, 1988).

The second assumption of the traits theorists is the intrinsic ethical character of the professions, according to which professionals act for the sake of the public good and humanity. Accordingly, the professional codes of ethics not only direct the ethical behaviour of professionals but they are also an expression of their character of work. Parsons (1951a, cited in Křížová, 2006:26-30) describes three principles of the ethical role of physicians: (1) *universalism*, which requires professionals to provide their knowledge and services to whoever needs it; (2) *affective neutrality*, which requires professionals to provide their services without emotional involvement and regardless of a client's situation and background; and (3) *functional particularity*, which means that professionals should not operate outside their field of competency. The ideal of objectivity and ideal of general public service of the profession, according to Parker (1994:33), are considered as being a part of professional ideology and the duty of an individual professional to the profession itself in terms of fulfilling its wider social role. The professional attribute of ethics can also be explained in the correlation to the needs, desires, and values of human beings and the existence of the professions; in other words, the professions *"can be defined by the needs they are presumed to satisfy and by the interests they are supposed to promote"* (Hayry and Hayry, 1994:137- 139). The functions of the professional codes of ethics can be understood accordingly as the first justification of legitimate professional actions in respect of the relations between the professional service and human needs, values and interests, and then as a safeguard against harmful or immoral professional action (Hayry and Hayry, 1994).

Greenwood (1957:51-53) describes the trait of professional culture as the interaction of social roles within formal and informal inter-professional groups, consisting of particular values, norms and symbols. The author emphasises the key values of the professions, which are (1) their service for the good of society, and (2) rationality based on objective theories and methods. According to Greenwood, professional culture is also associated with appropriate behaviour of professionals related to progression in their careers, and interactions with clients. The traits theory suggests that the professionals choose job fulfilment over remuneration: Greenwood (1957:52) argues that "[t]he professional performs his services primarily for the psychic satisfactions and secondarily for the monetary compensations.

In conclusion, early sociologists considered complex formal knowledge, skills of the professions, and the altruistic character of their work, as distinct from other occupations and as a vindication of protective institutions and high status (Freidson, 1986, cited in Koehn, 1994:2); in other words, specific knowledge and professional ethics were assumed to provide legitimacy to the professions.

The traits approach to analysis of the professions was criticised in many ways. First, it is argued that it had no empirical basis as it uncritically perceived the established professions of law and medicine as prototypes of a profession (Larson, 1977), and therefore it does not explain why some traits are important to others and the causal relationships between them (Johnson, 1995). Furthermore, the traits theory does not define the quality or extent of the traits that are necessary for an occupation to be considered a true profession (Johnson, 1995). A further critique is aimed at the structural-functionalist input to the traits theory which addresses its static, functionalist and idealist standpoints of analysis (Macdonald, 1995), and the neglect of the importance of class, status and power (Wilding, 1982). Hugman (1991) concludes that the shortcomings of the traits approach lies in its preoccupation with attempts to reproduce the ideologies of the professions themselves as a part of social science research findings. Saks (1983, 1995, cited in Saks, 2010:889) similarly argues that both variants of the approach were based on assumptions rather than empirical findings, and that the notion of professional power and self-interest was somewhat ambiguous. Furthermore, Abbott (1988) asserts that traits such as expertise monopoly, special training, ideals of public service and altruism credit the profession with serving higher goals than just economic self-interest.

2.3   The Neo-Weberain Approach to the Professions

This section examines the neo-Weberian approach for analyzing the professions, one of the most significant theories in the sociology of the professions. Some authors, such as Saks (2010) and Macdonald (1995), argue that the Neo-Weberian perspective on the professions remains the most relevant and plausible. Furthermore, their argument suggests that the Weberian concept of social closure in the marketplace constitutes the key to professionalisation of occupations. This approach has been widely utilised in the Anglo-American tradition of the sociology of the professions, as it corresponds with the idea of professional autonomy in market environments, which is characteristic of the political and economic establishment of these regions (Evetts, 2003). The Neo-Weberian approach is based on the concept of competition of political and economic power and self-interest, in which an occupation aspires to reach or maintain the privileged position of a fully-fledged profession (Saks, 2010:887). The character of professional knowledge is abstract, and applicable to empirical work, but most importantly *certified* and *credentialised* (Weber, 1978, cited in Macdonald, 1995:161), and granting jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988). According to Weber (1978), in modern society credentials represent knowledge in the form of degrees and certificates, which are provided by well-recognised organisations of the educational system. Abbott (1988) argues that by specific knowledge professionals are able to obtain control of a jurisdiction in their field, which defends and possibly extends their scope of activities.

Saks (2010) and Macdonald (1995) argue that some theoretical Weberian concepts constitute key elements in most of the approaches to the professions, and therefore they consider the neo-Weberian approach as the most expedient framework. The general thrust of Weber's work is that society consists of more or less collectively conscious groups, who pursue their interests by generating ideas in competition with other groups in the economic and social orders. Weber suggests different types of reward that the groups seek, such as economic, social and power (Macdonald, 1995:27-30). Regarding the professions, the central idea of this approach is legally-based exclusionary closure which enables professions to achieve considerable advantages and positions in markets and simultaneously in the socio-political order (Saks, 2010:892). Social closure refers to a process where a particular social group strives to regulate market conditions within the competitive environment in order to acquire a favourable position. Consequently, the group gains control over access to certain market opportunities (Weber, cited in Saks,

2010). With respect to the professions, professional groups develop strategies to regulate the supply of entrants to a profession so as to safeguard its market value (Parkin, 1979, cited in Saks, 2010). The neo-Weberian approach also intrinsically assumes the involvement of the state in the formation of the professions by the setting of legal boundaries that distinguish and advance particular professions against others in the market. Saks (2010) describes aspects of a profession according to the neo-Weberian perspective as follows: (1) direct market control of specific services managed by professional associations; (2) privilege of a profession to define the needs of a customer; and (3) independence of professional discretion and work organisation. Parkin (1979, cited in Saks, 2010:894) also refers to dual closure, which is a strategy of *"lower ranking"* professions, such as nursing, which involve measures of exclusionary closure but also unionisation. This reflects the emphasis of the work of Weber on collective action of professional groups in the form of collective social mobility. Macdonald (1995:29) describes it as follows: *"Exclusion is aimed not only at the attainment and maintenance of monopoly, but also at the usurpation of the existing jurisdiction of others and at the upward social mobility of the whole group."*

In comparison with theories of the traits approach, the neo-Weberian perspective *"is intrinsically dynamic, with political power and group interests coming into play as driving forces in a fluid market environment which encompasses the state, citizens, professions and other occupations"* (Kuhlman and Saks, 2008, cited in Saks, 2010:888). The key aim of this approach is to define the factors that determine successful or failing outcomes of the profession in its endeavour to secure legally-based forms of exclusionary closure in a certain country (Macdonald, 1995).

According to Saks (2010:895), a professional group has to be recognised by the state through *"a competitive political process"* that does not necessarily take the professional knowledge base into consideration. In this view, adopting appropriate strategies is an important condition in the process of professionalisation; one of the key strategies lies in the ability of the representative of a profession to convince leading politicians of the advantage of public protection in the form of legal exclusionary closure (Saks, 1995); in other words they need to offer a suitable rationale for securing market closure in the form of apparent political objectives (Saks, 2010). Some studies, such as that of Freidson, have pointed to the tension that can arise between the professions and working organisations because the assumed autonomy of professionals can conflict with organisational

management. Particularly in bureaucratic settings professional self-interest can be subordinated to public interest (Freidson, 2001).

One of the most influential works in the sociology of the professions comes from Larson (1977), who came up with the concept of a *professional project,* a model explaining the process of the emergence of professional groups, with emphasis on the aspects of special knowledge and the existence of free markets. Her arguments clearly resonate with Weber's perspectives on social stratification and the significance of expertise and property (Macdonald, 1995:9).

"Without a relatively secure market the new pattern of mobility inaugurated by the nineteenth-century professions would have been meaningless. ... that this relation was reciprocal: the success of the professional mobility project depended on the existence of a stable market; but also, in the process of securing a market, the professions variously incorporated ideological supports connected with the 'antimarket' structures of stratification." (Larson, 1977:66)

The professional project refers to a consistent course of action undertaken by a professional group, although it is not a deliberate process of all the members. It aims to dominate the market in 'knowledge-based services' through a 'regulative bargain' with state (Cooper et al., 1988, cited in Macdonald, 1995). Macdonald (1995:31) encapsulates the professional project as an endeavour of a professional group in the economic order to achieve the legal closure and monopolisation of the market through acquisition of knowledge and education, which earns them social status. Wenocur and Reisch (1989:4) added that the professions organise themselves into specialised groups, such as professional associations and schools, and around specialised journals, which pursue their own institutional lives. Additionally, they confirm that the main purpose of the professions is to *"regulate the service commodity through which the members of the occupation earn their livelihoods."*

The other significant study of the professions is Freidson's (1970) work on the medical profession in the United States and Britain, in which he examines the dominance of the profession over other occupations and its autonomy to prevent interference and supervision from outside. He argues that medical people's professional autonomy derives from their influence over elites, the state and the public, until they achieve a position of social

prestige; and also the cognitive and normative aspects of the professions enable them to define the boundaries of their domains, and simultaneously establish an ideology as a universal validity based on their technical expertise (Macdonald, 1995; Freidson, 1970, 2001). In his last work, Freidson (2001) describes professionalism as the third logic of the organisation of work, which can be considered as an alternative to the free market and rational-legal bureaucracy. Freidson (2001:9) defines professionalism as *"an ideal type where the organisation of, and control over work is realized by the occupation instead of by the market or by an hierarchy",* and he argues that the recent direction of policy towards enforcing competition in a free market and efficiency in skilled management of organisations has a significant weakening impact on the position of the professions, particularly in the United States. Wenocur and Reisch (1989) describe the professions as quasi-market corporate enterprises where professionals hold a considerable degree of control over the production, distribution, and consumption of a service commodity. According to Freidson, professionalism is the most convenient form of organisation of work in cases where professional discretion derived from special knowledge operates with problems of high uncertainties. Professional discretion is based on public or clients' trust, and is enabled by low regulation. The monopoly of knowledge (Larson, 1977) intrinsically implies the condition of trust in the professions; trust between professionals and clients, but also trust of the general public in professionals (Svensson, 2006).

Freidson (1986:90) claims that semi-professions are those occupations which do not have sufficient cognitive control over jurisdiction or public discourse about their work. He also distinguishes three types of members within a profession: practitioners, administrators and teachers-researchers, who exercise different professional powers over services and production. Moreover, each group has a certain view *"on the relevance and use of the profession's formal knowledge"* (Freidson, 1986:xiii). Professional knowledge is transformed and modified according to a group's purpose and perspective in areas of front-line practice, management policies, and academia. Academics are concerned with formal knowledge criteria and the intellectual side of practice, while administrators are keen to organise practice by rules and regulations consistent with the agency purpose, and practitioners create a guiding framework based on professional experience of unique practice situations. Academics and administrators aim to control the performance of practitioners, and it depends on which group possesses more power to define the professional knowledge according to its view (Freidson 1986).

Drawing on Larson's work, Wenocur and Reisch (1989:7-18) in their political-economic analysis of the professions summarised the tasks of the occupations to form a professional enterprise as follows:

Economic tasks:

    1. Create a marketable commodity (service).

    2. Ensure sufficient production of the service through training and standardised control of quality.

    3. Acquire control of organisation for distribution and sales.

    4. Create a consumer market or clientele for its services.

    5. Establish patterns of client demand, consumption, and distribution.

    6. Ensure the ability to attract producers.

Political tasks:

    1. Induce individuals or groups of potential providers and resource holders to invest in developing and producing the services.

    2. Define boundaries of enterprise in order to include or exclude members.

    3. Establish the domain of the enterprise by overcoming competitors for resources and markets.

    4. Negotiate favourable agreements in order to protect investments.

    5. Foster the social status of the members of the enterprise and their political connections.

Ideological tasks:

    1. Convince members of the enterprise that they have a shared mission.

    2. Convince legitimating bodies, including the political elite, that the enterprise should be sanctioned.

    3. Convince the public of its quality and of the necessity for the services.

    4. Establish ideological justification and the ability to communicate it.

The tasks in *italics* particularly refer to variables relevant to the professions working in social contexts and providing an "*unusual type of commodity to be marketed"*, such as the social work profession (Wenocur and Reisch, 1989:7-18). According to the authors, the professions aim to secure a broad base of clientele, and market investments. In addition, an individual approach to work, and having a large heterogeneous group of clients, increases

the power of the professions. The professions also attract potential new members in order to invest their resources in training; the promised rewards include social status, high income, career security, autonomy and mission. Ideological justification depends on connections to influential people in the political and public spheres, and establishing convincing accounts of the profession's merit through formal and informal vehicles of communication.

The Anglo-American tradition of the sociology of the professions more or less revolves around Weber's notion of market closure. It suggests that the professions are not an ultimate result of modern labour division; rather, it is a process of competing interests between an occupational group, the state, other occupational groups, and the public, for social and economic rewards and status. The professional project, Larsons explains, utilises the specialised knowledge, professional training and ideology as vehicles for capturing market monopoly and professional autonomy. This is achieved through legal procedures and political influence.

2.4   *The Neo-institutionalist Approach to the Professions*

It has been noted above that the Anglo-American approach to analysing professions has limited applicability in other European countries. There has been a division between the sociological studies of the professions based on the different socio-economical and cultural institutions in Anglo-American and European countries. According to Evetts (2003: 398), the Anglo-American approach focuses on occupational closure and market shelters when professionals seek control over the working conditions, whereas the continental sociologists' approach conceives the professions in much broader perspectives of occupational identity, professional training and expertise, and employment in the public sector (Collins, 1990, cited in Evetts, 2003). The main distinction lies in the institutional embeddedness of the professions and subsequent strategies of professionalisation, which refer to market self-organisation and 'organisation from within' in the Anglo-American countries, and an elite bureaucratic hierarchy in the public sector dependent on professionalisation 'from above' in European countries (BcClelland, 1990, cited in Evetts, 2003; Burrage and Torstednahl, 1990). Le Bianic (2003:1) describes the conditions of European continental professions as those with '*high degree of stateness*' (Heidenheimer, 1989, cited in Le Bianic, 2003), meaning that the states act as the creators of the professions and their jurisdictions with the aim of controlling most aspects of social life.

The states in European countries *"display an endless ability to create professional work"* (Abbott, 1988, cited in Le Bianic, 2003) and have a large degree of control over the professions in the process of their institutionalisation. In contrast, the state in Anglo-American countries plays a rather more passive role in the formation of the professions, with limited intervention restricted to legal protection. The state in countries with a low degree of stateness assumes the position of a protector of the professions, whilst the state in countries with a high degree of stateness is the main initiator of the professions (Le Bianic, 2003).

Le Bianic underlines the limitation of the neo-Weberian approach in its perspective on the definition of the state as a mere *"legitimating instance"* (p. 5). Freidson (2001) views the state's role in the formation of the professions as creating a favourable political and institutional environment, which supports the position of professionals in the market. In this perspective, liberal states favour professionalism whereas highly centralised states obstruct it. According to Le Bianic, the neo-Weberian approach fails to recognise the boundaries of continental states imposed on the professions and their capacity to organise themselves. In addressing the 'black box' of the state, as he calls it, the neo-institutionalist approach (state-centered approach) views states as *"polymorphic actors, relatively impervious to the demands of the civil society and social groups"* (Le Bianic, 2003:6). Le Bianic, in his analysis of the professionalisation psychology in France, suggests that the professions acquire social prestige through (1) a cognitive community based on scientific discourse, prevalent in the private sector, and (2) a status community securing shelters within state bureaucracies through successful alliances made with a particular segment of the state. The relationship between these two communities in a profession may be conflicting in character and cause fragmentation within a profession. In addition, Le Bianic (2003:13) argues that the process of internationalisation, in which the professions organise themselves beyond the nation-state, favours the cognitive communities grounded in expert knowledge rather than status communities which derive their legitimacy from their privileged relations with the state.

The paramount role of the state for the professions in European countries is examined also by Krause (1996), who in his comparative study of the state, professions and capitalist relations in five countries demonstrated that wider social-political environments are important determinants of professionalisation. Specific national historical developments significantly determine the character of professional trajectories, such as the prevailing

historical pattern in the United States of capitalism playing the dominant role in the political economy, the central role of the state in France, the private ownership central to the professions in Britain, and the remaining pattern of partocracy in Italy (Krause, 1996:281). However, Krause found that there is a common feature of capitalist values and rationale being adopted by the professions in all five countries he studied, to such an extent that they are becoming 'the middle-level employees of capitalism' (Weber, 1978, cited in Krause, 1996). Krause, although categorised as a neo-institutionalist theorist by Le Bianic, confirms Weber's idea about the 'long-term rationalisation process' of the state that caused the diverting of guilds' (or professions') control over self-governance into the hands of the state.

In a similar comparative analysis, Macdonald (1995), using Larson's professional project framework, points to the importance of cultural context of professionalisation and the central role of the state, particularly in France and Germany, in as much as he concludes that the concept of the professional project loses its plausibility in highly centralised countries. In this respect, he suggests that the professional project is more likely to be successful in constitutions in pluralistic and decentralised establishments where the civil society penetrates the state and the political groups delegate some important functions to other groups in society (Macdonald, 1995:94-96). On the other hand, in Germany and France the domination of the state and its responsibility for public control prevents the autonomous development of the professional project, and maintains the knowledge-based services within its sphere of influence. Therefore the professional groups use the state structures and its agencies, such as universities, for their establishment and social closure in accordance with the concept of the professionalisation 'from above' (Macdonald, 1995:98). In a similar way, Muzio and Kirpatrick (2011:391-392) describe the 'Continental mode' of the professions as one in which the professions pursue their interest in status and power through the state by means of credentials acquisition from institutions of higher education and the attainment of high offices.

Krause (1991:5-17), in his attempt to theoretically underpin the development of the professions in communist countries in the late 1980s in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, found that the professions were substantially incorporated into the state to such an extent that the state controlled their education and licensing, employed them, organised their associations, and determined their professional and political interests. State-socialist regimes controlled all economic activities by central planning through extensive party-state

administration including professional self-regulation.

Nevertheless, the extent of the state control varied in different countries, over time and for particular professions. The author (Krause, 1991:4) suggested a conceptual continuum of profession-state relationship, ranging from the 'private' profession with limited state intervention in the Anglo-American countries, to the 'state-involved' professions in Western Europe, and to the 'state-located and state-employed' professions in socialist Eastern Europe. As Kennedy and Sadkowski (1991:170) noted, the Soviet-type state controlled the conditions of professional practice, reproduction and distribution, and therefore the professional project could only confront the state power directly. One of their conclusions was that the state-profession relationship was a subject of constant change, where the role and position of the Communist party was the key variable (Kennedy and Sadkowski, 1991:234), since working for the state meant working for one political Communist party, when party membership was often a prerequisite. The autonomy of work in state services depended on the political will as well as academic activity, where senior positions were primarily conditioned by Communist party membership. However, the weakening power of the party in the 1980s led to the state monopoly giving away some functions and space for the professions in a way that is described by Buchner-Jeziorska and Evetts (1997) in their study.

A limited amount of literature exists on the professions in democratic Eastern Europe or post-communist countries, after the fall of highly centralised regimes. Buchner-Jeziorska and Evetts (1997) analysed professionalisation in Poland in the period of transition from centralised to market economy. They focus on aspects of regulation of the professions (higher education, remuneration, registration and licensing, accreditation, professional career development and self-governance) in four periods from real socialism until the present, and look at how the regulation and control over the professions is shared between the state, the market and professional associations over time. The authors describe how the state in real socialism strictly regulated and controlled all professional activities as it defined the role and position of a profession within society, and through the educational system controlled student enrolments and curricula. The professional associations represented a part of the state establishment, and the professions were bound to public services; private service was not allowed until the late 1980s. This has gradually changed with the introduction of democratic and free market principles, by which the professional associations and the market have gained most of the influence over professional regulation.

Withdrawal of the state from the control and funding of significant parts of public service led to deregulation and privatization. Consequently, the professional associations gained control over the registration, accreditation and curriculum, while market forces started influencing the professional career development, remuneration and number of students. However, the authors noted that a lack of capacity for self-governance among the professions has been extensively substituted by market forces, and subsequently there has been significant division between professional members in the public and private sectors.

The European tradition of the sociology of the professions emphasises two important aspects of professionalisation, which are the embeddeness of the professions in the state structure and the cultural conditionality of the process. According to Le Bianic, the professions gain social and economic status not only through their expertise but also through relationships with various state agencies and by taking positions in the bureaucratic apparatus. The literature on professionalism in communist countries suggests that professional autonomy can be completely absorbed by the political agenda, and that free market principles can be substituted by the logic of political ideology.

The main contribution of the sociology of the professions from Continental Europe is the revision of the relationship between the state and the professions. Two general conclusions can be drawn from the literature reviewed. First, as suggested by the neo-institutional approach, the state does not represent a single object with obvious political functions and economic aims, but instead is made up of many institutions, organisations, procedures and perspectives of which professions are parts as active authorities. Secondly, the political constitution of the state fundamentally determines the relationship of the professions and market, and that is not only in terms of market shelters. In their studies, Kraus and Buchner-Jeziorska and Evetts (1997) illustrated how political ideology influences the establishment of markets defined by different levels of state control and intervention, and how this essentially affects the sphere of influence and manoeuvre of the professions.

The tradition of Continental Europe does not necessarily conflict with the claims of Anglo-American sociology of the professions. In fact, it may be considered as complementary, as it examines the professionalisation of occupations in countries which are politically and culturally different from the political, economic and social systems of the Anglo-American region.

2.5   Causal Stories

Agenda-setting research focuses on the process in which issues in the media are transferred to the public agenda (McCombs, 2005). Although the theoretical approach is primarily related to the study of communication and journalism, it has also been applied to analysis of public policy-making processes (Birkland, 2007). The general argument is that the processes of defining problems, solutions and alternative issues are central to decision-making and policy-making in the public sphere, in which various interest groups compete to draw attention to their definitions (Birkland, 2007). Schatschneider (1975) asserts that politics depends on the way in which various interest groups and political parties gain the dominant position in a large number of possible conflicts. "*Conflicts that dominate become the issues that engage the attention of political elites and thereby attain agenda status*" (Eustis, 2000:11).

The authors stress that problems are socially constructed, and therefore changing the definition of a problem requires a new definition of a solution and policy. Stone (1989, 1997) concentrates on the crucial process of problem definition, and claims that policy-making is not a matter of rational steps, but a matter of representation instead. In this perspective, interest groups and government agencies define issues and the related course of action strategically to their advantage. Stone describes political reasoning as strategic representation that determines the dynamics of policy agenda setting. *"It* [political reasoning] *seeks to evoke values and emotions by presenting something as good or evil, innocent or guilty, responsible or not, possible or impossible, strong or weak, right or wrong"* (Stone, 1989:379). According to Stone (1989:282), issues do not have inherent quality, but political actors ascribe significance to them according to their interests. Therefore, policies are made not upon the causal model supported by science but political stories that describe harm and difficulties, which need to be addressed by governmental actions. The causal idea refers to defining issues by image-making, in which cause, blame and responsibility are attributed (Stone, 1989:382). The typology of causal stories created by Stone demonstrates the process of controlling interpretations and images of difficulties. Causal stories have empirical and moral dimensions based on harm and blame through which "[they] *move situations intellectually from the realm of fate to the realm of human agency"* (Stone, 1989:283). Stone created four categories of causal stories: mechanical causes, accidental causes, intentional causes, and inadvertent causes.

Stone created a typology of causal stories that are used in the process of transforming difficulties and matters into political problems. The underlying assumption is generated from the agenda-setting theory arguing that defining a problem of public concern is a matter of image-making and attribution of *cause*, *blame* and *responsibility.* Interest groups compose (causal) stories through which they portray harm and problems caused by the actions of other groups, in order to be delegated by the government authorities to prevent the harm. Causality in the social world can be defined as *"a sequence of events by which one thing leads to another"*, which originated with a mental decision. Stone maintains that in politics the distinctions between actions with purpose or motivation and without, and between intended and unintended consequences, are crucial for creating causal stories. The types of causal stories are described in Figure 2 below.

Figure 1 Types of Causal Theories (Stone, 1989:285)

Consequences

		Intended	Unintended
Actions	Unguided	MECHANICAL CAUSE Intervening agent Machines Brainwashed people	ACCIDENTAL CAUSE Nature, weather Machines that run amok
	Purposeful	INTENTIONAL CAUSE Assault, oppression Conspiracies that work Programs that work	INADVERTENT CAUSE Intervening conditions Unforeseen side effects Neglect Carelessness Omission

Stone's model defines four main causal narratives prevalent in the policy-making process: *accidental*, *mechanical*, *inadvertent* and *intentional*. These causes are presented by actors in order to propagate their story so that it is seen as *"caused by human actions and amenable to human intervention"* (Stone, 1989:281).

Stone (1989) argues that accidental and intentional narratives are particularly clear and influential, whereas mechanical and inadvertent causal stories have a weak position. Accidental narratives tell a story of *unguided* actions resulting in *unintended* outcomes, and *"include natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, droughts and hurricanes"*

(Stone, 1989:284). She argues that accidental narratives may be particularly attractive to actors seeking to avoid or deflect blame for a policy problem, as they do not construct a causal story that frames a problem as a result of human actions or something amenable to redress. Instead, negative consequences are framed as inevitable or uncontrollable, and the framers argue that, bereft of human guidance, there is no one to blame. Stone notes that problems framed by the accidental narrative, such as natural disasters, are often the subject of wide governmental intervention, which is itself often accompanied by debate focused on *"how human action contributes to accident or exacerbates its effects"* (Stone, 1989:284).

Intentional cause refers to an action that was intentionally undertaken by individuals or a group with the aim of results that occurred. This type of story reveals oppressors and victims of a certain event, in which good or bad consequences were deliberate and even concealed (Stone, 1989:285).

Inadvertent causes leading to unintended consequences are used in stories that ascribe harmful side effects to deliberate human action, some of which include carelessness. According to Stone, inadvertent causal stories are especially common in social policy when *"people do not understand the harmful consequences of their willful actions"* (Stone, 1989:286). The author describes these inadvertent stories as *liberal*, according to which victims are blamed for their irresponsible attitude, compared to *conservative* intentional versions of stories in which victims deliberately harm themselves.

Stories with mechanical causes suggest that intended consequences were caused by unguided action. Such actions are usually carried out because of the will of other people, such as the actions of people who were systematically brainwashed (Stone, 1989:288).

Stone (1989:288) also argues that in cases of complex systems not just a single event can be used as the cause, but rather a composition of causes is likely to be attributed. She defines three types of these complex causes: (1) complex systems in which failure is caused by many components and people, (2) institutional complex causes that involve *"a web of large long-standing organizations with ingrained patterns of behavior",* and (3) historical or structural causes that assume that social behaviour and institutions tend to reproduce themselves.

Furthemore, Birkland (2007:63-75) describes how definitions of issues move through the levels of the agenda within the public policy frame. Alternatives of problems and possible

policy changes are formed in the systematic agenda embedded in the larger agenda universe determined by the political and social systems of a particular society. From the systematic agenda definitions upgrade to the institutional agenda, where interest groups seek to block other alternative definitions in order to reach the decision-making agenda. Interest groups and other political actors possess dissimilar powers and employ various strategies to force their definition through the levels of agenda and disqualify the definitions of others.

Birkland (2007) describes the *agenda* of the public policy sphere as a collection of problems and understanding of their causes pursued at all governmental levels. However, due to limited time and resources, only a limited number of issues and solutions is approved on the systematic and institutional agendas and reaches the decision agenda at the center of policy-making. Successful interest groups have developed various ways either to win political support or prevent other groups from presenting their alternative definition of problems.

Stone's approach to the analysis of the dynamics in policy-making is considered useful with respect to the observation of the relationships between different professions or even inter-professional groups such as academia or practitioners. It is suggested that the causal story theory can complement the macro-analysis of the sociology of the profession, offering a deeper insight into intra- and inter-professional relations and strategies of professionalisation. Findings about causal stories of inter-professional groups that are directly or indirectly involved in the policy-making of a new child protection system show the groups' positions, professional aims and ways of their pursuance.

So far, only general theories of the professions have been reviewed, so the next section focuses more specifically on social work, the sociology of the profession, and the key factors that determine the professionalisation of social work.

2.6   Social Work in the Sociology of the Professions

The primary focus of the sociology of the professions has been aimed at well-established professions such as medicine and law, particularly in the United States and Britain. Addison in 1711 referred to *"the three great professions of divinity, law and physic"* (Carr-Saunders 1928, cited in Abbott and Meerabeau, 1998:2): fully-fledged professions

that were regarded as the ideal type of profession, and used as subjects of analysis for the traits approach later. According to traits theories, established professions have a monopolization of particular forms of expertise, they maintain social boundaries through control over entrance to qualification and training, and they work for the sake of public interest and altruism. Professional autonomy is legitimated through self-controlling mechanisms, which create advantages in the labour market and secure higher status. However, as Abbott and Meerabeau (1998:3) argue, *"almost no occupation calling itself a 'profession' can meet all of these criteria".*

Carr-Saunders (1955, cited in Abbotts, 1998:3) suggested four types of professions according to their level of knowledge and skills: (1) the established professions such as medicine, which are based on theoretical study and a moral code, (2) the new professions such as engineering and sciences, which are based on fundamental studies, (3) the semi-professions such as nursing, midwifery or social work, which are based on technical skills, and (4) would-be professions such as hospital managers. According to Etzioni (1969) the semi-professions have a shorter period of training, a less specialized body of knowledge, less control over their work, and a lower status. With respect to social work, Etzioni argued that it lacked the necessary scientific knowledge base as practitioners drew more on skills than knowledge, and it had not achieved organisational independence. Social work and caring professions in general were seen to lack the technical and abstract knowledge as they are based on interpersonal and domestic skills. According to Phillips and Taylor (1980, cited in Hugman, 1991:16), it is the social status of these skills that are perceived as 'women's work', which causes the devaluation of social work and which underpins the semi-professional concept. Social work was also identified as a bureau-profession by Parry and Parry (in Parry et al., 1980) due to its bureaucratic mode of organisation developed in the departments of state provision. According to the authors, its formation within the bureaucratic apparatus has actually secured a chance to create a unified social work profession. Clarke (1993:13-15) also refers to social work as a special type of bureaucratic profession, which is based on the creation of distinctive knowledge and skills specific to the complex administrative structures of national and local government departments.

Rogowski (2010:30) traced the beginning of professional social work in the United Kingdom to the middle of 19th century, when the Charity Organisation Society, with Octavia Hill in a leading position, applied a systematic approach, and activities based on traditional Christian values of the individual and the family, in order to help poor and

vulnerable people. Already in 1915 the famous speech *"Is Social Work a Profession?"* (Flexner, 2001), given by Abraham Flexner at a social work conference in the USA, raised doubts about the social work knowledge base and its potential as a profession. He proclaimed that a social worker *"was not a professional agent so much as the mediator invoking this or that professional agency"* (Flexner, 1915, cited in Morris, 2008:41). Morris (2008) in her analysis of Flexner's speech concluded that it "*took on a myth-like character"* (Austin, 1983, cited in Morris, 2008:48) as "*if it is the birth of social work's consciousness"* when asking "*whether it has yet become a full-fledged profession"* (Morris, 2008:48). Hugman (2009:1140) argues that Flexner initiated social work's preoccupation with the urgent search for its own knowledge and skill base that would yield social work the status of a *"true"* profession. As a consequence, social work strived to become *"scientific"*, as it was believed that scientific commitment can secure a position within the professions (Germain, 1970, cited in Payne, 2006:146).

The main 'shortcomings' of social work are discussed in detail below: these are social work occupational knowledge, its bureaucratic establishment in the state administration, and weak professional associations. In addition, the position of social work in the market is reviewed as it represents the key concept of neo-Weberian approach; and finally, the relationship between social policy-making and the social work profession is discussed.

2.6.1 Social Work Knowledge

*"The decline of moral theories of poverty and the advent of trained and paid workers resulted in a demand for a systematic body of knowledge on which social work practice could be based - a basis for **professional** social work.*" (Abbott and Meerabeau, 1998:35)

Simultaneously social work aimed to establish its training and also sought to lengthen its training programs in order to prove the importance of professional expertise and lengthy education for producing qualified professionals (Roth, 1974:7). Even after a century of social work professionalisation, the matter of social work training is unresolved. For example, with respect to current changes in British social work education, Lymbery (2009:903) argues that the extension of the basic length of qualifying education, and the increase in the academic content of courses, promise a bright future for social work development.

The issue of social work knowledge stems from several factors: (1) there is no clear consensus about the role and purpose of social work (Aldridge, 1996; Lymbery, 2001); (2) the practical character of the work is situated in uncertain and complex social situations of individuals and groups (Munro, 2011); and (3) the issue of social work's own theoretical base needs to be addressed (Abbott and Meerabeau, 1998).

The mission of social work started with the idea that educated people should provide poor people with an opportunity to improve their lives through education and leadership based on Christian philanthropy (Lymbery, 2001:370). However, the general mission of social work varies in accordance with time and place, and continuously revolves around the two inherent dilemmas of social work - whether to aim at changes in the individual lives of clients or changes in social structures of oppression and inequality, and whether to achieve the transformation through means of support and assistance or control and supervision (van der Laan, 1998). Gray and Webb (2010:xxvii) describe the dilemma of two conflicting perspectives: one perceives social work as a mechanism of social change, well-being and positive problem-solving interventions, whereas the other perspective sees social work as an institution of social control of normative moral, ideological and political regimes. As Gibeman (1995, cited in Gibeman, 1999:299) notes, the socio-political and economic environments have always influenced the objectives, methods and standards of the social work profession; however, the relationship is two-sided, thus the mission of the profession and even the character of social work professionals *"also serve to expand or contract what social workers do"*.

It is a long-term requirement for social work practitioners and academics particularly to reflect, to define, and to redefine the aims and objectives of the social work profession (Hamilton, 1974; Haynes and Whites, 1998; Gibelman, 1999; Lymbery, 2001; Hugman, 2009; Gray and Webb, 2010; Munro, 2011), and to re-evaluate professional expertise accordingly. Aldridge (1996:181) even claims that the inability of social workers to agree on their values, aims and methods is the main reason for social work's failure to professionalise.

In addition, social work as an academic discipline builds extensively on other social science fields of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, law, social psychology and pedagogy; and the search for its own theoretical base has been considered a requisite and a

problematic matter. Dominelli (1997:156) argues that although social work has identified its own professional field and permeated its own areas of expertise, it still *"continues struggling to establish its status as a discipline with a specific remit*." Dominelli compares the difficult endeavour of social work to achieve an academic establishment to that of sociology in the past. Some authors (Sibeon, 1991; and Davies, 1991, cited in Dominelli, 1997) argue that it rather collects theories from other disciplines and applies these to its own purposes.

As explained above, theorising about social work knowledge has not been an enterprise without issues. Some authors argue that the theoretical underpinning and development of social work knowledge are crucial for its professionalisation, whereas others consider the practical skills as the core of the social work profession and contest the relevance of high educational training for social workers. Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century *"the 'founding mothers' of social work sought to secure a sound 'scientific' base for the profession - an aspiration requiring high quality university-based specific training"* (Walton, 1975, cited in Dominelli, 1997:152); while in the late 1960s the Marxist radical social work movement initiated an anti-professionalism discourse in which they rejected professional knowledge, recognition and economic reward on the grounds of these being elitist and unethical (Healy and Meagher, 2004:249). Their argument was that the professionalisation of social work should be abandoned due to its potential affinity with dominant classes and alienation from disadvantaged groups (Hugman, 1998, in Abbott and Meerabeau, 1998:184). Roth (1974:7) commented that *"the relationship of this training to social work practice has never been demonstrated"*. This dilemma of theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the social work profession persists, and often it takes the form of a division within the profession between social work practitioners and social work academia. Nevertheless, most authors agree that a core body of distinctive knowledge is essential to the social work profession, and that it should strive for it. Aldridge (1996:177) refers to this point as follows: "... *it is time for social workers to abandon their reluctance to claim distinctive expertise and set about developing a more confident set of intellectual skills and thus an effective voice."*

2.6.2   *Social Work and Bureaucracy*

Bureaucracy according to Weber (1947, cited in Poggi, 2006; Farell and Morris, 2003) is a vehicle of modern societies that enables the effective organisation of large numbers of

people; bureaucracy should be considered a model 'capable of efficiency' rather than being efficient per se. Weber saw bureaucracy as administrative arrangements of the state in which professions or occupations are those involved in the development of modern politics and administration (Poggi, 2006). The recognised limitations of bureaucracy refer to the tendency of repetition and lack of creativity, the influence of informal networks in formal structures (Blau, 1953, cited in Farrell and Morris, 2003), and the tension between bureaucracy and democratic accountability (Michels, 1967, cited in Farrell and Morris, 2003).

The traditional approach to the professions argues that the professions have authority and autonomy in terms of control over their work conditions, and thus social work was described as a bureau-profession by Parry and Parry (1979, cited in Lymbery, 2001:376), and as a state-mediated profession by Johnson (1972, cited in Lymbery, 2001), due to the limits in professional autonomy resulting from state intervention. In this view, the relationships between practitioners and clients, as well as clients' needs, are defined by the state authority, and also autonomous decision-making of professionals is circumscribed by bureaucratic hierarchy. Scot (1969, cited in Hamilton, 1974:336) argues that social workers are different from 'professionals' because their work is subject to routine hierarchical supervision. Derber (1983, cited in Lymbery, 2001) proposed that the professions should govern themselves in two ways: (1) ideologically when they have the authority to define the ends of their provided services, and (2) technically when they are in control over their methods of work. Jamous and Peloille (1970, cited in Lymbery, 2001) further elaborates this idea and claims that the professions maintain a balance between the procedural aspects of work and professional discretion. In the case of social work, the bureaucratic embeddedness, competence approach, and emphasis on education, move the profession towards technicality and curtail the scope of the professional judgment (Yelloly, 1995, cited in Lymbery, 2001; Dominelli, 1996; Munro, 2011).

This resembles Max Weber's idea of organisational rationality (Popple, 1985:570), which claims that routine work that can be externally supervised should rationally take the form of bureaucratic organisation, whereas non-routine work and decision-making that can be scrutinised only internally is best organised in the manner of professional work. The bureaucracy is a system that aims to provide services in accordance with social, political and personal clarity and neutrality, and is administrated through a set of rules. Conversely, professionalism offers a service that is flexible and based on expert judgment. Social

workers, as 'bureau-professionals', are organised into a hierarchical pyramid of responsibilities within which they have certain discretion in their work. They operate within the state bureaucratic settings but should have some discretion in the delivery of the services. The most important aspect of working in a bureaucratic agency is that professionals are accountable to a group of people higher up in the hierarchy, who are neither a peer group nor clients (Hugman, 1998:185). The principal dilemma of a social work professional-organisational relationship lies within the acceptance of power and goals of the agency they work for (state welfare, charity, municipal services), which can be in contradiction to the ideology and mission of the profession. In other words, the profession becomes allied with social control rather than with oppressed people or people in need (Payne, 2006:106-111). According to Jones (1997, cited in Lymbery, 2001:381), the relationship between the state and social work at the end of the 20th century can be characterised as a bargain, where social work agrees to perform coercive statutory functions under the condition of abandoning its involvement in discussions about inequality and injustice.

In some countries, social work is predominantly a state activity, primarily funded from the central government and organised through structures of local authorities. According to Dominelli (1997:115-150), in these conditions practitioners have little ability to define the remits of social work and their interests as this is strongly influenced by the political process. Moreover, social workers' access to, and allocation of, resources is also problematic due to their employment conditions in state welfare. Therefore the only way of pursuing their own interests, decision-making and control over their work, is through formal structures such as trade unions, professional associations, line managers, and by controlling the training of qualifying practitioners. Professions such as medicine or law have developed powerful organisational structures in the form of professional associations, which enable them to define its ideology and values and to have control over the profession's activities and entry into its ranks. In this way, they produce the means of social control internal to the profession, and direct their training and socialisation process.

In the West, professional social work emerged from the charitable and religious organisations, and was significantly incorporated into state welfare institutions after the Second World War. The 1950s and 1960s are considered to be the golden age for welfare professionalism, when social work professionals largely dominated control over work in the social services without excessive interference from outside authorities (Foster and

Wilding, 2000). Clarke (1998:236) concludes that bureau-professions became a powerful force in organisational and ideological terms in the post-war welfare states. The welfare state was a 'professional state' (Alaszewski, 1995); while Dominelli (1997) argues that this initial *'statisation'* of social work resulted in substantial managerial control over professional tasks and performance.

In the 1970s and 1980s significant criticism and reconsideration of the positions and legitimacy of professionals was raised against the professions, based on cases of misuse of professional power, neglect, irresponsibility and planning debacles (Dominelli, 1997), which led to the introduction of countermeasures and surveillance. The core idea of New Right politics of that time was to manage social services economically, and managerialism was considered as the correct method of achieving a more effective welfare system (Payne, 2006:111). In the 1980s and 1990s social work witnessed increasing proceduralisation (Banks, 1998:213), bureaucratisation (Howe, 1992). The introduction of competency-based training instead of professional-style education resulted in a decrease in professional autonomy and influence, according to Foster and Wilding (2000).

Many authors have discussed the impact of managerialism on the caring professions. Hugman (1998) claims that social workers are losing their autonomy and are being re-defined as skilled workers. Lymbery (2001:378) concludes that *"there has been a shift in power from social work practitioners to managerial elite."* Dominelli (1996, 1997) argues that managerialism has led to fragmentation and a curtailment of professional work, has reduced the ability of social workers to practise self-organization, has restricted practice innovations, and has caused the proletarisation of professional work. On the other hand, Causer and Exworthy (1999) do not agree with the perspective of a clear-cut division between managers and professionals or managerial and rank-and-file professionals. They suggest that managerial assets should be considered as career advancement within the professions when the essential nature of the work becomes a combination of both elements.

Another aspect of change in the organisation of professional work paramount to the strategy of managerialism has been the implementation of market principles into welfare service systems. Initially in welfare states professionals had the confidence of public citizens and were entrusted with the just and efficient allocation of public resources (Alaszewski, 1995). Parsons (1951, cited in Alaszewski, 1995) argued that the 'collective-orientation' of professionals differentiates them from entrepreneurs and ensures effective

development in the organisation of the economy. Privatisation and marketisation of public services were introduced after the economic crisis in the 1980s in Western countries, when the main goal was to reduce public ownership and expenditure, and to introduce competition into service provision (Payne, 2006:119), based on neo-liberal and economic perspectives that people are rationally- and economically-thinking individuals and that professionals' management of expenditure is uneconomical. According to this view, the freedom of professionals to allocate funds with little accountability was seen as problematic in respect of efficiency and social justice (Alaszewski, 1995). Therefore market mechanisms were established also in the social services, in order to reduce costs by competition in markets or quasi-markets (Payne, 2006).

The mixed economy of social care was established on several principles, such as a clear delineation of service requirements between tenders and contractors, and the encouragement of not-for-profit sector development. In the case of the Children Act 1989 in the UK, the policy strived to make field social workers care managers in charge of tailored service packages. According to the policy, social workers should be advocates for clients and accountable to them; however, as the author suggests, in practice they have greater accountability to management (Alaszewski, 1995). On the other hand, Hudson (1992, cited in Aldridge, 1996) observed that the high degree of regulation of quasi-markets prevented the system from resembling genuine market principles. Aldridge adds that the idea of freedom of purchase is hardly compatible with centralised governmental budgets, the increasing volume of statutory obligations, and the advantaged position of larger voluntary organizations.

Healy and Meagher (2004:244-250) define the changes in the organisation and management of professional social work as 'de-professionalisation', which comprehensively describes the impacts of the privatisation, marketisation and managerism on the social work profession. De-professionalisation refers to fragmentation and routinisation of social work, loss of creativity and discretion in front-line work, but also a decline in professional categories of social service employment in terms of disintegration of professional work into competencies and indicators, and underemployment of professional social workers who work in para-professional positions.

On the other hand, Farrell and Morris (2003:138) suggest a distinction between professional autonomy and managerial autonomy of professionals, where the former refers

to control over 'front line' work, and the latter to financial and organisational decisions. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald and Ferlies' (2000:733) research confirms that professionals are not passive subjects of policy interventions, but active players who respond correspondingly in order to adapt to new circumstances.

Lipsky (1980) introduces the theory of street level bureaucrats, through which he demonstrates the process of policy implementation in public administration by those serving and working with members of the public and clients, such as social workers. He suggests that street-level bureaucrats permanently encounter dilemmas stemming from the responsibility for clients' needs and for policy requirements, and hence develop 'coping' strategies such as rationing resources, screening and 'routinising' clients. By these strategies they limit the demands on their time and resources; but they also modify the concepts of their work and clients in order to approximate the policy goals with their resources and accomplishments. This is considered as an indirect form of policy implementation. According to Lipsky (1980), ideally street-level bureaucrats create working environments of 'mass processing', in which they can work with the public fairly, appropriately and effectively. However, it is also the case that they acquiesce to pressure and resort to favoritism, stereotyping, and routinising; strategies that instead serve private or agency purposes (Lipsky, 2010). He assumes that street-level bureaucrats want to help the public (according to their professional ethos), but in the face of vague policy objectives, high caseloads and insufficient resources, they are forced to adapt and work in corrupted services. Lipsky (1980) sees the central issue as dilemmas of street-level bureaucrats in ill-defined and unrealistic organisational goals, and limitations of management control. Front-line workers actually develop strategies to curtail management supervision by controlling the sharing of information and by exploitation of management's reliance on their decision to continue service provision. They interpret policy and organisational regulations, which are often contradictory, according to their work tasks, and sometimes they also have to deal with situations in which no policies have yet been applied. Lipsky emphasises the durability of these coping mechanisms: street-level bureaucrats adhere to their developed working patterns based on survival.

2.6.3 Social Work and Professional Associations

The historical form of professional organisation is the 'guild-like collegiate' (Johnson,

1972, cited in Greenwood and Lachman, 1996) which in time adjusted and adapted to changes in the modern age and developed into advanced forms of organising (Johnson, 1972, cited in Greenwood and Lachman, 1996). Traits theory suggests that the professions are internally organised (Flexner, 1915, cited in Hamilton, 1974), and that their essential work is controlled by fellow professionals (Goode, 1957, cited in Hamilton, 1974). The latter characteristic implies that no external agent has the possible authority to fully judge the performance of a professional, except a colleague or a peer (Thomas and Pierson, 1995, cited in Kornbeck, 1998). Healy and Meagher (2004) describe professional associations as institutional vehicles for occupational closure. From this point of view, social work associations represent social work professionals, they are involved in professional training and accreditation, they set the standards of the professional work, and they usually manage professional registers. They also have some degree of sanctioning power (Kornbeck, 1998). Professional associations usually aim to control the accreditation of the profession, and register professionals in order to secure the title and position of social worker only for those who hold an adequate professional qualification. The primary objective of occupational closure is to differentiate certified social workers from unqualified careers and assert monopoly over defined areas of work (Abbott and Meerabeau, 1998:10). A professional association's function is to develop a coherent professional ideology and promote cohesion among members (Wenocur and Reisch, 1989:119). There is an important relationship between professional associations and universities, in that universities manage and legitimate the professional expertise while professional associations influence the process of training and accreditation (Aldridge, 1996). McDonald (1995), drawing on a comparative example of professionalisation in three European countries, argues that the extent of involvement of professional associations in university professional education is indicative of the extent of a profession. Aldridge (1996:185) also claims that the associations of a *"powerful profession"* heavily control the validation of qualifying programmes. *"Since eminent researchers and academics will probably sit alongside distinguished practitioners in the professional association, the circle will be complete."* (Aldridge, 1996:185).

Professional associations also play an important role in unifying the profession, though unity presents a great challenge for social work as it is in character a very fragmented activity. Minaham (1973, cited in Popple, 1985:567) claims that *"searching for unity"* had become the major task of the profession. Popple even argues that *"social work is not a unitary profession to which traditional models can be applied"* because *"social workers do*

very different things, have different skills, and possess different knowledge." Kornbeck (1998) structures his comparative study of social work professionalisation in European countries on Müller's concept of the professionalisation process (1993), which implicitly defines the role of professional associations. The first stage is *unification*, in which social workers are unified internally by their solidarity and externally in institutional and legal terms; then follows *licensiation* (author's translation of German word *Lizensierung*), which refers to the process of implementing a licensing scheme, in which credentials are required in order to be appointed as a social worker. *Monopolisation* is the completion of the two previous stages, when only those who are unified and accredited may work in the profession. Kornbeck observed that in Europe the social work profession is unified only in a few countries such as Britain, France and Germany, and the schemes of licensiation vary significantly from countries with accreditation to countries with regulation and countries with no certification. Additionally, according to Kornbeck there is a little evidence supporting the realisation of monopolisation.

However, professional associations have limited capacity to influence the recognition of the profession or, for example, the rewards for professionals (Abbott and Meerabeau, 1998). Also, Dominelli (1997:121) argues that there is a little evidence in the case of British social work and its associations that the professional organisations have the power to defend their interests, or have any significant impact either on the working conditions of professionals or the character of the work. She also illustrates the dissent between the academics and the practitioners' social work associations, and the power struggle to determine the framework of training. As a response to social service marketisation, increasing fiscal constraints and changing modes of public administration, Healy and Meagher (2004) argue for social work collective action in terms of convergence of professional associations and trade unions, in order to achieve professional recognition in a time of changing conditions. Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008:286-287), in their comparative study of the social work profession in ten countries, also pointed to the matter of representativeness of professional associations due to low membership: for example, in the USA only a quarter of accredited social workers are members of a national association, while in the UK it is between a fifth and a quarter. On the other hand, in Sweden the association represents eighty percent of social workers because the national association also serves as a trade union. In some countries there is also a problem of diversity of associations representing social work only in particular settings or practitioners' backgrounds, rather than being a single professional body. The authors observed that

national professional associations fulfil different roles and functions according to the national context: some are oriented to professional development through promotion of ethical codes and education, some incline to regulation and promotion of governments' interests, and some take a policy activist role as well, in the interest of service users.

2.6.4 Social Work in the Marketplace

Apart from the literature discussed above on the negative effects of market forces in the social services on the social work profession, few authors look at social work and the market from the actual perspective of economic relations, and suggest that the market creates further opportunities for professionalism even in the case of social work. The market principle is a key condition of Weber's notion of social closure, which implies that the professions' success in the service market comes through state legal protection that creates a market shelter, and the credibility of professional ideology. Wenocur and Reisch (1989) described the transformation of the American social work profession from an occupation based around charity organisations to a business enterprise. They associated the emergence of the profession in the 1890s with social workers defining their services as 'social treatment', so that they became attractive to potential sponsors. The professional project continued by offering solutions to individual and social problems, and emphasising science and secularism at the beginning of the 20th century.

There is a limited volume of literature on the position of social work in the marketplace; one of the few examples is Barth's study (2003) on the social work labour market in the United States. Barth (2003:14) first explains the fundamental distinction between *need* and *demand* in the case of social work services, in which the ability to purchase determines the demand. Figure 2 illustrates how *need* translates into effective *demand*: many people have a *need* for social work services but this does not become *demand* until there is somebody able to pay for the services. The social policy and political ideology definitively determine the availability of funding resources, which come mostly from public but also partly from private sectors.

Figure 2   Generation of Demand for Social Services (Barth, 2003:14)
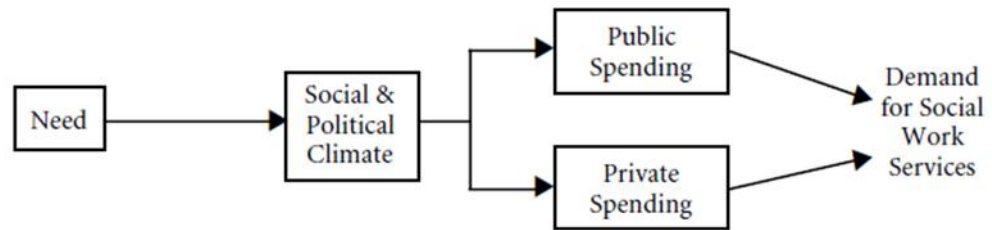
In this respect, the *demand* for social workers depends on the *demand* for the social service product mostly required by organisations such as councils, hospitals and NGOs. In addition, Wenocur and Reisch (1989) argue that the social work market consists primarily of low-income and low-status people who cannot afford to pay for the services, which means that there is no opportunity to establish private services (i.e. fee-paying services). This, the authors claim, decreases the level of professional control and professional status of social work.

Barth also attempts to explain the low-wage issue of social workers: there is evidence of a below-average increase in social workers' wages in the United States. This may be due to limited competition between social workers with different degrees (BAs, MAs), the availability of substitutes for social workers with the same educational level, and the unresponsive demand for social work services. It seems that budgets for social work services in the public sector are set regardless of the market for social workers (Barth, 2003:17). Leiby (1979, cited in Wenocur and Reisch, 1989) similarly comments on the position of social work in the market; he maintains that social work services are generally not purchased by direct users but by the state (or philanthropists), which consequently restricts their professional and collegial control.

Baines (2004), in her analysis of the New Public Management strategy in the social services in Canada, points out the dual market character of welfare practice. In her view, the new managerial initiative reflects a *pro-market* and *non-market* reconstruction of social caring and responsibility, in which pro-market processes supplement, extend and legitimise the private market, such as when for-profit organisations enter the public service sector. On the other hand, non-market processes stand outside the principle of capital accumulation, such as in universalistic or participatory models. According to Baines (2004:7), the current Canadian state and non-profit social services reflect this dualism, as *"they are pro-market*

in their organizational ideology and, at the same time, non-market in their organizational form". The reconstruction creates possibilities for private practice social work as an alternative to shrinking opportunities in public and non-profit sectors; private providers are more likely to work with paying clients, who are less costly. Specht and Courtney (1995:107) suggested that private practice social work was becoming the most significant trend of the American social work profession, in which provision of psychotherapeutic services had the primary role. This move to clinical social work and an increasing number of social workers in the private sector earned a lot of criticism. Also, Specht and Courtney claimed that in this way social workers had abandoned their primary mission of helping poor and oppressed people, and instead had become *"secular priests in the church of self-repair"* (Specht and Courtney, 1995:28). The major controversy surrounding private practice lies in the assumed value conflicts between professional ethos and discrimination against those who cannot afford to pay for the services (Gibelman and Schervish, 1996).

Gibelman and Schervish (1996:325) identified the motivating factors for social workers to enter private practice, including higher prestige and income, dissatisfaction with agency-based social work, and the desire to gain autonomy and flexibility. The specialisations of psychotherapists, clinicians and counsellors are the most popular amongst social work students who plan to establish private practice (Karger and Stoesz, 1994, cited in Gibelman and Schervish, 1996; van Heugten and Daniels, 2001). However, the authors conclude that the development of private social work practice is very much dependent on external factors, mainly on the market-oriented economy and health and social policies of the government. Van Heugten and Daniels (2001) also suggest that the creation of a market for private social work services requires a concept of personal problems. This means emphasis on the individual over community responsibility, and the belief that social problems can be solved through an inter-psychological approach rather than by social reform.

In conclusion, the position of the social work profession in the market is delineated by the socio-economic ideology of the welfare system, as it is the government that defines the needs of poor and disadvantage people for whom social work services are provided and purchased. Social work service users have little power to determine the demand for a social work labour force, unlike employing organisations such as the state and non-profit organisations. On the other hand, as some authors from Anglo-American countries suggest, the social work profession develops various strategies as a response to changes and requirements of either the quasi-market of the welfare system or the free market.

2.6.5   Social Work and Social Policy

This section reviews the arguments concerning the involvement and influence of the social work profession on social policy making, and sets the background scene for the professionalisation processes. The historical inter-relationship between social work and social policy is complex. The social work profession has substantially contributed towards the development of social welfare policy; in fact, the emergence of social work and social welfare is inseparable. Nevertheless, generally social policy shapes the character and practice of the profession (Ambrosio et al., 2011). The basic idea of social welfare is to provide citizens with resources so they can lead productive and satisfactory lives, and social work is a profession to facilitate these objectives (Ambrosio et al., 2011). However, the social welfare arena is profoundly ideologically and politically determined; therefore the role of the social work profession is formed, shaped and challenged in response. It could be said that social work manages the tension between the personal and the political (Halmos, 1965, cited in Acquith et al., 2005). The social work profession has to be seen in the wider context of ideologies of welfare; "validity for social work knowledge" (Payne, 1999) corresponds with the popular political perspectives at a certain time. Acquith et al. (2005:3) identified successive models of welfare policy and ideology of the Western countries that have formed the social work profession since the Second World War: (1) welfarism characterised as social democratic paternalism, (2) professionalism emphasising expertise and professional authority, (3) consumerism stressing the consumer power of service users, (4) managerialism focusing on managerial and economic concerns, and (5) participationism suggesting an equal relationship between service providers and service users.

As mentioned above, the proclaimed mission of the social work profession is to meet the needs of individuals and communities, but also to engage in a process of social change, particularly when there is an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in society. Although the social work profession was established by people actively campaigning for the rights of disadvantaged groups and social changes, recently the major focus of social work practice has narrowed down to the changing of individuals' life circumstances mainly by employing a casework approach. In this respect "*social work scholarship suggests that, although a focus on individuals is critically important, it may not be enough*" (Simon, 1994, cited in Abramovitz, 1998:518), and that more attention should be paid to social changes at the macro level. Abramovitz (1998:517-520) suggests that although there is a

long history of social work activism towards social reforms, particularly in the United States and Britain, there are several accounts of insufficient engagement of the profession in policy-making. This is influenced by the position of social work as a mediator between the requirements of the market economy and the unmet basic needs of some individuals. Also professionalisation is considered as an obstacle diverting the profession from a focus on social reform to concentrate rather on the market of expanding social services: *"[market] requirements pressed social work to narrow its vision and to play it safe"* (Wenocur and Reisch, 1989, cited in Abramovitz, 1998:519).

The relationship between social work and social policy is characterised by ideologically initiated government policies rather than policies formed upon evidence from practice or social work professional perspectives. Butler and Drakeford (2001, cited in Humphries, 2004:94) describe *"social work's willingness to collaborate with 'a particular form of social authoritarianism', which has robbed it of its radical and transformatory potential."* In a similar vein, Jordan (2001) argues that social workers adopted the role of policy executors concerned only with rationing and risk assessments.

Illustrative examples of the relationship between social work and social policy can be found in the reviews by Munro (2010, 2011) of child protection in England and a comparative study of child protection systems in Europe conducted by Cooper (2002). The former analysed the English child protection system after unsatisfactory outcomes of policy interventions, drawing on the Lord Laming Reports (2003, 2009), after the Victoria Climbié and Baby P cases. Applying systems theory, Munro (2010) found that even well-intended reforms designed by well-informed people, inevitably create new, unforeseen complications; in other words all reforms have side effects. Previous child protection reforms failed to improve the frontline social work practice; on the contrary, according to Munro, they led to an over-standardised system unable to respond flexibly or adequately to children's needs, and constraining professionals' ability to exercise their judgment. The previous policy reforms pursued a risk assessment approach that focused on identification of abuse and neglect by implementing measures, setting targets, and introducing a code of practice, lengthy assessment and evaluation forms, voluminous handbooks and increased inspections; but it also brought changes in training, particularly for early-career social workers. This resulted in (1) lack of time and resources for professional interaction with clients, (2) compliance of professionals with regulations and rules, (3) inefficient assessments, (4) purposeless inspections, and (5) collection of a lot of data.

Similarly, Cooper examined the English and Welsh child protection system through comparison with systems in other European countries. The study concluded that in order to understand the everyday practice of social work in child protection, it is necessary to consider determinants such as the professional cultures and societal attitudes to professionals, concepts of the family and children in society, and also wider political and social variables. The major findings concur with Munro, referring to heavy reliance on rules as a driving principle of policy and practice. The inter-related factors defining professional practice in England are an adversarial legal system with emphasis on individual rights, the view of the welfare state as something 'residual', weakening institutions of public life, a history of child protection scandals, and public reaction leading to the 'risk aversion' approach. In contrast, the German child protection system rests on principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, where families and the local community carry most responsibility, and in which the main focus is on the variety of social services with preventative and therapeutic orientation. In France the underlying principle of the system resides in a common belief of the primacy of kinship and ties of blood. The Children's Courts judges are the main professionals involved in child protection cases; however, the main effort of judges is rehabilitation through the medium of relationships. According to Cooper (2002:135) this approach enables *"parents and children [to] trust the system to essentially work in their favour, even if they may not like particular decisions and contest them."*

On the other hand, Wilding (1982:22) argues that the professions, including social work, possess considerable power in policy making. He gives an example of social work involvement in child protection and social service legislation in the late 1960s, and claims that White Papers from this time illustrate *"the triumph of social work definitions of the problem of delinquency."* Social workers were by law delegated the power to decide about the character of delinquency and the nature of intervention, which originally belonged to lay magistrates.

There is an increasing volume of literature and comparative studies observing the differences and commonalities of various policy aspects of the national social work professions in Europe (Shardlow and Walliss, 2003; Hill, 1991; Cannan, Berry and Lyons, 1992; Lorenz, 1994; Chowanietz, 2006; Campanini and Frost, 2004; Fortunato, Friesenhahn and Kantowitcz, 2008). One of the main reasons for this is the engagement of

the European Union in all areas of economic and social life in European countries. Meeuwisse (2009) argues that it is the type of model of social policy and social welfare that significantly influences and shapes the features, position, organisation and practice of the social work profession.

The classical typology of social welfare organisation derives from the work of Esping-Andersen (1990), which was later revised and supplemented by authors such as Leibfried (1992) and Deacon (1993). Accordingly, Lorenz (1994) distinguishes four models of social work in Europe in relation to underlying ideologies that determine the state and public responsibility towards social problems. The *Scandinavian model* represents social as general social policy that guarantees a high standard of living to all citizens through an all-embracing social services and welfare system. The state plays the key role; however, local authorities have a unique position as service providers and welfare organisers. Thus social work has a long tradition in Scandinavian countries with appropriate training and qualifications. Considerable numbers of social workers are employed, mostly in public services, and case management is a common approach that focuses on prevention. On the other hand, the system inclines towards interventions into family and individual affairs. The *Corporativist model* is based on the principle of subsidiarity, which can be found in Germany. Social welfare is organised through the insurance system, and most of the responsibility is delegated from the state to occupational, religious or voluntary organisations. In this model, there are smaller than average numbers of social workers in public services, who represent the controlling power of the social services, and a larger number of social workers are employed by the church or non-for-profit organisations, who offer a wide range of professional services. The *Residual model* is usually found in countries with liberal welfare systems in which the state takes a minimalistic approach to intervention in individuals' and families' private lives. The state usually secures a minimum standard of economic security and protection for vulnerable individuals. Social workers are employed in the public sector and charity organisations; however, some professionals may also work in for-profit companies. The *Rudimentary welfare model* can be seen in South European countries, where the majority of people rely for welfare on informal care; therefore social workers have a limited scope of activity, such as child and family welfare.

Lorenz (1994) did not consider social work in the *Post-communist welfare model* as defined by Deacon (1993). In the early 1990s, Deacon described welfare systems in post-

communist countries as a *post-communist conservative corporatist welfare regime*, which was characterised by a persisting socialist orientation, and maintenance of power by some of the old institutions and labour unions. Communist social policies rested on heavy subsidies of foods and rents, full employment, and the provision of free services in health and education (Deacon 1993). The transformation brought new economic and social phenomena such as inflation, unemployment and increased poverty (Fultz, 2002, cited in Fenger, 2007:14). Both Deacon (1993) and, later, Esping-Andersen (1996, in Fenger, 2007) argue that post-communist welfare regimes are transitional and temporary, and that they will sooner or later adopt the principles of the West's welfare systems with the help of the EU, the IMF and the World Bank.

A social problem in itself does not determine the approach of social work towards it, but it is the political and social interpretation of such a problem in a particular region (Niemela and Hamalainen, 2001, cited in Chowanietz, 2006). Nonetheless, in the current debate about welfare systems most authors agree that different welfare systems are developing into a 'welfare mix', where various social policies are combined and the main preoccupation lies with the rising cost of care. Fortunato et al. (2008:14) argue that the neo-liberal approach has significantly influenced the current development of the welfare systems in Europe and that the trend to promote 'workfare instead of welfare' is also having a consequence on the role of social work. According to the authors, reforming the welfare systems in European countries is characterised by certain common trends oriented towards decentralisation, the principle of subsidiarity managed by the governance of local authorities and an expanding third sector, as well as for-profit organisations (Fortunato et al., 2008).

To summarise, most authors perceive social welfare models as the key determinant of the social work profession's existence, with the current emphasis on consumerism, quasi-markets, employment and an individual approach. The following section overviews the Czech academic discussion on the professionalisation of social work.

2.6.6   Czech Discussion on Social Work

There is a lack of literature and research on the professions in the Czech Republic in general; however, recent academic discussion has opened up the debate about the

development of social work as a profession in democratic Czech society. The discussion is concerned with the societal changes that occurred after the fall of the Communist regime and how the social work profession responded to it. The existing literature on the social work profession also focuses on the complex theme of the identity of social work.

The interrupted history of social work in the Czech Republic may be considered as one of intensification of the search for professional identity. Most authors seek to explain the current issues of social work professionalisation in the Czech Republic, and to reaffirm the professional status of social work. The need for theoretical and epistemological foundations for the social work discipline is one of the general arguments for stronger professional identity, which is principally limited by the organisational and institutional cultures of the social welfare providers (Klenovský, 2010). Musil (2008), one of the main contributors, deals with the issue of the fragmented character of the profession reinforcing the uncertain identity of social work, and considers the ambiguous definition of social work expertise and services as one of the factors leading to a lack of professional autonomy. Corresponding with the literature on managerialism in social services, the author suggests that the lack of professional control over work conditions derives from political and organisational power over social work; however, in the case of Czech social work this is not the consequence of new management policy but political expectations and the culture of public administration.

The inability to define clearly the mission and purpose of social work services, in order to emancipate the profession, lies, according to Musil, in the different conceptions of social work shared by different fragments of the social work professional community. He distinguishes between administrative, philanthropic and professional types of approaches to social work, where each type has a different perspective on the objectives of social work and pursues dissimilar methods and approaches to clients (see Table 1). Musil argues that ineffective communication between these types of social work represented by different institutions of social services is the stumbling block to social work professional status and its improvement.

Table 2 Musil's Typology of Conceptions of Social Work (2008:67, translated by the author)

Conceptions of social work and their approaches to the role of a social worker			
Conceptions	*Administrative*	*Professional*	*Philanthropic*
Ideal role	Officer	Specialist	Human
Aim of social work	to deal with matters in compliance with set procedures within by given measures	to design, implement and evaluate long-term scheme of intervention	to provide to the vulnerable person whatever s/he needs most, especially relationship
The subject of influence	partial, following agenda determined by law and regulations	unique and complex life situation of a particular client	The biological, practical, emotional, spiritual needs of a particular client
Autonomy of social work	it is based on interpretation of norms	it is in accordance with the full scope of a task	it rests on empathic learning of client's needs and shared experience
Required qualification and competencies	secondary or technical education, loyalty, dealing with procedures and communication with difficult clients	higher but preferably university education, respect, discretion, tailored intervention	any education, altruisms, establishing relationships
Supervision	it is not expected, emphasis on instructions and surveillance	peer supervision	training and manager supervision is preferred to formal qualification

Zita (2008) explains the unsettled situation of Czech social work (described as the silent

and discreet profession) by referring to several factors, including lack of informative capital of social work practitioners and academics, increased bureaucratisation of work, the fragmented character of the profession at the organisational and institutional levels, and the social attitudes of society characterised by individualism, short-sightedness and lack of solidarity. Zita agrees with the argument of Musil that the diversity of social work creates different types of professional identities, which create problems in communication and clear representation of social work.

The overall discussion on social work as a profession in the Czech Republic can be concluded by reference to the assertion of Lorenz (2007:70), who says that it is not necessary to abandon the idea of social work as an autonomous profession or to be concerned about the professional identity of social work. On the contrary, the pressure of social and political changes is a window of opportunity for social work professional refinement. Furthermore, Lorenz mentions the unique situation of social work in post-communist countries, in which social work methods have to re-establish their own traditions, and simultaneously carefully adopt contemporary theoretical discourses from other European countries. Social work in the post-communist countries, as Lorenz notes, has to be constantly aware of parallel development in social policy, on which its professional formation is dependent more than anywhere else.

2.7   Conclusion

The traits approach presented by Greenwood (1957) provides a useful description of a profession; however, it provides little explanation about professionalisation processes, especially in changing political regimes. The neo-Weberian approach suggested by Saks (2010) offers a constructive analytical tool based on the Weberian notion of social closure and the interactive relationships between the market, the state and the profession. Nonetheless, this approach assumes the economic principle of a free market, which cannot also be applied entirely in the case of the Czech Republic. The neo-institutional approach proposed by Le Bianic refers to a closer relationship between the profession and state institutions, based not only on the creation of market shelters but also on what he defines as a status community, a profession embedded in the public administration; this is a characteristic trend in European continental countries. The causal stories by Stone (1989) describes the dynamics of different interest groups pursuing their definition of policy problems, and in this way securing themselves positions of power in the structures they

operate in. This concept is considered to be useful in order to bridge the social workers' experience in child protection policy-making and the understanding of the current social work professionalisation.

The social work profession finds itself in a persistent struggle to move from a semi-profession (or bureau-profession) to a fully-fledged profession. Several themes have emerged from the literature review as current or ongoing issues relevant to the profession. First, social work has been engaged in a persistent and long-term search for its own expertise, which is interlinked and conditioned by lack of clarity about its professional mission. This is indicative of the inadequate power of social workers and their associations to define their own objectives and methods, mainly because of the bureaucratic organisation and state dependency of the profession. According to some authors, the key limitation to social work autonomy enhancement is the distorted market position. Despite the endeavours of the quasi-market and managerialism, the boundaries set by national social welfare policies and systems, as well as the state-social work-clients relationship, restrict the ability of the social work profession to assert itself.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

This chapter explicates in detail the approach to the research subject and the research design that was applied. First, it identifies the research questions, and then it describes the research methods and procedures by which the research project was undertaken. Finally, it summarises the conceptual framework of the project in order to clarify the analytical approach to interpreting the data, and reflects on the ethics of the research process.

3.1 Research Questions

The aim of the research was to describe and understand the current state of the social work profession in the Czech Republic by examination of professional involvement in child protection policy-making. The thesis aimed to define the ways in which social work professionals strive to enhance their profession.

The two main research questions drew on the theoretical concepts in the sociology of the professions, and were separated into sub-questions according to the theoretical approaches to the study of the professions. This is explained further below in the Conceptual Framework section.

The research questions and sub-questions were as follows:

1. How do social worker professionals describe the state of professional development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic?

1.1 How do they describe the current traits of the social work profession?

1.2 How do they describe the position of the social work profession in the social work market?

1.3 How do they describe the position of the social work profession within the state structure?

2. How do they describe the current pathways of social work professionalisation?

2.1 What are the causal stories of the social work inter-profession groups in the process of child protection policy-making?

2.2 How do social work inter-profession groups pursue their causal stories?

3.2 Research Design

The research was designed as a case study of the professionalisation of social work in the Czech Republic since the establishment of the first Republic in 1918, focusing on the current field of child protection. The qualitative approach was utilised, in which the social work profession was studied primarily from the perspectives of social workers and other social work professionals involved in the field. The research design followed the single case study approach, allowing the research subject to be approached comprehensively, by providing in-depth examination of a single instance from different angles using various data sources and research methods. Case study approaches *"help to identify causal relationships as well as help to understand the worldview of the people they study"* (Thatcher, 2006, cited in Plucer, 2008:3), and this is the most widely utilised method for studying professions (Macdonald, 1995). Ragin (1992:218) suggests considering cases *"as the products of basic research operations"* that *"can bring operational closure to some problematic relationship between ideas and evidence, between theory and data."* He maintains that casing, the operational process of case definition, is a fundamental part of the process of structuring the social reality according to theoretical concepts and articulating the theoretical notions with empirical data (Ragin, 1992:225).

According to Flyvbjerg (2011), a case study approach is an intensive analysis of a particular unit which observes the influential factors within the context of a case. Flyvbjerg (2011:301) characterised the case study approach as a research design that studies the research subject from a number of angles using different methods, thereby achieving an in-depth understanding of a study unit. In this project, the social work profession in the Czech Republic is defined as a case, which is described in the first instance as a professional project from 1918 till 2011, and in the second instance as the current field of child protection social work. The data collection methods for this thesis consisted of participant observation and interviews, which are described in detail in the Research Methods section below.

In addition, case studies focus on *developmental factors* that influence the evolution of a case in time, and *its relationship to the environment,* which sets the case in context.

However, the delineation between context and the case is important. The demarcation of the social work profession is informed by the literature and is explained in the conceptual framework. The social work profession is understood as a complex entity of professional groups of administrators and policy-makers, teachers and researchers, practitioners including managers and front-line workers, and professional associations, all of whom strive to achieve favourable labour market positions. The developmental factors or variables are defined as the authorities of the state, the employing organisations, the market and the public set within the socio-economic order of the country. The relationship of the profession to the environment is realised through strategies or pathways to professionalisation, such as market closure, scientification of knowledge, or definition of public issues. These pathways have been identified in the literature but they are further examined through the data analyses.

Ragin (1992:222) explains that casing is motivated by theory, which necessarily implies that the focus is narrowed and some categories of empirical data remain secondary. This applies to the present analysis of the profession, which draws on agenda setting theory, particularly causal stories, using data from the interviews and the observations. In a similar way, Yin (2003) claims that case studies can contribute to theory development although they cannot be used for generalisation at a statistical level. In other words, case studies are based on a developed theoretical framework that is compared with the empirical data; in this way, theoretical concepts can be reconsidered and further elaborated depending on the purpose of a case study. In accordance with Yin's basic categorisation of case studies, this research project can be classified as a *descriptive* case study. Therefore, the empirical analysis was designed to provide evidence about the state of the social work profession and paths to professionalisation, as well as resources to evaluate the theoretical assumptions used in the conceptual framework of the thesis.

3.3   Research Methods

In case studies, triangulation of multiple sources of data is an essential method of data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003) because it reinforces the validity of the case study process (Tellis, 1997). According to Snow and Anderson (cited in Tellis, 1997),

triangulation can even arise with data, investigators, theories or methodologies. The collected data create a case study database (Yin, 2003) that serves as a source of analysis.

The case study approach means using various research techniques of data collection and conceptual categories in order to provide a fuller picture and in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon. The primary technique of data collection in this research project was interviews with professionals in the field of child protection social work, complemented with participant observation, and documents and policy reviews. The techniques of data collection are described in the following sections.

3.4   Participant Observation (Piloting)

Participant observation is a qualitative research method mostly used in anthropological and ethnographic studies. According to Becker and Geer (1957:28), this method can *"provide us with a yardstick against which to measure the completeness of data gathered in other ways, a method which can serve to let us know what orders of information escape us when we use other methods."* Observation as a research method can be defined as the systematic description of people's behaviour, interaction, events of the social world in the setting of a particular study (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, cited in Kawulich, 2005), using the "five senses" and providing a "written photograph" of the situation (Erlandson et al., 1993, cited in Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation is a method that enables a researcher to examine the activity of people in their natural setting through observation and either covert or overt participation (Kawulich, 2005). The literature mentions several advantages of the method, such as enabling a researcher to record non-verbal expression of feelings, the complexity of interactions, the types of communication, and the dynamics of activities (Schmuck, 1997). It also provides an understanding of the context and nature of the research subject (DeWalt and DeWalt, 1998, cited in Schmuck, 1997). There are different approaches to conducting the actual observation: one of them is suggested by Werner and Schoepfle (1987, cited in Angrosino and de Perez, 2000:677), who distinguish between descriptive, focused and selective observations according to the scope of focus on the subject of a study. An observer should follow certain strategies while undertaking the observation in order to gain good data, including establishing rapport with people under study, being skilled in note-taking and communication tactics, and being actively observant (Bernard, 1994).

Participant observation in this project was undertaken at the Child Protection Department in a city in the Czech Republic. This place was chosen because of ease of access due to a long-term personal relationship between the researcher and the social workers employed in this department and with academic staff at a local university, as well as previous familiarity with the local social organisations from the time of researcher's undergraduate course at the city university. Participant observation was part of the piloting stage of the research project, and lasted four working weeks (26/7/2010 – 7/8/2010 and 9/2010; see Appendix C: Agreement with the Child Protection Department). Field notes were produced concerning various daily activities carried out by front-line social workers, and from informal interviews with professionals in the child protection field. The main objective of the observation was to gain insight into the daily working problems faced by social workers and how they understand them, as well as into their interaction with fellow social workers, managers and other professionals. The results of the observation contributed to the case study database, but mainly helped to establish and clarify questions and methods of the research project, and generally informed the further direction of the research inquiry. In addition, contacts with potential interviewees were made during this period.

As mentioned above, the participant observation was part of the pilot project and it was completed during four working weeks spent at the Child Protection Department while shadowing different social workers both as a researcher and as a student on work placement. This arrangement was suggested by the manager of the department as she considered it the most convenient approach. Student placements are a very common and well-understood form of contractual activity involving people from outside the department. The participant observation was *overt*; however, not every person encountered during the observation was informed about the research purpose of the researcher's presence, as in some situations the social work supervisors did not consider it to be appropriate. This decision was ascribed to their priority of getting their work done rather than being held up by explaining the researcher's presence. Nevertheless, the primary aim of the placement, which was to make observations and collect data as part of this research project, was clearly explained in written and oral forms to the social workers who were being shadowed, and, importantly, to the heads of the social service and child protection departments. The signed agreement between the Child Protection Department and the researcher included consent to the ethical standards, which involved (1) respecting the organisation's Codes of Practice, and (2) an obligation to adhere to the organisation's

confidentiality policy. It is important to emphasise here that the observation was focused on the interaction between social workers and other professionals, and that communications between social workers and their clients were not recorded, and neither was any confidential information. No records were made without the consent of the persons observed.

The pilot project was approved by the Bangor University College of Business, Social Sciences & Law Ethics Committee, and this is further discussed in the Ethics section below. Permission was given for the researcher's request to make records of social workers' activities during their work, provided the organisation's rule of confidentiality was not breached. The observations included shadowing social workers during their everyday duties such as home assessments, office consultations, court sittings, police interrogation, and department meetings. Furthermore, there were also opportunities to observe informal interaction between social workers during their lunch breaks, and small talk amongst social workers themselves and other professionals involved in the child protection service. Observations were recorded on paper outside the times of observation because social workers did not feel comfortable with the researcher taking notes while they were working.

3.5   Interviews

Interviewing is predominantly a qualitative research method that has greatly expanded as a way of data collection and of gathering in-depth information (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Qualitative interviewing is grounded in conversation (Kvale, 1996), "*with the emphasis on researchers asking questions and listening, and respondents answering"* (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, cited in Warren, 2001:83). The main purpose of interviewing is to learn interpretations from respondents' narratives, as participants are viewed as 'meaning makers' not passive informants (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, cited in Warren, 2001). Also, in this thesis, the reason for employing an interview research method was to learn about the social work profession from the point of view and understanding of social workers themselves. One of the important points about interviewing is that respondents adopt different perspectives from different standpoints within one interview (Warren, 2001:84). The basic assumption of the interviewing method is that stories of others are worthy, and that one is interested in them. The limits of understanding the narratives of

others lie in the researcher's ability to enter *"into the other's stream of consciousness and experience[d] what he or she had"* (Schutz, 1967, cited in Seidman, 2006:9).

The interview scheme and set of questions were developed according to the outcomes of the piloting project and the initial theoretical base of the research project. In the earliest stages of the research, the approach was informed by Bourdieu's concepts (1990) of habitus field and capital as a way to explain the position of the social work profession and its relations with other professions in the child protection system. Although these concepts were not subsequently used to analyse the questions, in the interview schedule theywere aimed at the practice of social workers and interaction with other professionals in the field. After the preliminary analysis of a sample of 20 transcribed interviews, the decision was made to reconsider the theoretical foundations of the thesis, the reason being that the most interesting themes to emerge were mainly to do with the subjects of organisation, policies and group interests; these are units of the mezzo-level of social structure rather than of interaction at the micro-level in Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1990). For this reason, the agenda setting theory and Stone's (1997) concept of problem definition and causal stories substituted the original theoretical approach (see Literature Review p.39ff). The agenda setting theory addresses the power relations of interest groups such as professions, and it was believed that data analysis using this theoretical model could answer the research question and explain the current status of the social work profession more effectively. The interview schedule was not revised after the changes in the theoretical foundation of the thesis, because the categories of causes and consequences of the stories in policy-making can be identified in the professionals' narratives, as well as the pathways to professionalisation and descriptions of the general state of the profession.

Interviews started with questions about the professional background of the interviewee and then covered current issues in the child protection field, such as reforming the child protection legislation and system, introducing multidisciplinary teams, reducing the number of children in residential care, and introducing new financing systems. The interview concluded with a question to encourage reflection on public expectations from social work. These questions were intended to give an opportunity to the interviewees to discuss their experiences and interactions with other professionals, managers and clients within their sphere of work, as well as to consider issues in child protection and the social welfare system. The set of questions was generally fixed for all interviews but some

questions were adapted according to an employing organisation or the working position of a respondent prior to the interview.

A summary of the interview scheme is presented here and also in Appendix F: Example of Interview Schedule for Child Protection Managers (translated by the author from the original Czech, the document had to be amended in the MS Word processor because the original Nvivo report design did not show clearly the coded and coloured parts of the text):

1. Identifying questions: job description, length of work in the social work profession, education.
2. Current topics in the field: new governmental policy, cuts in social welfare spending, strike in public administration.
3. Reformation of the child protection system: introducing multidisciplinary teams, efficiency of the current system, possibility of success, involvement in policy-making, financing.
4. Social work profession: public expectations from social work professionals.

In total, 44 semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted and they represent the main source of data for this research project. Four interviews were joint interviews, when two social work professionals were present and answered each of the interview questions together, producing a single set of answers. The only reason for the joint interviews was limited time availability of social work professionals. During these interviews, usually one of the respondents was more dominant and more communicative than the other; however, there was no friction between any of them and views on acute concerns were even more strongly highlighted. Interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. All of the interviews were audio-recorded using a Sony ICD UX523 device, transferred to the computer in mp3 files, transcribed verbatim, and analysed with the help of Nvivo software (Appendix E). The interviews were conducted and analysed in Czech language, and later selected quotes were translated into English, when the main emphasis was placed on the essential meaning of the narratives, even where this resulted in some paraphrasing of the original words.

A purposive sampling method was used. The sample included a number of social workers from the child protection department involved in the pilot project, who served as intermediaries for contacts with potential interviewees. The rationale for sampling was based on the principle of saturation, and insights from the literature (Musil, 2008; Horák

and Horáková, 2009; Freidson, 2001) on the significance of social work inter-profession groups of administrators/policy-makers, teachers/researchers, and practitioners, and also the organisational division of the profession into statutory social work, social work in NGOs and semi-governmental residential organisations. Therefore, the only criteria for selection of interviewees corresponded with the vertical division of social work occupations (administrators, lecturers, practitioners), and with the horizontal division of organisations (statutory, NGOs, semi-governmental). The research project narrowed its focus on social work in the child protection field, and thus all of the organisations and professionals in the interview sample held a position related to child protection, although their professional responsibilities varied widely. These responsibilities ranged from adoption, fostering, residential care, assessments, and consulting, to policy-making, and lecturing. Accordingly, the sample consisted of 3 social work lecturers, 3 top-level managers from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 12 middle-level managers, and 26 front-line social workers, drawn from the statutory child protection departments, various NGOs and residential organisations (Appendix D). Otherwise, the sample was not intended to be representative of other criteria such as age, gender or education. As shown in Table 3 below, the sample is covering a wide range of ages from 23 upwards, and most of the social workers had either bachelor or master degrees.

In most cases, potential interviewees were contacted by an e-mail that contained a reference from his or her fellow social work professional, whom I had previously interviewed. It provided an explanation about the research project and a request for an interview appointment. Most of the interviewees in the research sample happened to work in the network of various child protection services in two geographical regions. The kind of consistency found in this research sample was considered to be an advantage, as the relationships between participants became more evident and provided apparent clues about their interactions with one another.

Table 3   Details of the Research Sample

Sample			Total
Position	Lecturer	3	
	Top-level manager	3	44
	Middle-level manager	12	
	Front-line social workers	26	

Employing Organisation	Statutory department	23	44
	NGO	13	
	Residential organisation	8	
Education	College/High School	10	44
	Bachelor degree	18	
	Master degree	13	
	Doctoral degree	3	
Gender	Male	5	44
	Female	39	
Age	23-35	22	44
	36-50	10	
	over 51	12	

Employing organisations of the interviewees in the sample were located in towns and cities of four counties of the Czech Republic falling under different municipal authorities of a particular county. Nevertheless, approximately half of the sample respondents were employed within the same county, which was also the location of the child protection department where the observation of the piloting project was conducted; therefore a certain degree of co-operation or familiarity between the organisations and social workers was expected due to their common location and operation in the field. Results showed that the professionals in each county experienced slightly different problems and relationships with other professionals and management according to local social problems, economic activity and political orientation of a particular county. For example, counties on the borders with Poland or Germany have larger communities of Roma people and related social problems. In addition, they are economically less developed in comparison with counties around the capital city of Prague, and they tend to be less religious than counties in Moravia. These factors were not considered in the sampling process, and this is regarded as one possible limitation of the research project.

Discourse analysis was used as a method of analysing qualitative data, using agenda setting theory. Discourse analysis draws on the role of language in construction of the social world, and thus interview data are used in this way *"to reveal regular interpretative practices through which participants construct versions of actions, cognitive processes, and other phenomena"* (Talja, 1999:459). However, as Nikander (2008) explains, discourse analysis includes a wide range of various theoretical and analytic approaches that

share a social constructionist epistemological perspective. Phillips and Hardy (2002) distinguish the field of discourse analysis from the focus on the social and political context to the focus on the micro-dynamics of interaction. Critical discourse analysis mainly seeks to understand the processes of power in terms of legitimisation, reproduction and enactment in speech and text of groups and institutions.

Discourse analysis was used as a method for understanding competing narratives proposed by social work professionals involved, even indirectly, in the policy making process. Fisher (2003:76) suggested that *"discourse analysis in politics begins with the recognition that discourses are distributed across institutions. In addition to the dominant discourses, competing discourses struggle to gain recognition and power"*. Stone (1997) identifies the competitive nature of political discourse, and views problem definition as a strategic representation of matters under concern. According to her, different actors deliberately fashion portrayals of a situation in order to promote their preferences for an action.

The deductive analytical approach to interview data in this research project's general theory-driven categories is based on the main theories of the sociology of the professions, and on Stone's causal stories. This theory assumes that different interest groups involved in the policy-making process present their perspective on a public issue by ascribing cause, blame and responsibility for the particular problem to competing groups, in order to get support for their suggested solutions (see p. 39ff).The thematic framework is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Thematic Framework

Theory	Themes
Stone's theory of causal stories	Problem, mechanical/accidental/intentional/inadvertent cause, victim, responsible agents, solution, ways of persuasion
Traits theory	Professional associations, professional knowledge, status
Neo-Weberian theory	Market closure, labour market, social work market
Neo-institutional theory	State authorities

A framework-based synthesis is used to organise and analyse data, utilising an *a priori* framework, which is based on themes and codes informed by literature or other background relevant to a particular research subject. The approach employs thematic analysis of primary data and secondary thematic analysis. Using a priori framework themes in conjunction with data analysis, new topics and codes emerge from the data and are incorporated in the framework (Carroll et al., 2013; Barnett-Page and Thomas, 2009). The final framework is therefore completed through primary analysis of data and consideration of additional theoretical concepts relevant to newly-emerged topics (Oliver et al., 2008). A synthesised framework may unify existing approaches to be used as the basis for an individual case study (Casey, 1998). A framework-based synthesis is a method used for data analysis in qualitative research, which is employed to build conceptual frameworks likely to be suitable for research questions and primary qualitative data (Dixon-Woods, 2011).

3.6   Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework can be defined as *"the current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated"* (Miles and Huberman, 1984, cited in Leshem and Trafford, 2007:95). In other words, it should provide boundaries for a research project and bring coherence to the research objectives, theoretical and analytical approaches, and conclusion. In this way, a conceptual framework sets the research processes in order to *"link abstract concepts to empirical data"* (Rudestam and Newton, 1992. cited in Leshem and Trafford, 2007:97).

The original conceptual framework of the thesis utilised Bourdieu's theory of habitus and capitals, with the aim of observing the relationship between social work professionals and other professionals in order to assess the professional project of social work. The focus of the observation was on the everyday activities of social work professionals: their co-operation with other professionals, perspectives on the preparation of new legislation, and perspectives on the position of the social work profession.

The first analysis of the interviews suggested that the relationships held between social work professionals from different social work organisations and institutions are more significant to the professionalisation of social work than relationships with other professionals, such as doctors, teachers or judges. Also, the first analysis showed that

narratives about the process of establishing a new child protection policy substantially reflect the dynamics and development of the profession. Therefore, the conceptual framework was adapted: theories of the sociology of the profession and theories of policy-making processes were incorporated in order to respond to the significance of the emerging themes, and to better understand the current character and processes of social work professionalisation. It is argued that the alternation and synthesis of the theoretical themes and analytical measures enabled the study to more fully encompass the complex theme of social work professionalisation, and thus to answer the research questions more adequately.

Although in previous sections the theoretical and analytical standpoints of the research projects were explained, the conceptual framework provides a complete overview of the rationale for the research processes of the thesis. As mentioned above, the main aims of the thesis were to examine the development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic and the current status of the profession. In order to achieve these goals, the theoretical notions of the sociology of the professions and the theory of causal stories in public policy were chosen as the main perspectives from which to approach the subject of study.

Drawing on the literature, it is argued that none of the theoretical concepts of the professions (traits theory, neo-Weberian theory or neo-institutional theory) can fully account for the process of social work professionalisation in the Czech Republic. A conceptual framework was developed, based on a synthesis of key concepts and relations between the key concepts of the theories mentioned. The conceptual framework, which guides the data analysis, suggests that the profession's main interest lies in the protection of labour market opportunities and related resources in accordance with neo-Weberian assumptions. However, it also agrees with the neo-institutional argument that the profession and the state consist of various agencies and groups, which interact with one another in particular ways, and that market closure is not the only strategy for a profession to achieve economic and social advantages. It is suggested that professionalisation is a dynamic process that depends on the socio-economic context of a society, and which is shaped by the interaction of the profession, the state, the market and public.

Although the traits model of the professions has been surpassed by later social theories, the attributes of the professions are considered to be still important characteristics. This is

particularly true for the social work profession in its persistent effort to move from a semi-profession (or bureau-profession) to a fully-fledged profession. Several themes emerged from the literature review as current or ongoing issues relevant to the profession. First, social work has been engaged in a persistent and long-term search for its own expertise, which is interlinked and conditioned by lack of clarity about its professional mission. This is indicative of the lack of power of social workers and their associations to define their own objectives and methods, mainly because of the bureaucratic organisation and state dependency of the profession.

The interactions between the profession and the state occur through government offices and other state agencies. The state employs a large number of social work professionals in different organisations, and also provides funding for the majority of social services. Therefore, a high level of organisational control over social work by the state is implicit. The social work profession develops specific knowledge that provides legitimacy to interventions and management of public social problems. As with any other interest group, the profession strives to convince the key decision-makers about its importance.

In addition, the literature on the social work profession shows that employing organisations of social workers significantly influence not only their working conditions but also the mission of social work. The conditions of social workers in employing organisations are seen as a sample of the wider relations and status of the social work profession. Furthermore, the agenda setting theory asserts that interest groups strive to pursue their own definitions of public problems in order to gain control over the organisation of the problems. It is suggested that a profession, or more precisely inter-professional groups, act as interest groups which attempt to define social issues and solutions for them so that the profession achieves control over the social issues and over the related segment of the labour market or social work market. In this way, the social work profession enhances its position as a profession.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework of this thesis used for analysis of the social work profession in the Czech Republic focuses on (1) causal stories of inter-professional groups in child protection policy-making and ways of pursuing their stories, (2) ways of professionalisation in terms of market closure, professional associations, knowledge generation, and (3) their interaction with the state authorities.

3.7   Ethical Considerations

In the Statement of Ethical Practice in this thesis the researcher agreed to (1) ensure that valid and informed consent was obtained before individuals participated in the research, (2) avoid personal and social harm, (3) protect the confidentiality of information about the research participants and their identities, and (4) ensure that dignity, respect and privacy were accorded to participants.

The Bangor University College of Business, Social Sciences & Law Ethics Committee approved the research ethical statement under the condition of provision of a consent form, an agreement between the researcher and the Child Protection Department, in the locations where the observation took place, and an assurance of safe handling of all collected data (Appendix A). The Bangor University College of Business, Social Sciences & Law Ethics Committee did not raise any questions about the limits of anonymity in cases of malpractice or risk of serious harm.

In addition, the research project complied with the requirements of the ethical standards of the social affairs departments under which the child protection departments fall. In the Placement Agreement with the Child Protection Department (Appendix B) the researcher agreed to respect the Codes of Practice for the organisation and adhere to the confidentiality policy of the organisation, which includes the reporting obligation required by law in the case of a child being at risk of serious harm or when there is a suspicion of a criminal act.

Engel and Schutt (2013:295-297), respected authors on the practice of research in social work, identified the main ethical issues in qualitative research in social work as (1) voluntary participation, (2) subject well-being, (3) identity disclosure, (4) confidentiality, and (5) appropriate boundaries.

Voluntary participation was addressed in the first point of the Statement of Ethical Practice, ensuring that valid and informed consent was obtained before individuals participated in the research. Prior to the interviews and observation, all social workers who were observed or interviewed were shown the letter of Ethics Approval from Bangor University and were informed about the aims of the research project. Consent forms were signed prior to interview sessions and interviewees were given the researcher's contact details in case they had any questions later. All participants were informed about the purpose and use of the research project and about the voluntary and anonymous character of interviewing. All of them understood their right to withdraw from the research process at any time. Interviews were recorded using audio equipment, and all participants agreed to this.

However, the adult and child clients of social workers were not informed about the role of the researcher-observer or the aim of the research, mainly because this was considered inappropriate by the social workers whom the researcher shadowed. The observation was carried out alongside qualified social workers, who were fully informed about the aims and methods of the research, and who believed they were working in the best interests of their clients. Therefore, the researcher chose to respect their professional discretion, which was not to inform clients about the researcher's observation. The social workers made a professional judgement that disclosure of the researcher's role might have potentially negative consequences for service users, including lack of understanding, confusion and intrusion into the professional-client relationship. It could also be time consuming. It is important to underline the fact that data were collected only on inter-relationships between social workers and other professionals. The researcher adhered to the firm principle that no records should be made about the adult or child clients of social workers, as they were not the subjects of the research inquiry.

Engel and Schutt (2013) refer to this as the ethical issue of the researcher's *identity disclosure*, questioning whether less-educated subjects of an observation may fully understand what a researcher and research are. They (2013:296) also claim that *"much field research would be impossible if the participant observer were required to request a permission of everyone having some contact, no matter how minimal, with a group or setting being observed."* This issue applied to many of the service users present during the observation of the social workers during the research of this thesis; most of them were children under 15 years old, or parents with very poor education, some of them illiterate, and some addicted to drugs or alcohol.

The next ethical issue in qualitative research in social work identified by the authors is *subject well-being* in terms of avoiding direct harm to the reputation of the subject or *"adversely affecting the course of events while engaging in a setting"* (Engel and Schutt, 2013:296). This was included in the Statement of Ethical Practice, which declared the need to avoid personal and social harm and to ensure dignity, respect and privacy to participants.

The research project was carried out in the sensitive field of child protection, and it involved direct contact with client children and families during the observation. Therefore, careful attention was paid to the ethical correctness of the research. The research project followed the ethical requirements in order to avoid any personal or social harm, to protect confidentiality of personal information, to respect the dignity and privacy of participants, and to maintain awareness of risk during the observation.

The character of the observations during the research for this thesis did not fall clearly into the category of either overt or covert observation. From the point of view of the social worker

participants it was overt; and from the point of view of the service users the researcher's position as a student was overt but as a researcher, covert. In each data collection situation the researcher's role as observer was described by the social worker in the context of an explanation of responsibilities and rights of each person involved. A typical interaction in the observation between the observer, the professionals and the clients was as follows:

The researcher sits behind a table next to a social worker, when two clients, a woman and a child, come in to talk with the social worker. The social worker introduces the researcher as a social work student, the woman agrees to the presence of social work student (the author of this thesis), *and then she discusses her problems with the social worker. The researcher observes. The woman and child leave and a social worker from the next office, also informed about the observer's research, comes in to discuss with the "researcher's" social worker the case of this woman. The researcher observes. Then the "researcher's" social worker calls to and talks with the GP of the child in order to deal with the problems they have. The researcher observes. At the end of the observation day, the researcher makes notes.*

The obligations of the researcher-observer were (1) to observe the social worker as a "student on placement" and as a researcher with the minimum of interaction with the social worker and clients or other professionals, (2) to keep confidential the identities of social worker participants and their clients, (3) to avoid causing harm in any other possible way, and (4) to report any suspicion of a child or a vulnerable person being at risk of serious harm, if unreported.

The responsibilities of the social work professionals were to (1) work in the best interests of their clients, for example by respecting confidentiality, and (2) show their work activities to the researcher. They also had the right not to participate in the research or to stop their participation at any time.

Both professional and research ethical frameworks applied and overlapped in the process of the actual research observation. While the research ethical standards required the researcher to disclose her identity to clients of the observed social workers, at the same time the professional ethical standards required the social work professionals to perform and decide in the best interest of their clients, and they chose not to disclose the role of the researcher for reasons mentioned above. In this case, the researcher gave priority to the professional ethical framework at the point of contact with the clients, which was considered as the most appropriate way of conduct.

The clients had different rights and obligations towards the social work professionals depending on character of their case. However, they had the ultimate right to refuse the presence of the student on placement (the author of the thesis), at the beginning of each meeting with the social worker. The

professional introduced the researcher as a student on placement and asked for clients' approval of her attendance. The introduction took the form: *"Mrs. XY, this is Lenka Divoka, she is a student on placement at our department. Is it o.k. for her to be present here, just as an observer?"* All of the clients responded positively without any hesitation.

The researcher believes that the observation activity of the research did not harm the clients or the professionals during or after the data collection in terms of their reputation, course of actions, or in any other way. Engel and Schutt (2013:296) argue that *"[i]t is not possible to avoid every theoretical possibility of harm or to be sure that any project will cause no adverse consequences whatsoever to any individual"*, but there is no evidence that the encounters were anything but beneficial.

The ethical issue of *confidentiality* was treated with particular attention, in order to avoid any possible disclosure of identity of professionals or clients. Respondents were referred to by numbers in the text, and their places of work, organisations or departments were not mentioned. As mentioned above, no descriptive notes were taken about the clients, whether adults or children. All records from interviews, observation notes, transcriptions and confidential documents were handled securely. Paper notes were kept in a locked case and electronic material was protected by passwords.

The last of the main ethical issues in social work qualitative research mentioned by Engel and Schutt (2013) is *appropriate boundaries*, which includes the boundaries of confidentiality in case of malpractice or serious risk of harm. They suggest that knowing professional social work guidelines helps to identify and address boundary issues.

The condition of disclosure relating to malpractice was not included in the Consent Form for research participants or the Statement of Ethical Practice; however, the Code of Practice of the Child Protection Department specifies the primary responsibility of professionals, as well as students and researchers, to report any risk of serious harm including consequences of malpractice.

As a qualified social worker, the researcher was aware of the Social Work Ethical Codex, and is professionally attuned to issues in social work practice. She would recognise circumstances that indicate malpractice by a social worker, such as incorrect treatment, confinement, sexual involvement with clients or other sexual misconduct, breach of confidentiality, defamation, failure to provide adequate care for clients in residential settings, or improper child placement. She is trained to recognise circumstances that signify serious risk of harm to a child such as neglect and abuse. Either during or after the data collection the researcher did not have any suspicion of malpractice by a social worker, or of serious risk of harm to a child or vulnerable person that was

unreported or untreated. Further reflection on ethical issues in the research process of the project suggests that the researcher could take measures in future to ensure that even higher ethical standards are met in a comparable data collection scenario. These measures would include: (1) an explicit statement about boundaries of disclosure relating to malpractice in the Statement of Ethical Practice and Consent Form for participants; (2) limitation of observation to settings where an approved Consent Form from each participant could be obtained; and (3) arrangement of a research placement or position in which the identity of the researcher is made explicit to service users as well as social work professionals.

The researcher acknowledges that neither she nor those involved in the formal ethics scrutiny process foresaw how the data collection process might fall short of the highest standards of researcher identity disclosure in the conduct of research. However, the research was fully compliant with professional ethics in the social work context. Fully informed consent was obtained from the primary participants in the research (the social work professionals). Clients' consent was obtained but was limited to the 'student observer' role. As explained earlier, this was not an oversight; it was the result of the social workers' professional judgement that disclosure of the researchers' role might have potentially negative consequences (see above p.81). The frameworks of academic research ethics and social work professional ethics overlap but are not identical. By giving priority to the professional framework in the practice situation the researcher intended to ensure that no harm actually occurred during the data collection process and that no signs of abuse or malpractice were overlooked.

In the future research, the researcher would approach the dilemma of identity disclosure in the social service setting by avoiding ambiguous situations. It can be achieved by: (1) obtaining informed consent from all participants involved in research observation including clients (certainly with an approval from social work professionals), (2) avoiding observations when social work professionals prefer not to disclose researcher's role, and (2) conducting observations in which clients are not present.

Chapter Four

Tracing the Development of the Czech Social Work Profession
And Child Protection

"... [S]ocial work is a diverse and often contested activity, strongly related to the historical, socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of particular nations and communities". (Lyons, 2003:1)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a trajectory of the Czech social work profession based on a review of literature and historical documents, in order to provide background knowledge to the current professionalisation of social work. The development of the profession is divided into three distinctive historical periods (Chytil, 2006; Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001; Šmejkalová, 2010; Harris, 1997):

1) Social work in the first Republic of Czechoslovakia 1918 – 1938
2) Social work in the communist Czechoslovakia Republic 1948 – 1989
3) Social work in the democratic Czech Republic 1990 – 2012

The trajectory described here includes the professionalisation of social work both in general and with a focus on the field of child protection. In each period, the review follows the following structure:

a) the political, economic and social context of the period
b) the traits and groups of the social work profession
c) the relationship between the state and the social work profession
d) social work in the employing organisations
e) strategies of professionalisation

The chapter concludes with an overview of the main factors influencing the development of the social work profession in the Czech Republic.

4.2   Social Work in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia 1918 – 1938

4.2.1   Political, Economic and Social Context of the Period

Czechoslovakia was established in 1918 as an independent State after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with 13.5 million inhabitants and 70 to 80 per cent of all the industry of the former monarchy. The state was one of the most industrialised countries in Europe at that time; however, the economic strains of the First World War and later world recession affected the economic progress of the country. After the war, the country struggled with food supply and inflation due to the effects of food subsidy measures and of import and export regulations. The consequences of the war and economic problems resulted in severe social issues such as poverty, a high level of unemployment, poor public health, alcoholism, prostitution, family breakdowns and many abandoned children (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001).

Although Czechoslovakia inherited a strong position in industries such as coal mining, clothing and the food industry, it was still a significant agricultural country with an underdeveloped service industry (Rákosník, 2008). With respect to the position of occupations, work within public services received respect and high status because of the economic security and advantages associated with it. The status and standard of living of workmen, especially qualified workmen, became stronger as working conditions improved (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001). In the 1930s, the country experienced economic and social prosperity. According to Rákosník (2008), in 1938 the economic situation of the country was similar in terms of national production to that of the Austrian economy and it had one of the most trusted currencies. It has to be noted that despite the fact that the world was affected by war and the impacts of the world economic crisis, the two decades between the world wars are described as a golden age for Czechoslovakia. This was a time of considerable economic prosperity, industrial growth, political stability and social order.

The state was formed as a parliamentary democracy, in which democratic principles ensured advancement of civil society. Táborský (1945:11, translated by the author) writes about the democracy of the first Republic of Czechoslovakia as follows: *"This little island of democracy in the middle of an angry totalitarian sea surging with aggressive nationalism, racialism and anti-Semitism, succeeded in holding on to its democratic*

freedom, while other democracies of Central Europe were sinking one after the other into decay and oblivion."

4.2.2   Relationship between the State and the Social Work Profession

The general aim of social policy of that time was to maintain and improve the stability of an already significant middle class population and to mitigate major social and economic differences between groups of citizens. This effort was aimed at preventing the spread of fascist and radical socialist ideologies in the country (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001). The Social Democrats had a strong position within the permanent parliamentary coalition during the interwar years, with continuous control of the Ministry of Social Welfare (Císař and Pokorný, 1922, cited in Harris, 1997). According to Harris (1997), the Social Democratic Party led the development of Czechoslovakian social policy and favoured the progression of social work. The social security system was aimed at several client groups such as war veterans and disabled soldiers, unqualified workers and the unemployed, poor tenants, working women, and children (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001). The social care system of the first republic was described by the author (Harris, 1997:120) as corresponding to the social situation of a capitalist society with remnants of feudalism and a strong influence of socialist ideas.

Originally, Czechoslovakia adopted social legislation from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Czech country had previously implemented the acts of the empire *Home Act 105/1863 and Poor Act 59/1866*, by which local authorities became responsible for providing necessary care to poor persons and families. Poverty became severe as a result of the process of industrialisation at the end of the 19th century. Provision of care was based on the principle of subsidy, according to which local authorities were considered as last resorts of help. Only persons who were registered in the local towns were entitled to it. Being poor was defined in terms of not being able to feed oneself. Nedelniková (2004) states that the responsibility for citizens in need was placed mainly on the town councils. However, an increasing number of private organisations of dedicated people organised aid for vulnerable people.

The principle of care was based on the need of a client and approval of the need by the care or aid provider. Needs were assessed according to moral values of 'diligence' and

'modesty', so that both the social needs and 'moral' needs of a client were considered (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:116).

Social policy of the first Czechoslovakia republic was based on the concept of social care, although the legal system at that time did not recognise the term *social care* and used the terms *health supervision* and *charity* instead. However, according to Vohradníková (2009:87), the idea of social care was mainly understood as the equivalent to social work in the interwar period.

Several factors contributed to the development of the social care system, including the negative impacts of the First World War on the living conditions of citizens, but also economic and social development and political liberalisation of the country in the post-war years. The primary aim of social care was to remove or moderate social problems of individual cases, thus performing social control or even repression rather than introducing preventative measures (Vohradníková, 2009:87).

4.2.3   Social Work in the Employing Organisations

Social care focused on the care of the poor, care of young people and care of war invalids organised through public authorities and private organisations; both sectors of social care organisation had particular advantages and issues. Statutory social care was managed by units of public administration at particular territorial and organisational levels - towns, counties, state. Some social care activities were delegated by the state to the municipal authorities and some remained within the state administration. The Ministry of Social Care had the following scope of activity: social-political issues, youth and war veterans care, housing, and consumer protection. Some domains fell under a number of ministry departments, such as social issues of judicial administration (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:121). As mentioned above, the primary responsibility of care for vulnerable people fell on the shoulders of town councils, which provided financial and material aid but also established various institutions for different groups of clients. The financial burden was shared evenly by public authorities. On the other hand, the duty of public social care was defined by the number of acts enacted by the Parliament of the first republic and those inherited from the Austria-Hungary Empire; and this, in consequence, caused problems with accountability and responsibility between authorities. Voluntary organisations had a vital role in the provision of social care, offering a variety of services outside the scope of

legally defined provision. They established an extensive organisational network and were delegated some of the responsibilities and roles of the statutory social care provision such as child guardianship, fostering, health and social consultation.

The areas of social care covered by the state within the public administration were food distribution, care of war veterans, care of the unemployed, public care of the poor and care of youths. The areas covered by private organisations (outside the scope of state responsibility) were either shared with institutions of public administration or arranged solely by themselves, and included health and social consultancy, basic health care, dealing with social pathological phenomena, protection of women's rights, protection of mothers with children, leisure activities for children, and financial support for students (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:122-123).

The main issues facing voluntary organisations were financial instability, fluctuation of volunteers, and sometimes lack of competence and lack of appropriate policies (Vohradníková, 2009:86-90). However, it ought to be mentioned that the voluntary sector in the interwar period was associated with the development of democratic principles and civil society, and reached a level that has not been achieved since. In general, social workers worked in the fields of community social work, youth care, social and pedagogical schools, vocational guidance and institutional care for the disabled, health care for mothers and children, and anti-tubercular care (Novotná et al., 1995, cited in Chytil, 2006).

4.2.4   Traits and Groups of the Social Work Profession

In 1917 training courses for social workers working with children and young people were organised by the Provincial Czech Commission for Youth Care; the length of courses was 10 days. The most important milestones for social work were the establishment of the *Women's High School for Social Care in Prague* in 1918 through the initiatives of Alice Masaryk, the daughter of the first Czechoslovakian president T. G. Masaryk. The initiative stemmed from the need to systematise and professionalise work that was carried out by public authorities and by various charitable societies (Sociální péče, 1922, cited in Chytil, 2006). In 1935 the former school was replaced by the *Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care*, offering university-level education (Nedelniková, 2004:38). Alice Masaryk campaigned for women's rights and systematically helped vulnerable people in general. She became a friend of the American founders of social work Jane Addams and Mary

MacDowell, and with the help of their expertise worked for the professionalisation of social work in Czechoslovakia. She also compiled a directory of social organisations and institutions throughout the country and organised a Summer School for social workers. Initially the training course at the High School was for one year, but was later extended to two years. A prerequisite for study was that applicants had to be over 20 years old and had to have completed secondary education. During the 1930s social work education divided into two branches: the first focused on social work as an independent professional activity and scientific discipline, including sociology, pedagogy and psychology, whereas the second branch concentrated on social work in health care supported by doctors in the area of social medicine (Novotná et al., 1995, cited in Chytil, 2006).

In 1919 the Central Social Institution was established by the Ministry of Social Care in Prague as a research and advisory body. The Institution had many international contacts and played an important role in the process of national social policy making. Legal proposals were prepared and consulted upon by the Institution before they proceeded to Parliament. In 1923 graduates from the High School of Social Care founded a Social Advisory Centre within the Institution as a training workplace for social work students.

"Social work education between 1918 and 1938 is characterised by the efforts to develop social work as a scientific discipline" (Chytil, 2006:330). One of the main contributors was Marie Krakešová, who in 1934 published her work on social work methods titled *The Social Case*, in which an individual approach to clients through mobilisation of resources is elaborated upon. Her method of formative social therapy was a widely-used theoretical concept even in the 1970s and 1980s (Chytil, 2006). The aim of the therapy focuses on a client so that he knows himself and understands the reasons for his adverse situation, and he learns skills and independence in order to manage his life. The approach of the therapy is based on the relationship between a client and a social worker, who uses tactics such as building trust and authority, guidance, open conflict and giving tasks.

Vostřebalová in 1935 (cited in Smejkalová, 1935:142, translated by the author) clarified the importance of social work university education: *"And if talented social workers have special training at universities, then they can work in research in order to be able to compete for leading positions with other professions; in this way, hopefully, the preconception that social work is an inferior occupation would be overcome."*

However, according to Kodymová and Šiklová (2001:123-6), the first generation of qualified social workers suffered from lack of work security and status, as the positions of top management were occupied by members of other professions such as doctors, lawyers and pedagogues. Moreover, social organisations were reluctant to employ the first graduates from the Higher School of Social Care in 1921 or to give them an opportunity for active engagement. The public and statutory organisations did not accept newly-qualified social work professionals because their activity was seen as lay voluntary service and not a service requiring professional salaried employees. Moreover, social worker professionals were often mistaken for nurses or caregivers.

Thus the first social work graduates defined the main tasks necessary to establish the profession:

1. To present the social care field as a separate occupational domain that is part of public life and has a great significance for the national, cultural and economic development of the democratic state.

2. To establish the social work education system within tertiary educational institutions based on scientific principles.

3. To present social work as an expert field, for which technical preparation (qualification) is necessary, and to include social work on the list of official posts in the public administration. (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:124)

In addition, social work graduates founded a professional association called *Organization of Graduates of the High School of Social Care*, which in 1927 lobbied with the ministries and central health and social institutions for jobs in the social services to be filled by qualified social workers. In 1928, the concept of social work was discussed at an international conference in Paris by presenters from Czechoslovakia (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001). Social work was referred to as an endeavour to improve the economic, existential, legal and health conditions of people who cannot be advocates for themselves. The social work profession was characterised by expert training, theories and methods of an independent discipline based on the study of many aspects of human social life. The expertise of a social worker was considered a guarantee of adequate assistance for clients (Vorlová, 1938, cited in Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001). The attempt to delineate the scope of the profession emphasised long-term preventative conceptual work with a client, in contrast to one-off types of assistance. This lies at the heart of the prevention of risk behaviour of a client and an escalation of her personal problems, and includes health,

social and other interventions in order to inhibit existing forms and manifestations of risk behaviour and to assist in solving their consequences. Within the wider context of social policy, Eduard Beneš, the future president, defined the general objective of national social policy as an organised effort to pursue justice and social reform in order to tackle social inequalities (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001).

The Organisation of Social Workers (OSW) was a social work professional association in existence from the early 1920s until 1948, when its activity was banned and its properties nationalised. The OSW carried out a wide range of activities dedicated to professional development, security and support of social workers, such as maintaining a register of social work vacancies, publishing a journal, developing international relationships, organising workshops and visits to social care organisations, but also providing financial support including mortgages to its members. In addition, the OSW built a strong position in relation to educational institutions and institutions of public administration (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:136).

In the period 1930-1935 a new debate opened up about the social status of the new profession, concluding that social work had not been recognised and awarded the status of an independent profession due to the nascent quality of modern social care in the country, social work being a largely female occupation, and the fact that decisions made within the social and health institutions still belonged to 'traditional' professions.

"...a doctor, a lawyer or a state official speak different languages from that of a social worker; they have different aims and naturally they use different work methods appropriate for their fields." (Vostřebalová, 1934, cited in Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:127, translated by the author).

By the late 1930s, according to Mertl (1938, cited in Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001), social work had already achieved a recognised position within the modern organisation of social care. Importantly, the endeavour to systematically assist people in difficult social situations was not considered as a voluntary effort of individuals but the responsibility of the state.

The largest field of social work in the 1930s was counselling in different areas. By that time, the network of counselling organisations had been transferred from private non-

governmental providers to public administration. In this way, the counselling activity of social work gained regular financial support (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:131).

Volunteers carried out functions such as mediating between professionals and service users (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:132). Baudysová in 1934 (cited in Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001) explains that social work professionals and volunteers had their own roles and strengths in the service provision; professionals possessed the expertise whereas volunteers had contacts, influence and the trust of clients, particularly those from villages. Šulc (1940, cited in Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001) observed the transformation of social work within non-governmental organisations; it started as voluntary activity, but with the expansion and systematisation of services of the organisation, paid and more social workers with qualifications qualified social workers were hired and had an increasing influence on the character of social work.

In 1936 at the Third International Social Work Conference in London, a profile of the Czech social work profession was presented, pointing out the necessity for political neutrality of social work and the objectivity of a social worker. The speaker referred to conflicts between social workers, politicians of local authorities in their role as employers, and politically-oriented social work volunteers, who strived to pursue their political interests rather than the interests of the wider community or even a disadvantaged part of the population (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:134-135).

4.2.5   Child Protection

The system of child care and protection was previously provided predominantly by the church until the beginning of the 20th century when it gradually became systematically organised (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001).

With regard to child protection, legislative measures included services for feeding and raising children of poor town citizens, as well as the provision of residential care such as orphanages, children's homes, refuge shelters and foster care. Although local religious organisations contributed, the programme of child protection was administrated by council administrations. In the inter-war period, foster care was prioritised over institutional care; however, as the selection of foster parents was poorly organised, sometimes foster children were treated as cheap labour (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001).

The major effort of social care was dedicated to mothers with children. On the initiative of social workers, a network of *Advisory offices for mothers and children* was established by the state. They aimed to replace church assistance with a network of advisory offices run by graduates from social schools. This is one example of the transformation of social work from a charitable arena to a systematic and legally-regulated activity (Kodymová and Šiklová, 2001:130).

In 1931 a central organisation for child care services called *Association of Czechoslovakian Child Care Services* was established, and this united all voluntary organisations in the field. The main purpose was to organise activities and to exchange knowledge and experience.

"We strive to decentralise individual child care services to local child care organisations in order to reduce the burden on the local and county authorities" (Šmejkalová, 2010:133, translated by the author). An important role in child care services was held by confidants, who carried out the functions of supervision and mediation between children or mothers and local authorities. Most confidants were recruited from amongst teachers, but they also included clerks or local entrepreneurs (Stejskal, 1969, cited in Šmejkalová, 2010:133).

Between 1938 and 1945 the development of social work was affected by the Second World War. After the German occupation, Czechoslovakia lost its independence and became the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia with German sovereignty. District Youth Care Committees continued in their work, but they were severely restricted by German supervision and ideology.

4.2.6 Summary

The professional project of establishing social work in Czechoslovakia started between the two World Wars when social problems and societal changes reached orders of great magnitude as a consequence of the First World War and the world economic recession. The acute issues of that time were related to poverty, unemployment, poor public health and abandoned children. Apart from the pressing social problems that needed to be addressed, the political and economic settings also established favorable conditions for social work professionalisation to proceed.

Legislation of social policy was carried out through a combination of laws from the former Empire and new acts, which caused a lack of clarity about the division of competences, responsibilities and resources between state, municipal authorities and social organisations. Nevertheless, the major accountability for social welfare was largely assigned to towns and their local administration. In the interwar period, social policy comprised the concept of social care with no specific reference to the term 'social work'; however, it was assumed that these terms were interchangeable. The principles of social care rested on the moral values of that time such as modesty and diligence, and methods of control and intervention prevailed over preventative measures. It was the care provider who decided about the needs of clients.

The birth of professional social work in Czechoslovakia was placed in the hands of dedicated individuals such as Alice Masaryková and Marie Krakešová, who strived to establish the profession both organisationally and as an occupation for experts. Social work training was launched at the secondary and tertiary educational levels, together with the establishment of professional associations and research centres.

According to the aims laid down by the first social workers and social work educators, the main tasks of the profession were to achieve *credibility* through generation of social work expertise and training, *legitimacy* through persuasion about the most adequate method of social work as a solution to the pressing social problems, and *validity* through ensuring state protection for the job in competition with other professions.

Social workers aimed to systemise the organisation of their practice, first by taking over social services provided by the church and by voluntary organisations, and later by incorporating activities of voluntary organisations into the services of public administration. They aspired to professionalise social work services but also secure funding for their activities. Private organisations usually depended on sponsors and all types of fundraising as they received little contribution from the state. This prevented organisations from employing a greater number of qualified social workers. Therefore social workers resorted to pursuing their activities, as in the case of counselling, within the state services because of secure funding and the state being the main guarantor of public welfare. The Association of Social Workers developed an influential relationship with

institutions of public administration, so much so that a team of social workers contributed to the preparation of new social care legislation in 1938.

In conclusion, the social work profession in the interwar period achieved enormous progress, establishing the profession within the educational system, organisations of social services and policy-making bodies. Although the profession at that time also suffered from diversity, low status and even competition between different social work groups, it gained a significant position amongst other professions and delineated a sphere of services classified as social work activities.

4.3   Social Work in the Communist Czechoslovakia Republic 1948 – 1989

4.3.1   Political, Economic and Social Context of the Period

The consequences of the Second World War on society were immense. The Proletariat of Czech and Moravia was liberated by the Russian Army, and a reunited Czechoslovakia fell under the ideological power of the Soviets, which was oriented around class struggle and an expected Third World War with so-called imperialist Western powers (Šiklová, 2001:140). The model of central planning was adopted from the Soviet Union in the sphere of social policy and social care. Marxist theory held that the economy was the foundation of social life including social problems and areas such as justice, culture, religion and education. According to Marxism, thinking and lifestyle reflect the economic establishment, which is determined by the ownership of production.

The Communist party was in a parliamentary coalition in 1945, and after the election in 1946 became the largest political party. A communist coup in 1948 and the establishment of a socialist state were followed by many changes in economic, social, and cultural aspects of life during the period of Stalinization. It was believed that through economic nationalisation and the abolition of private ownership and entrepreneurship all social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality could be solved. Therefore any remaining social problems were understood only as an inheritance from the capitalist system that was expected to disappear with the introduction of communism (Šiklová, 2001:140).

The communist party claimed to act in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the working class people, and formed the only actual party in power. The executive body was considered as the highest state organ, superior in power to the legislature and judicial bodies, and the Communist party became the only provider and guarantor of social security and social care in the country. The centralised economic system was based upon two-year, and later five-year, plans that set the production targets of the country (Šiklová, 2001:140). The economy was planned and based on limited markets and non-existent entrepreneurship. The idea of governance of 'working-class people' led to a totalitarian regime of a one-party system through the process of so called 'democratic centralisation'. This resulted in the practice of high censorship and control over the mobility of people, as well as human rights violations. People who were party members became privileged, unlike non-members (Šiklová, 2001:141). Communist propaganda organised a high number of 'politically correct' social organisations such as trade unions, youth and women's clubs, sports clubs, and so on, which were expected to promote social unity and cohesion and to serve as a link between the government and society; and also to encourage antipathy towards Western democratic countries.

The social care system was fully funded and organised by the state, and thus became entirely dependent on the state administration. The state became the only employer in the country (Šiklová, 2001:140) and "*formed one big and strictly hierarchically controlled factory*" (Večerník, 2009:216, translated by the author). Moreover, strict equalisation of earnings was implemented according to the principle of meeting basic needs. In fact, the significance of human capital, according to which education and experience determine the productivity of labour and earnings, was downgraded in Czechoslovakia the most of all CEE countries. The political influence on earnings was shown in the determination of one's education through controlled access, particularly to university, and in controlling the process of job searching (Večerník, 2009:75-85). In addition, the abolition of private ownership and a shift to employment of the entire labour force in public administration led to a deepening dichotomy between the public and private lives of people, which further affected moral values, values of time and wealth, and manners. Different moral values applied in private and public spaces: whereas amongst family and friends people behaved in responsive, caring and polite ways, in the public sphere norms of honesty and politeness were not maintained (Holý, 2010:27-33).

According to Šiklová (2001:139), the first changes in social policy came with the first wave of confiscation of properties and forced migration of German and Hungarian populations from the Czechoslovakian countries. The influence of the state in economic redistribution increased and as a result the social and economic inequalities between social classes decreased, which led to a more egalitarian society. The Ministry of Social Affairs was closed down in 1948 and its administration transferred to other ministries, namely Health, Justice and Home Affairs.

According to Aidukaite (2009:27), countries such as the Soviet Union can be defined as authoritarian welfare states, which maintained an extensive social policy and social security built upon a massive redistributive mechanism. Orenstein (2008:82-83) describes welfare regimes of communist states in terms of four characteristics: (1) the socialist economic system provided full employment as it maintained low costs of extensive social provision. Unemployment was no longer an issue as the labour market achieved 100 percent employment, however artificial, and women in particular were encouraged and expected to work in paid labour. (2) Communist states provided extensive social services, social transfer and insurance systems, including universal medical care, pensions, a variety of benefits, housing, subsidised basic food and alcohol. *"It was not uncommon in communist countries to see busloads of factory workers dropped off at national theatres or concert halls to take advantage of high culture"* (Orenstein, 2008:83). Most public welfare services were provided in order to support people at work. In other words, the state provided family support services in a wide system of provision of public social care and accommodation, such as nursing homes, kindergartens, residential care homes, children's homes, canteens, school, college and university hall accommodation, maternity houses, residential homes for the mentally and physically disabled, residential care for children with behavioural problems, sanatoria, winter and summer recreational accommodation, prisons, and so on, all with great stress on collective care. All services were free of charge and universal social benefits were widely implemented, such as child benefits, disability allowance, birth support, and funeral support. (3) The state-owned enterprises, in which profit-making was in fact a secondary matter, had an important role in social provision, such as providing housing, recreation accommodation, health care and entertainment for employees. (4) Communist ideals of the welfare state institutions emphasised class equality; however, this was beneficial only for the party supporters. In brief, the areas of employment, education and social security became the main domains of political control, which were interlinked with the security forces and formed so-called "preventative

measures" (Ripka, 2010:1). Orenstein (2008) claims that the generosity of the communist welfare states led later to great expectations of citizens about the state's role in social provision.

Možný (2009:41, translated by the author) aptly describes the situation of a Czechoslovakian family adapting to a new political and economic situation in society: *"Assimilation was the first phase of acclimatization of a family to new circumstances. Families accepted the reality of a new socialist state, to which they needed to accommodate, provided that individual members did not identify themselves with the ideological aims of the movement yet. The new societal establishment offered or promised significant advantages to a family in an exchange for the opportunity taken to expand family wealth: to women liberation from endless household chores and a new dignity of economic independence earned in paid employment and in the near future a 'liberated household' with services of the socialist system; to workmen and small entrepreneurs as fathers of families the unprecedented security of a stable job and relief from pressure of competition; to farmers fixed working hours and free Saturdays; to many workers promotion to new cleaner office work; to young people a job placement scheme for their first employment, lifelong security of employment and a pledge to a flat without any investments or worries, according to a fair rationing system, cheap canteen catering, and a nursery for free; instead of a religious belief in justice and bliss in paradise the vision of social justice here and now; and a promise was given that capitalism would be eradicated by the end of the 1960s', and that even the present generation will live in communism ..."*

4.3.2   Relationship between the State and the Social Work Profession

According to the rhetoric of the Communist Party, state socialism eliminates all social problems as these are a characteristic of capitalist societies, and thus social work became a superfluous profession. *"... the all-embracing meeting of need, through the unification of economic and social policy in a political economy driven by citizens' social needs, would render social work redundant"* (Hartl, 1991; Dixon and Kim, 1992, cited in Harris, 1997:425). Nedelniková (2004) states that in a country with no social problems, social work loses its legitimacy. It was even planned to abandon the term *social problem* and to use the term 'legacy of capitalism' instead (Šolcová, 1981, cited in Šiklová, 2001:141). The Communist Party was the only producer of social policy, and social workers in the public administration at local authority level were part of the system (Šiklová, 2001:141).

In fact, social workers became executors of state power and administration; the so-called *"prolonged hand of the state"* (Šiklová, 2001:143). According to Schimmerlingová (1992:14), social work became officially restricted to a service of social care without any aspirations for therapeutic, social, pedagogical or community activities.

In the 1950s and early 1960s social workers were limited to work in the fields of child welfare and residential care for the elderly and disabled. Chytil (2006) described this period as *"the real liquidation of social work"*. In fact, social work did continue in two forms of service provision: first, within the industrial enterprises, social workers carried out the personnel welfare function, and secondly, employed by units of local administration, social workers worked with clients outside the production process (Harris, 1997). In the production sector social work was developed as an autonomous activity that had the function of providing care for 'working cadre'. In the era of normalisation, many social care services were transferred from the administration of local authorities to organisations of production (Šiklová, 2001:147).

The change of the social work paradigm towards activity in human resources and ideologically-determined activity can be illustrated in the definition of social work proposed by Rufert (1986:205, translated by the author): *"Social work is a set of specific measures and activities that aim to create favourable conditions for optimal distribution and effective use of the labour force within the national economy, industry sectors and particular organisations and institutions ... Nevertheless, social work has also greater significance and a wider sphere of influence. Social work strives for universal development of a human not just as a worker but as a citizen of our socialist society, and for meeting social needs and consolidating the social security of our citizens."* According to the author, successful social work creates conditions for the stability of workers and a good relationship between them and organisations, and also provides the care and services of a socialist society. Interestingly, Rufert (1986:204-208) already at this time describes the profile and function of a social worker as a professional whose work is based on theoretical knowledge and practical methods. The description does not significantly differ from modern definitions of social work activity apart from the emphasis on working life, the arrangements and efficiency of a person in the process of production, and a complementary consideration of a Marxist world view.

4.3.3   Traits and Groups of the Social Work Profession

After the Second World War two university-level courses of study in social work were established: first, in the *Political and Social College* at the Social Faculty in Prague, and then at the *Social College* in Brno. The establishment of university social work education had a remarkable significance for the scientification of the discipline, as social research was a vital part of the courses and contributed to the theoretical and scientific development of social work methods (Janoušek, 1947, cited in Chytil, 2006). However, in 1953 all courses in social work education were discontinued due to the political will of the Communist Party. "*The explanation was that there would not be any social problems in the era of socialism, and so there would be no need for social workers*" (Chytil, 1998:52).

During the period between 1953 and the 1989 Revolution, social workers were allowed to study only two-year courses at social-law colleges. The only other type of social work training was provided at the secondary school level for 15 to 19 year-old students, with the curriculum closely supervised and approved by the Ministry of Education (Harris, 1997). Schimmerlingová (1992:10) states that social work was one of the professions most affected by the ideological concepts of *'socialist man'*. The idea of socialism influenced the profession in three aspects: (1) as a political ideology which believed that social problems diminish with the suppression of class exploitation; (2) in requirements on expert training because a social worker could be anyone who was *'politically mature'*; and (3) from the perspective of moral ethics, in the view that the state and society were believed to meet and provide all the needs of citizens and ensure social order without any need for civil moral responsibility, family ethics or activities such as charity and voluntarism.

In the 1960s, following Communist ideology, Czechoslovakia advanced from an era of totalitarianism of the working class to a popular and later socialist democratic society. This led to the revival of a number of social institutions to a certain extent, such as care provided by the church for the mentally sick and those with long-term illness (Šiklová, 2001:144). In 1968 the Prague Spring was a period of political liberalisation in Czechoslovakia. Although the attempts to achieve political change and emancipation were suppressed by the invasion of armies of the Warsaw Pact, there was a considerable transformation in social policy. As a consequence of the Prague Spring, the existence of social problems was again acknowledged. With respect to social work, the acceptance that social problems may exist even in socialism brought opportunities for professional

development. Social workers were able to enter fields other than child welfare and care for the elderly and disabled, as certain problems in previously inaccessible areas were identified (Šiklová, 2001). Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was re-established and started cooperation in policy development with experts from Western Europe (Nedelniková, 2004:38). Importantly, a large number of qualified experts from different fields were forced to resign from their positions for political reasons during the period of *normalisation*; these were professionals such as sociologists, psychologists, and lawyers. Some of them were allowed to work as social workers and brought new perspectives into the field as well as new methods of research (Chytil, 2006). Social work did not develop as an individual academic discipline at that time but rather as a method necessary for improved by dedicated individuals from various social and healthcare services (Šiklová, 2001:147).

The circumstances of the 1970s led to a *"renewed demand for social work"* (Nedelniková, 2004). In 1969 the Association of Social Workers was re-established, although from 1973 until 1990 it became a section of the Czech Medical Association. The Association strived to develop social work professionally and to motivate social workers in their efforts to assist vulnerable people. It also organised informal training workshops for professionals in areas such as marriage counselling, which were often in conflict with the party-proclaimed ideology.

"Contrary to the officially proclaimed approaches taught in the social work training, these informal groups emphasised that a deprived (socially ill) member of a family was first and foremost a symptom of a crisis or 'an illness of a family' per se, in other words, symptom of the system. This opinion was not, of course, acceptable to the political system, as the view that an individual demonstrated a failing in a 'socialist' family, representing the ills of the system, was easily applicable to problems of the whole society. It was not in the interests of the then political establishment to interpret social problems in this way and to make an analogy between groups, subsystems and the societal system." (Šiklová, 2001:145, translated by the author)

According to Chytil (2006), despite the abolition of university social work education in 1953 and limited opportunities for social work training, practical and theoretical development of the social work discipline continued, especially after 1969, based on the practice and issues from the field of social work. In the 1970s and 1980s the Research

Institute of Work and Social Affairs became the main centre for social work research activities that drew graduates from the University Department of Political and Social Science in Prague, and the University Department of Social Science in Brno. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a shortage of social workers with university qualifications, and the gap was filled with graduates from other fields such as psychology, sociology and educational science, who carried out from various perspectives (Šiklová, 2001). However, many research results were censured by the Communist party as publications about social problems could affect ideas about the lives of people under socialism and tolerance for the political party (Šiklová, 2001).

The Association of Social Workers within the Czech medical association managed to maintain social work training at the post-secondary educational level that had been earmarked for downgrading to high school courses. In 1983 this organisation even proposed to establish social work education at universities, and this was partly achieved in 1988 due to the efforts of a representative of the association, who worked at the Ministry of Social Affairs, and of a director of the Research Institute, Igor Tomeš, who elaborated a new concept of social policy that included social work (Šiklová, 2001:150). Already by 1980 a government resolution (59/1980) had recognised social work as an independent activity alongside personnel work in organisations of production, as well as accepting the importance of secondary and tertiary education and long-term social policy planning (Rufert, 1986:139-140).

4.3.4   Child Protection

With respect to child protection, for the purpose of social work training the field was described as follows:

"The aim, form, content and methods of child protection are socialist in character. The purpose of child protection is neither to solve the problems of social poverty nor to ensure that all children have the necessary care to support their physical and mental development. For socialist care the issue of lack of material possessions is no longer the main problem but the problem is the socialist raising of a new generation, which is the main task of parents and related social organisations and state bodies. Even within the sphere of child protection the Communist Party has the leading position ... and provides analysis of the

comprehensive development of our children according to Marxist theory ... ." (Keller, Brablcová and Zelenková, 1974, cited in Šmejkalová, 2010:151, translated by the author)

In accordance with the new *Youth Care Act 48/1947,* the former District Youth Care Committees administered by the Ministry of Social Care were transformed and transferred to People's Councils, as all services became part of the state provision. The introduction of the *Social-legal Child Protection Act 69* in 1952 transferred the responsibility for child protection to the Ministry of Justice and Child Protection departments operated by district courts. The ideological presumption was that political change would remove the causes of child neglect and abuse; therefore protection was, almost by definition, redundant and was replaced by consultation services and guardianship, intended mainly for children without a family. This resulted in fewer requests for social work help in terms of preventative and social care, and the need for collective (institutional) care in preference to foster care.

"... if it is necessary to put a child into care, in principle he or she will be placed into collective (institutional) care; otherwise it is possible to place the child with a foster family, where there is a guarantee that the child will be brought up to love the people's democratic state, and where the family provides a supportive environment for the child's positive development." (Social Legal Child Protection Act 69/1952 par. 9, translated by the author)

The following is an extract from the speech of one of the parliament members when the new legislation was discussed. It illustrates that child protection policy was also a political matter.

"And now, dear comrades, let's have a look at how children are cared for in the capitalist countries while we are discussing this Act. ... in the USA, there is no legal act that will protect a mother and her child. In the USA, there is no help for a family in the case of illness, and therefore a child tends to be the first victim of this insufficient care. As a result of the aggressive arms race the situation of British children is deteriorating. ... The Union of Italian women declares: 'Save our children against war, poverty, illness, depravity and ignorance!' At the same time 138,000 people died of tuberculosis in Italy and most of them were children ..." (an extract of the record from Parliament meeting, 30/10/1952, translated by the author)

In 1964 the Child Protection Directive 59/1964 superseded the Social-legal Child Protection Act 69/1952. This legal act defined in detail the competences and obligations of People's Councils in child protection matters, and it also specified the occupations of workers involved in child protection procedures. It mentioned *'qualified workers'* and inspectors of child care in general terms, with no further specification or requirements, and it also referred to the term 'social workers' with no explanation about their competences or roles. Nonetheless, the legislation explained in detail about *'confidants of child care',* who were local people elected according to their personal qualities, life experiences, and relationships with children, and whose main task was, amongst others, to supervise parents.

In 1969 the child protection responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which led to an increase in the number of child protection social workers. Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s commissions of family and child care were formed at the local authority level and chaired by members of local political groupings and other social organisations such as labour unions, associations of workers in agriculture, or anti-fascist militants. The Communist Party both ideologically and in practice influenced the activities of all such organisations (Šiklová, 2001:146).

In 1975 the *Social Security Act 121/1975* came into force and designated child protection as part of the social care services. It did not mention the profession of social work or elaborate on its roles or competences. Even the much later *Authority of Institutions of Social Security Act 114/1988* did not recognise social work as the primary profession most competent to work in the child protection field. In fact, the right of child protection workers to acquire information about clients' cases was given to a wide range of people, even those not professionally qualified (translated by the author): *"Officials of People's Councils, confidants of child care, citizens competent at supervision, and other voluntary assistants ... have the right to ask for information and explanation from every citizen involved (par. 28)."* With regard to legal definitions, child protection was not considered or specified as the domain of the social work profession, and in fact, other professions and occupations were delegated to carry out important roles and responsibilities in the field.

4.3.5   Summary

The political events of the late 1940s and the early 1950s brought many institutional and organisational changes of significance to the social work profession. First, the ideological

position of the ruling Communist Party as regards rescuing society from social problems through governance of the working class and state ownership resulted in the abandonment of many institutions dealing with social issues, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, social work university courses, and social organisations, as they were considered to be symbols of the rejected capitalist system. Furthermore, Marxist ideology underpinned the whole state welfare mechanism and became the only tolerated way of viewing the world. Secondly, the transformation of the national economy to state ownership and central planning displaced any private form of social work services, and established statutory welfare provision as the only permissible way of social work and social care. At this point, the social work profession in its entirety became part of the state administration, including professional associations, labour unions, social work training departments, and research centres, which affected the independence and recognition of the profession.

During the 40 years of the communist regime, the scope of social work activity and methods of work significantly narrowed, and the administration of social work services was moved across different ministries. Until 1968 social work was performed predominantly within the fields of child protection, care for the elderly and disabled, and personnel departments of industrial establishments. After the Prague Spring social problems were acknowledged, and social work re-established its position through the re-opened Ministry of Social Affairs and entered other areas of social services. However, social work methods were always preconditioned with the constraint not to question socialist ideals or the communist system of governance, which was oriented towards collective care and institutionalism. Social work training was mainly restricted to secondary education, which limited the official progress of social work as an academic discipline and detracted from the social and economic status of the profession. On the other hand, in cooperation with organisations and individuals of other professions, such as doctors or lawyers, the social work profession developed unofficial or semi-official activities, training programmes and research projects that helped to maintain the theoretical and methodological base of the profession.

In conclusion, the development of the profession during the communist regime resulted in very low public awareness about the existence and function of social work (Schimmerlingová, 1992:12). The socialist ideals and the totalitarian way of governance meant that the social work profession was seen as either a redundant profession or an instrument of oppressive power. On the other hand, the theoretical and practical

development of the profession was maintained because of the dedication of certain individuals, social workers and other professionals, all of them keen to combat the pressing social issues of that time. Amongst those personalities were Marie Krakešová (1898-1979), a social work theorist, Arnošt Inocenc Bláha (1879-1960), a social work sociologist, Igor Tomeš (born 1931), a researcher and social policy expert, Zdeněk Matějček (1922-2004), a child psychologist and child residential care expert, Věra Novotná, a child protection legal expert, Zuzana Havrdová, a community work expert, Věra Schimmerlingová, a social work theorist, Jaroslav Skála (1916-2007), a psycho-social therapist, and others (Matoušek, 2001:140-148).

4.4   Social Work in the Democratic Czech Republic 1990 - 2012

4.4.1   Political, Economic and Social Context of the Period

The *Velvet Revolution* in 1989 was the turning point in the collapse of the communist regime, and marked a new start for the country for political and institutional changes towards a democratic system of pluralism. In addition, in 1992 Czechoslovakia split up, and the Czech Republic was established as an independent country. The transition period witnessed economic market reforms, with strong involvement of the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, including a shift from a central planning and command economy towards a neo-liberal market economy, the introduction of private ownership, and privatisation. The transformation of the economy also changed the consumer market and brought about a new lifestyle: Czech society experienced a transformation into a *"mass consumer society"* (Katona, 1964, cited in Večerník, 2010:101) according to the model of Western countries. Research by Mansfeldová and Rakušanová Guasti (2010:305-324), which conducted an analysis based on the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, evaluates the development of democracy in the Czech Republic and points to the high level of a consolidated democratic system and market economy in the country; in fact, it ranked first out of 125 new democratic countries (Bertelsmann, 2008, cited in Mansfeldová and Rakušanová Guasti, 2010). However, with respect to performance of the government, the Czech Republic seems to have gaps in enforcing reforms and low civil participation in political processes. Strong aspects of the country include stable party representation in parliament, no serious issues with ethnic, religious or political conflicts, and successful completion of regional reforms of public administration. On the other hand, the country has to contend with high levels of corruption, inactivity of citizens in political matters,

slow working of the justice system, and continuing friction between private and public sectors. The remaining culture of clientelism and corruption among the political elite hinders the successful completion of the reforms (Možný, 2009). According to Pehe (2012), after the Revolution political parties were "privatized" to people with various interests, together with state property. Jinek (2009:108) claims that the developmental dichotomy in society between, on the one hand, the advanced bureaucratic structure of governance and Western ways of communication, and on the other hand, deficiencies in human potential, civil society, 'social infrastructure', and the political culture, correlates with the contradictions in the social work profession, in which strong pressures of an external structure of ethical correctness does not correspond with the reality of ethical awareness amongst practitioners and politicians.

In the labour market many changes occurred after 1989, particularly with respect to the composition of the labour force by industry and occupation: agriculture and heavy industry declined considerably while the tertiary sector expanded. Correspondingly, the number of manual workers dropped, while the number of professionals increased from 446,000 to 544,000 between 1993 and 2007 (Večerník, 2009:28-29). On the other hand, in comparison with other EU countries, the Czech Republic still has a low number of workers with a university degree, and the lowest public support for education and research (Večerník, 2009:38). The formation of an open labour market and the removal of wage regulation led to an increase in earnings disparities and a growing inequality in general according to the market reward principle (Večerník, 2009:74-85). Although after 1989 wage levels changed significantly and a new wage tariff grid was implemented in the public sector, it still *"favours experience over qualification"*. For employees in the public sector, such as the majority of social workers, remuneration is determined by years of employment and not by the level of qualifications achieved.

Večerník (2009:13, translated by the author) summarises the transformation as follows: "*After 1989, the whole economic and social landscape in the Czech Republic and other Central and East European (CEE) countries went into flux. Political reform installed democracy in place of totalitarian rule, while economic reform introduced a market mechanism in place of the command system. Social reform was directed at replacing state paternalism with a balanced mixture of solidarity and individual responsibility. All reforms were intended to create a politically open, economically efficient, and socially cohesive society. By the early 2000s, the Czech Republic was well integrated into international*

structures, and in 2004, together with the other countries of the region, became a member State of the European Union."

Early studies on social welfare in post-communist countries identified the shift towards a liberal to residual model of welfare regimes; however, Deacon (1993) and Fenger (2007) argue that the development of welfare systems in Central and East Europe does not correspond to any previous welfare typology. Deacon defines such an independent model as a *post-communist conservative corporatist* welfare regime, but post-communist welfare systems have also been described as 'faceless', in other words, as a mixture of features from different regimes (Tomka, 2005:2). Tomka asserts that cultural variables also play an important role in welfare formation apart from political and socio-economic determinants. Although each country has followed a distinct pattern of progress, according to Aidukaite (2009:34), post-communist welfare regimes possess certain common macro-level features, such as strong social security systems but low benefit expenditure, persistence of institutions of the social policy system from the past, and significantly low levels of trust from the public in the state institutions.

The welfare system in the post-communist Czech Republic was built upon established institutions and historical traditions of a corporatist type of welfare model originating from Bismarck's Germany, even though voices from abroad called for more radical changes and cuts in the social system (Večerník, 2009:43). Social policy had to respond to the new economic system and newly-emerging social issues such as unemployment, poverty, the high divorce rate, drug abuse, the sex trade, different forms of exclusion of the Roma community, homelessness, and immigration.

After 1990 problems related to poverty emerged and became part of the social policy agenda. Under the communist regime poverty was treated with equalisation of living conditions, earnings and compulsory employment. The new poverty arose out of labour market failures, and the rapid growth of wealth and income inequality. On the other hand, the level of poverty in the Czech Republic has been considerably lower than in other post-communist countries, with a rate of 10% in 2004 (Večerník, 2009:160-175).

The new ideology of social policy rested on the promotion of the idea of civil society as an intermediate institution and an alternative to state encroachment and domination over the private lives of citizens. The de-institutionalisation of social services was followed by a

significant development of the non-governmental sector, as mentioned above (Šiklová, 2001:151). State intervention was associated with the order of the old communist regime, and therefore resorting to voluntarism and the market forces in the provision of social care services corresponded with the wider changes towards economic liberation and the effort to move away from a state apparatus discredited by state socialism (Harris, 1997).

According to Řezníček (1994), in the 1990s the public authorities continued to maintain their traditional paternalistic approach towards clients. In fact, major reforms to the social welfare system were postponed until the late 2000s, when issues of pensions system, health care, and social care became pressing and unavoidable. Potůček (2004) considers the Social Doctrine of the Czech Republic 2001 as the main document of the national social policy shift, in which focus was diverted from a residual welfare model of social security policy with emphasis on prevention against situations of unemployment, to a policy of social investment concentrating on human capital activation. With some correspondence to the social policy of the European Union, the policy shifted from maintaining a social security net to the development of equal opportunities and the development of human potential. In 2004 the Czech Republic became part of the European Union, and this affected the national social policy and social work in several ways. The main interest of EU social policy based on *welfare to work* has been the employment and subsequently education and training of the labour force, and tackling the social exclusion of those who cannot participate in the labour market. Drawing on financial resources from the European Social Fund, Czech social service providers have developed their activities in this direction. On the other hand, as Potůček mentions, the success of social policy reform has been spoiled by a number of factors such as the high level of centralisation, the lack of long-term concepts, and co-ordination amongst the policy-making authorities.

4.4.2   *Relationship between the State and the Social Work Profession*

In the 1990s, the term *social worker* and the profession were determined by the MLSA in the act titled *Standards of Social Services Quality*[1]. According to Nedelniková (2004), the Standards were based on European norms, and the majority of social workers in the services could not meet the educational level that was required. Moreover, the Standards defined professional activities and specialisations in general terms and vaguely, as there

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[1] Standardy kvality sociálních služeb, Decree No. 505/2006 Coll., implementing provisions of the Act No. 108/2006 Coll., Social Services.

was little distinction made between the terms *social worker, social-education worker* and *socio-therapist* (Havrdová and Zamyková, 2001, cited in Nedelniková, 2004). The *Social Service Act 108* of 2006 was one of the most eagerly-awaited acts, and extensively transformed the system of social services and of other aspects of welfare provision. Inter alia, it refers to social work as a professional independent activity for the first time; it defines the roles and distinctions between social workers and other workers in social services more clearly and sets out the training requirements for them. Efforts have been made to define the social work profession by an independent professional law, as in the case of other professions in the Czech Republic, such as doctors and lawyers enjoy (Nedelniková, 2004). However, such endeavours have not yet been successful. The argument is that unclear differentiation of social workers from other workers in the social care services, as well as the remaining issues with registration and licensing of social workers, hinders the status of social work in the job market (Nedelniková, 2004).

Paragraph 109 of the Act delineates the activities of a social worker as follows (translated by the author): "*A social worker shall carry out social investigation, arranges social agenda including solutions of social law problems in facilities providing social care services, social law counselling, analytic, methodical and conceptual activities in the social sector, professional activities in facilities providing social preventive services, screening activities, provision of crisis assistance, social counselling and social rehabilitation.*"

The professional qualification requires a post-secondary level diploma, bachelor or master degree in the fields of social work, social policy, social pedagogy, social care or special pedagogy. Social workers who had already been working in any type of organisation or institution, but did not meet the educational requirements, were given a certain time to complete their education. Many of the social workers who had previously undertaken a two-year course, which was the only social work training available during the previous regime, had to re-take a new social work course, as their previous training was not considered sufficient. The MLSA set a deadline of 2012 for social workers to complete their education if they wished to remain in their job. The exceptions were social workers over 50 years old with a certain number of years of experience.

4.4.3   Social Work in the Employing Organisations

Chytil (2006:334) mentions that no substantial change within social work practice took place just after the Revolution in 1989 as the majority of social workers still worked in social departments of local authorities within public administration, hospitals, schools or care institutions. However, in the following years non-governmental organisations started employing social workers, and the number of social workers increased in line with the growing extent of social problems.

According to research undertaken by Růžičková and Musil (2009:79-90), and Musil et al. (2008), the fragmented character of the current social work profession caused by social work specialisation and the division between statutory and non-governmental forms of social work hinders collective action towards unification and assertion of professional interests. The major difference between statutory and non-governmental social service organisations lies in the process of financing from public resources in the form of subsidies. Whereas statutory providers receive funding from the governmental and municipal budgets, who have the responsibility to provide certain social services according to social legislation and receive funds from the state budget, non-governmental organisations rely on public subsidies administrated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the local authorities. Subsidies have to be applied for yearly, which generates great existential insecurity for NGOs. Grants for the NGOs are allocated for specific social services, as the form of funding is designed to financially support only successful applicants; however, the conditions for approval are not always transparent (Musil et al., 2008:98-112). According to the authors, the differences in ownership and funding of social services have a significant impact on the approach to working with clients. Furthermore, the different policies dealing with social services enacted by statutory and NGOs have resulted in different approaches to social work provision. The NGOs are challenged to work on market principles, providing high quality of services and attracting clients, which demands motivated, innovative and skilful social workers. On the other hand, in statutory offices more emphasis is placed on procedures and following the set of standards of the institution (Musil et al., 2008).

4.4.4 Traits and Groups of the Social Work Profession

The endeavour to improve the status of the profession and professionalise the occupation is declared in the Manifesto of the Chamber of Social Workers, issued in 2003, which states (translated by the author): *"We aim to respect the rights of the clients, and also aim to develop and implement various work methods; these include a commitment to reinforce the professionalism of social workers, to improve the social prestige of the field and to strengthen its unique place among the other caring professions".* On the other hand, as a response to the general intensive effort towards academisation and scientification of social work, a group of social work professionals represented by Syrový (2010) condemned this aspect of the professional project on the grounds that it was renouncing the original social work mission. According to their argument, the recent development of the profession was diverting social work from its function of maintaining a close and supportive relationship with clients to performance in the interests of power while being completely dependent on the state.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s many universities and colleges opened new social work courses, establishing the social work educational system (Chytil, 2006:335) as follows:

1) specialised higher schools (3-year post-secondary school courses) oriented towards education for practical use
2) undergraduate degree programmes (3-year courses) oriented towards theoretically grounded education and research
3) postgraduate degree programmes (5-year and doctoral courses).

According to Chytil (2006:334), in the 1990s social work education was one of the fastest growing fields in the country. The Association of Educators in Social Work (ASESW) was set up in 1992 with the aim of establishing and maintaining a high-quality foundation of social work education according to a set of minimum standards (Musil and Chytil, 2000, cited in Nedelniková, 2004). The Minimum Standards for Social Work Education recommends the core composition of course subjects for the social work programmes, which include theory and methodology in social work, social politics, philosophy and ethics, sociology, psychology, methodology in social research, law, social pathology problems in ethnic minorities and minority groups, health and illness issues, and field practice (Chytil and Popelková, 2000, cited in Nedelniková, 2004). The standards were

compiled by a group of organisations and individuals composed of representatives of social workers' employers, the Association of Social Workers in the Czech Republic, university departments providing education to social workers at different faculties, and post-secondary schools of social work and legal studies, as well as academics from the Netherlands, Great Britain and the USA (Chytil, 2006:335).

Several professional organisations were established as non-governmental organisations, such as the Association of Social Workers in the Czech Republic (1990), the Council for Social Work Development (1998), the Social Work Professional Committee, and the Czech Association of Streetwork (1997). Nevertheless, only a small number of social workers, mostly front-line social workers, joined these organisations, and none of the organisations has any enforcing authority. In addition, the Ethical Codex of Social Work (1995) was compiled; however, this also is not enforceable.

Chytil refers to the new period after the Revolution as a renaissance of social work; however, others are more sceptical, such as Navrátil (1999), who described social work in the Czech Republic as *"a profession with no professional culture and a low social status."* The general feeling of social workers is that their profession *"is not taken seriously among the other caring professions and that it remains relatively unknown amongst the public at large"* (Nedelniková, 2004:42). One of the professional associations (the Chamber of Social Workers) identified the lack of descriptive methodologies and a structured framework as the main causes of low professional status, together with the absence of a platform for professional discussion. In the 1990s these problems were accompanied by a lack of literature written by social work experts, and a practical training without appropriate supervision or diverse ethical beliefs (Nedelniková, 2004). The author (2004:42) claimed that the greatest challenge facing Czech social work was *"to find a way to legitimise social work in a market economy"*.

Havlíková (2009:70-77) refers to a generally accepted definition by Navrátil and Musil (2000), in which they distinguish social work from other helping professions by its aim of supporting clients in social functioning by means of communication, relationships and client-centred intervention. However, according to Havlíková's own findings, practitioners in residential care organisations understand a concept of social work *"that was dominant before 1989"*, with its prevailing focus on administrative activities.

4.4.5   Child Protection

There are around 20,000 children in residential care in the Czech Republic; in view of the country's total population of only 10 million people, this is deemed as a high figure and a worrying statistic. In 2005 foreign delegates from the European Union visited one Czech children's residential care home and found a small child strapped in a barred cot. This resulted in strong criticism from the European Union authorities, and the urgency to reconsider the child protection system in the country became evident. In 2008 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched the first research studies into the organisation of child protection, and set up goals for the transformation of the system, which was reinforced by novelization of Child Protection Act in 2013. The main issues for the system identified by the MLSA and needing to be addressed were (1) a lack of general child protection discourse shared by all professionals and institutions; (2) fragmentation of the child protection agenda between different governmental departments, and consequently a lack of cooperation between them; (3) a clash of competences between local authorities and the government; (4) a lack of qualified and well-trained social workers; (5) a lack of standardised procedures for assessments and interventions; (6) a lack of co-operation between key child protection social workers, and child and family services, such as primary and secondary prevention; and (7) insufficient effort to develop and use alternative kinds of care to residential care, such as foster care or adoption (MLSA, NAP 2009 - 2011, 2008a). The MLSA has become the key co-coordinator of the transformation process and the policy changes. The lack of a shared child protection discourse is considered to result from the organisational fragmentation and the different approaches resorted to by different ministries.

The transformation of the child protection system has a certain priority on the agenda, even for the current government. The overall objectives of the forthcoming reforms are (1) to improve the quality and accessibility of services for vulnerable children and families, (2) to integrate procedures of professionals working with clients, (3) to reduce the number of children placed in any type of long-term institutional care, and (4) to increase children's life chances by enhancing their general well-being (MLSA, NAP 2009-2011, 2008a).

These targets are operationalised into several concrete aims and measures: (1) to clearly define and enact child protection discourse and competences among all participants in the system (governmental institutions, councils and non-governmental organisations); (2) to

introduce a multidisciplinary approach; (3) to compile methodological guidance for multidisciplinary teams; (4) to provide methodological guidance and standardised procedures for child protection social workers, who remain the key professional workers in case management; (5) to transform financial and human resources into effective programmes of primary and secondary prevention; (6) to provide financial incentives for the councils' administrations for child protection projects; and (7) to provide quality training to child protection social workers and thereby improve their professional position (MLSA, Proposal for Transformational Measures, 2008). The coordinators of the transformation presume that its successful realisation is a long-term matter and may take even a couple of decades (MLSA, NAP 2009-2011, 2008a)

The transformation of the system of care for vulnerable children in the Czech Republic started in 2008 under the National Action Plan to Transform and Unify the System of Care for Vulnerable Children 2009–2011. The first research inquiries into the field started in 2009, and indicated that the optimal number of child protection social workers would need an additional 560 social workers (Kuchařová et al., 2009:15).

A particular feature of child protection in the Czech Republic consists of the very high number of Roma children and families who are clients of either child protection or supplementary social services. For example, out of 1,673 children taken into institutional care in 2006, 21% were of Roma origin (Žurovcová and Vishwanathan, 2007). Estimates suggest that there are between 250,000 and 300,000 Roma people living in the Czech Republic, which represents the largest minority in an otherwise very homogenous Czech society. The problematic relationship between the two communities has escalated over the last two decades, and more rapidly in recent years as a response to reported cases of positive discrimination. The Czech Republic has been criticised on several occasions by the European Union Human Rights Commission because of racial discrimination. The Roma population is generally poorly educated, highly dependent on social benefits, and suffers from long-term unemployment. Some of the Roma communities live in ghettos that are socially and economically excluded from participation in normal city life. The issue of Roma integration has often been described as a vicious circle, where many governmental and non-governmental projects have been put in place, but no significant improvement or changes have been registered. Social workers in child protection and family services are most likely to work with Roma clients.

The MLSA is in charge of the execution of child protection in terms of family assessments, interventions and supervision, child custody, and the entire administration. The work is carried out by child protection social workers and youth curators based in the social affairs departments of the local councils. The MLSA coordinates additional social services related to family and children's affairs, such as several specialised residential care homes, the Office of International Child Protection, and the distribution of financial resources through grants to social service providers. The Ministry of Education administers all types of schools and educational institutions, but also children's homes and residential care institutions that are intended for children under the age of 18 who are not able to stay with their families, mainly because of their behavioural problems. The Ministry of Health organises medical professionals, psychologists and all types of health services, as well as residential care for children under the age of two. The Home Office manages the programmes of youth criminality prevention, in cooperation with police forces. The Ministry of Justice provides the family courts (they are called the Institutional Care Courts in the Czech Republic), when deciding about placing a child in care, and the civil courts for divorce cases.

The territorial transformation of public administration took place in the 1990s with the purpose of decentralisation. In these rearrangements, some of the district councils' agenda was conveyed to local councils and some to higher territorial units, namely the county offices. As a result, the child protection departments based in district councils were divided up and delegated to councils' administration. On the presumption that local authorities are in a better position to review child development in their local area and can take appropriate measures in time if needed, they are primarily in charge of the child protection process and hold most responsibilities. Councils provide the permanent operation of child protection departments and adhoc meetings of child protection committees dealing with complex cases.

It is important to stress that child protection agendas, similar to the agendas of social security, social aid, and care allowance, still fall under state execution, and therefore the role of councils in this process is only administrative. In this sense, councils as self-governing institutions are obliged to provide such services and employ professionals for child protection work, but they lack the controlling authority. County offices operate as representative bodies of the state; they control and produce guidelines for child protection departments, maintain foster care provision on the agenda, provide accreditation for some

child protection services, and make decisions about subsidies for providers of immediate care to children.

The third sector (NGOs) in the Czech Republic is considered young, as the majority of these organisations were set up after 1989 and developed significantly with the support of European Union funding. As in social work services in general, in the child protection field there are also different experiences of co-operation between the statutory departments and non-profit organisations, as each of them follows different principles and methods and has a different responsibility towards clients and authorities. This leads to a certain resistance from statutory social workers to work together with social workers from NGOs.

The current Child Protection Act 359/1999 imposed the obligation upon child protection social workers to use all means available for the welfare of the child or family; however, this is still an issue. Child protection social workers do not have any guidance at their disposal except the Child Protection Act, Family Act and other related Acts[2], and the methodological precedence issued by the MLSA; therefore each council's child protection department develops its own method of work and procedures. Child protection social workers are the key workers in coordinating the care, and they rely on the legislative regulations, which stipulate that they have to use all options of the social services in order to improve the lives of children and families on their agenda. The problem lies in the distrust of statutory child protection workers for social workers among non-governmental organisations in general, and non-governmental organisations with delegated responsibilities, in particular (Cílečková, 2010).

Besides the issues of different philosophies, objectives and methods of practice among the institutions and organisations (Kuchařová et al., 2009:3), it is also the incongruity of the distribution of financial resources flowing in to the system that contributes significantly to the fragmentation of the child protection system. The most problematic aspects of funding for child protection are as follows: (1) the double-sourced funding of the work of child protection departments, resulting from the indistinct division of responsibilities between local authorities and governmental bodies; (2) the multi-sourced financing of social

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[2] Act No. 359/1999 Coll., Child Protection Act
Convention on the Rights of the Child 1959, adopted in 1989
Act No. 40/1964 Coll., Civil code
Act No. 94/1963 Coll., Family,
Act No. 108/2006 Coll., Social services
Act No. 109/2002 Coll. Institutional and protective education in educational facilities

services, particularly non-governmental organisations, dependent for their existence on funding programmes of the European Union and political commitments to community planning of governments; and (3) the fact that the major proportion of finance resources is allocated to fund the provision of residential care, which limits the resources for alternative care and programmes of primary and secondary prevention.

The councils therefore play a very important part in child protection as employers of social worker teams. They are the guarantors and the providers of child protection services; however, they are not in charge of defining the methods of practices or the social work supervision. This division of competences causes many conflicts, first, in the social departments, and second, between the MLSA and the councils. This is an issue concerned with the state organisation of public administration, and is deemed problematic in general. Some responsibilities of the state public administration are delegated to councils, who have become the executors of the services but cannot interfere with the making of policy and procedure. This causes problems in practice: for instance, the MLSA sets the rates of pay for workers in the social services according to their position and years of work in public services; however, some council administrations underpay their employees.

The MLSA determines the amount of a special grant for the provision of child protection for each child protection department according to their case load. This grant may be used for the execution of various services, including wage payments and personal rewards; however, the council administrations decide and authorise the spending of the resources. On the other hand, the MLSA ordains the amount of obligatory training hours for social workers, and expects the councils as employers to pay for training courses, which indeed leads to some level of discord.

Social services are crucial in child protection as they supplement the statutory social work with additional services oriented towards the wider welfare of children and families. Some of the service providers are authorised to take responsibility for some of the child protection competences as well, although that is less common. As mentioned above, the complexity of funding of social service providers, mostly non-profit organisations, contributes to their dependency on grant providers and their requirements for the social services. The European Social Fund is one of the largest sources of funding for the social services in the country, supporting services for social exclusion and working rehabilitation operated through the Human Resources and Employment Operational Programme

(HREOP) 2007-2013 and administrated by the MLSA. The national authorities are obliged to financially assist the projects, and this was approximately by 17% of the cost in the case of the HREOP (0.32 billion euros)[3].

The Child Protection Act No. 359/1999 Coll. that came into force in 1999 is a key piece of legislation, defining child protection as: (1) protection of a child's right to positive development and appropriate upbringing; (2) protection of the rights and interests of a child including his or her property; and (3) an agency to assist in restitution of the eroded family functions. The Act delineates the chief principle of child protection provision, which is '*the best interest, benefit and welfare of a child*'.

4.4.5.1   Social Workers in the Child Protection System

This section presents a comparative description of organisations and responsibilities of social workers in child protection departments and non-governmental organisations working in co-operation with children and families.

Clients of child protection social workers are primarily abused, neglected or maltreated children, but also children who need guardianship because of their parents having been through the process of divorce. Social workers also work with parents or other guardians; however, their primary concern is the safety and development of children. Children become clients once a suspicion of abuse is reported, and after initial investigation the registration of a child is approved. In most cases, children remain as cases of child protection social workers until they reach 18 years. Child protection social workers work under the council administration, whose responsibilities are, in brief, to:

- search for children who need child protection
- consult parents or other guardians regarding shortcomings in upbringing and meeting parental responsibilities
- consult children
- monitor and prevent adverse conditions on their development and their causes
- assist in arranging further social services or other assistance for parents and children or to assign to parents the use of such services
- organise foster care

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[3] EFS CR (2011) Evropský sociální fond v ČR. http://www.esfcr.cz/evropsky-socialni-fond-v-cr.

- arrange and administrate placement of children into residential care on the order of a court
- represent children in front of a court
- supervise children.

Child protection social workers are bound to confidentiality; however, organisations of public services and other professionals involved in working with children have the legal obligation of reporting any suspicion of abuse or maltreatment of children and of providing required information to social workers in the child protection departments. According to child protection law, child protection workers have to search for, and use all alternatives of, services to prevent placements of children outside a family; in other words, they should seek co-operation with other social service providers, especially those specialising in prevention.

As employees of the municipal administration, child protection social workers are responsible to a line manager within the bureaucratic hierarchy of the municipal institutions, with a council secretary in the highest position. In addition, child protection social workers hold responsibility for the administration of their work and the correctness of the procedures with respect to the county office, which is a representative institution of the state at the regional level, and acts as the inspecting authority. The highest body of the child protection system is the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is the organisational, methodical and disciplinary authority. As mentioned above, at time of writing, there is no existing general social work professional association with any delegated powers to regulate or control the work of social workers.

Recently many non-governmental organisations have started to provide family rehabilitation, as this service has become recognized and been supported by the MLSA, as a new social policy that tries wherever possible to avoid using the residential form of care. In fact, a non-governmental organisation *Střep* is one of the main proponents of family rehabilitation, and according to their internet sources[4], it has been able to influence the amendment of the Child Protection Act of 2006 in the way in which the legislation included family rehabilitation as an activating service for families with children (Maděřičová, 2008).

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[4] Střep (2012) Legislativní změny (Legislative changes) http://www.strep.cz/index.php?offset=28&cat=0

Family rehabilitation services provide an additional support for families with complex problems, and often work in co-operation with child protection social workers when they refer families from their register to them. Family rehabilitation can be defined as a set of child protection measures and other social services that are provided to parents and to children whose social, biological and psychological development is at risk (Bechyňová, 2008, cited in Bittner, 2009:4).

Usually the contract between clients and a non-governmental organisation includes a condition of termination of services in the case of lack of co-operation from the clients' side or when rehabilitation is found ineffectual. As mentioned above, such families are mostly referred to these organisations by a social worker from the child protection department, who also determines the expectations and priorities of the family rehabilitation intervention (Bittner, 2009).

Co-operation between municipal departments of child protection and non-governmental organisations is crucial as the child protection department is legally responsible for working with clients and therefore has control over the course and development of the family rehabilitation programmes. The exchange of information about working progress or changes regarding clients should respect the confidentiality principles; however, information sharing is the key to successful co-operation.

Table 5 below outlines the differences between the work of a child protection social worker in the municipal child protection department and a social worker from a non-governmental organisation. It shows the fundamental differences between them in terms of the volume of responsibility, their accountability, their approaches to working with clients, and their positions within working organisations.

Table 5 Comparison of Working Responsibilities and Conditions between Statutory and Non-governmental Social Workers

Factors	Child protection social worker (State)	Family rehabilitation social worker (NGO)
Goals of the	-to protect children's rights and	- rehabilitation of family

services	interests - rehabilitation of family functions	functions
Clients	-children at risk, parents/guardians	- family as a unit
Responsibilities	-look out for children in need, assess the risk and take appropriate measures to prevent harm, neglect and abuse - consulting and monitoring parents -supervision and guardianship of children -arrangement of foster care -placing children in foster or residential care - referring to other services	- skills training - consulting - accompaniment - arrangement of other services
Duration	Depending on level of risk that a child is exposed to; many children from registration until 18 years old	Depending on contract; 6-24 months (contract can be avoided)
Accountability	1.Management of a municipal administration 2.County office and the MLSA	1.Management of an NGO 2. Social service inspecting body and the MLSA 3.ESF
Co-operation	-Child Protection Act orders social worker to search for complementary services for clients -Rules of confidentiality have to be followed	-Depending on referrals from the child protection departments -Agreeing on conditions of contract with clients and child protection departments -Legal obligation of reporting abuse/neglect

A number of characteristics of the groups have already been described in the literature review, Chapter Two. Freidson (1986) described the ambiguous relationships between social work academics, practitioners and administrators as a power struggle over the definition of professional knowledge. Burrage and Torstendahl (1990) highlighted the fact that the relationships and positions of professionals are influenced and determined by the employing organisations. Referring to the social work profession in the Czech Republic, Musil (2008) distinguished different concepts of social work held by social workers in statutory and non-governmental organisations. According to the author, the employing organisations influence the approaches and methods of working with clients as well as the social workers' notions about their professional aims and working conditions. Social workers in statutory organisations adhere to the administrative type of social work that lies in the compliance with procedures and norms, whereas social workers in non-governmental organisations represent the professional and philanthropic types of social work. The concept of professional social work is based on planning and intervention specific to the circumstances of particular clients, and the philanthropic concept is primarily based on personal relationships with clients.

Nevertheless, the most substantial difference between statutory and non-governmental organisations lies in the various ways of funding available to providers of social services, including those addressing the child protection agenda. Statutory child protection departments obtain funding from governmental resources; however, municipal administrations have significant power over the distribution of governmental funding to the departments. Non-governmental organisations depend on municipal and public tenders or subsidies from the Social Fund of the European Union. The NGOs' projects usually run for one to three years, although Musil et al. (2008) indicate that the conditions for grant approvals are not always transparent. Non-governmental organisations adapt their organisation to work in a social service quasi-market, whereas statutory departments are pressed to comply with the procedures and demands of the municipal bureaucratic settings.

Regarding the organisation of policy-makers in the child protection transformation process, the executive authority is the Family Department in the MLSA, which launched several policy commissions consisting of academics, practitioners and politicians, to work on the preparation of a new child protection act. The conventional legal procedure starts with preparation of the content of a policy regulation, which is then forwarded as a draft to other

ministries and levels of public administration that can comment on amendments to the draft. The so-called *amendment process* is also opened up to interested public persons, and it is the particular ministry that works on preparation of the second draft with respect to the suggested amendments. Then the proposal is subject to three parliamentary readings: the first two readings are platforms for amending the proposed policy regulation, while during the third reading only technical changes can be made. The bill then has to be approved by the Senate before implementation. It is common that with elections and subsequent changes in the composition of political parties in the government, staff changes occur in the ministry departments, as in 2010 when a new right-wing coalition came to power.

Nonetheless, according to the MLSA Report (2010a), the government assigned to the MLSA responsibility for the co-ordination of the National Action Plan (NAP) for Transformation of the Child Protection System 2009 – 2011. It also established an inter-departmental commission to work as an independent, initiative and consulting body. The MLSA Research Institute in co-operation with the non-governmental organisation LUMOS was delegated to undertake a study of pilot projects in the child protection system (MLSA 2010b).

The NAP set concrete aims and targets towards which the MLSA works:

(1) to clearly define and enact child protection discourse and competences, and responsibilities of all subjects in the system (governmental institutions, councils and non-governmental organisations),

(2) to introduce a multidisciplinary approach of work and to compile methodological guidance for multidisciplinary teams,

(3) to produce methodological guidance and standardised procedures for child protection social workers,

(4) to create effective programmes of primary and secondary prevention,

(5) to ensure financial incentives of the councils' administrations for child protection projects,

(6) to provide quality training for child protection social workers.

4.4.6   Summary

The social work profession in the democratic period has significantly established its position in the labour market. Factors such as the pluralistic political system, the changing

structure of the labour market, and the emergence of new social problems, have all enabled the profession to bolster its status by developing social work theory, establishing university social work departments, opening up the third sector with social non-governmental organisations, and entering new fields of welfare services. On the other hand, some remaining formal and informal institutions, such as the robust centralised bureaucratic apparatus, corrupt political practices and a low level of civil engagement have also affected the process towards professionalisation of social work. The massive changes in the labour market have generally favoured the growing role of professionals and the service sector; however, social issues and related services have not been recognised as a public and political priority. Therefore the status of the social work profession has not significantly improved compared with other professions; one of the reasons being the association of social work activity with the state interventions of the former communist regime.

Nonetheless, establishing university social work courses made the subject one of the fastest growing fields in the 1990s, and the persistent efforts towards academisation of the profession, with the assistance of foreign universities, have borne fruit in the strengthening position amongst the helping professions. The practically-oriented social work courses of post-secondary education started to be replaced by university undergraduate and postgraduate social work programmes. The demand for social work undergraduate studies was also boosted by a new public management policy concerning completion of university education by employees in the services of public administration, which applied not only to statutory social workers but also to those outside the field who, nonetheless, decided to undertake social work courses.

Social work as a profession was defined legally in a consistent way by the Social Service Act 108/2006. However, it has not yet achieved independence through licensing and registration arrangements in the same way as other professions. Moreover, the Act permits professionals with training other than social work to undertake social work jobs; therefore, social work positions are often filled with professionals with other educational backgrounds such as special pedagogy, social pedagogy or social policy. Thus professional closure has not yet been ensured. In addition, the scope of social work activities is still defined vaguely, which results in an ambiguous image of social work, and employers assigning to social workers responsibilities outside their competences.

One of the characteristic features of the current social work profession is the fragmentation of the profession resulting from organisational differences between the state and non-governmental social service sectors, both of which have different responsibilities and approaches towards provision of social work services. Accordingly, several professional associations have been established to unify particular fragments of social workers according to their specialisation or the type of organisation in which they work. A number of associations have attempted to unify and represent the social work profession as a whole, but without great success. The social work profession still lacks a representative professional association with delegated authority regarding licensing, professional registration, and supervision of professional ethics, which significantly affects its professional status and power to negotiate.

In conclusion, the social work profession has progressed considerably in the last two decades during the democratic era in the Czech Republic, mainly with respect to the establishment of social work training, expansion of social work activities in new organisations and fields, and the legal definition of the profession. These have been the main strategies designed to professionalise social work. However, the professional status and autonomy are still limited, owing to inconsistent market closure to social work jobs, institutional and organisational fragmentation of the profession without any unifying association and measures, and lack of political interest and initiative in social issues and social policy reforms.

Table 6   Summary of the Development of Czech Social Work

Period	Features
	Political, economic and social context
1918-1938	- Bureaucratic system of Austria-Hungarian Empire - Social problems caused by the First World War - Political pluralism and stability - Relative economic and civil prosperity - Social democratic welfare policy
1948-1989	- Centralised bureaucratic system of one political party - Marxist interpretation of social problems - Communist welfare model with emphasis on full employment and public service provision - Non-existence of private ownership and laisser-faire
1990-2012	- Political pluralism with free market economy - Emerging social problems of new democratic society - Welfare system shifting from social democratic policy to residual model

	- New public management initiatives with aim of decentralisation - Development of service and third sectors
	Social work and the state
1918-1938	- Social work was included in wider policy of social care - State provision of fundamental social services with important role of NGOs providing a wide range of complementary services
1948-1989	- Social work was considered as an abandoned profession and some social work and social service organisations were closed - In the 1960s social work was recognised as a profession in child protection, elderly care and factory human resources fields - All aspects of the organisation of the profession belonged to the state and the Communist ideology
1990-2012	- Social work was legally defined and treated in Social Service Act 108/2006
	Social work in employing organisations
1918-1938	- Council administrations and non-governmental organisations were main employers of social workers; each of them had a different approach to work with clients and funding
1948-1989	- The state was the only employer - Centralised planning and administration of social services
1990-2012	- Council administrations were still the main employers of social workers but state policy initiates strived to shift the provision of social services to the profit and non-profit sectors - Differences between social work and status of social workers in state and non-profit sectors
	Traits of the social work profession
1918-1938	- Establishment of social work training (post-secondary education, later university level) and research activities - Establishment of an active professional association and relationship with institutions of the state - Non-governmental organisations had an important role in policy making and shaping social work services - Fragmentation of the profession due to organisational differences - Poor public image and low professional status
1948-1989	- Social-legal courses at secondary education level - Later social work professionals had sub-association within the Medic professional association - Research and practice development mostly undertaken under other academic fields, by other professionals or informal groups - The Communist Party controlled social work performance, procedures and training curriculum through the public administration - Limited power to refer to social problems for public and political recognition - Public association of the profession with the execution of the Party – state power
1990-2012	- Post-secondary and mainly university social work courses were established - Post-qualifying training within policy of continuing professional education - Several professional associations formed with unifying and training

	functions - Development of social work research including European and international projects - Increasing engagement of social work organisations or professionals in social policy making - Growing sphere of social work influence in social services - Lack of an independent professional act treating matters of registration, licensing and independent ethical commission - Fragmentation of the profession into organisational differences - Improving public image and low professional status
	Strategies of professionalisation
1918-1938	- Pointing out social problems - Academisation of the profession - Lobbying the professional association to include social work jobs in scope of posts in public administration - Building up collegiality amongst members of the professional association - Shifting some of social work activities to the state social service institutions because of secure funding
1948-1989	- Social work became well-established in the structures of public administration - Co-operation among helping professionals on examination and resolution of social problems to some extent - Informal groups of dedicated social workers
1990-2012	- Academisation of the profession - Clearer delineation of the sphere of services and responsibilities towards other professions - Involvement in the social policy-making - Securing funding for social services - Public promotion of some social problems

The following chapter analyses in detail the results from interviews with field social workers, social work managers, and policy makers in the area of child protection. The objective is to describe the current situation of the professional project from the perspective of social workers, and to examine aspects of the professionalisation of social work in the context of the historical background outlined above.

Chapter Five

The Contemporary Social Work Profession I.

Interview Analysis – Causal Stories

5.1   *Introduction*

The following two chapters include the final analysis of the semi-structured interviews on the subject of child protection reform and the current position of the social work profession. These interviews were conducted with social workers and managers from the municipal social affair departments and from non-governmental organisations, as well as with child protection policy-makers and social work university lecturers Chapter Five describes how social work professionals from different organisations deal with problems of the current child protection system, and Chapter Six shows their reflections on the professional status of social work.

To briefly recap, the theory of causal stories in the policy-making area, and the neo-Weberian theory of sociology of the professions, share the analogous idea that the profession as an interest group has to persuade the public, political groups and policy-making groups about its importance, based on the expertise and skills needed for resolving social issues. According to Stone (1989), in the field of policy-making various interest groups aim to define a problem of public concern in such a way as to attract and secure political support in order to be involved in the process of solving the problem. Interest groups describe a problem as a harmful situation in which responsibility is attributed to the guilty party, and a solution offered to assist the victims in avoiding the disadvantages suffered. Stone suggests that in such accounts causes of the problem can be classified according to purposeful or unguided actions of a responsible party for intended or unintended consequences. To summarise, a causal story is a narrative of a certain interest group that includes a description of a problem and an explanation that contains the identification of a harmful situation, someone responsible for it, victims, and a reasonable answer to the problem. The analysis of the interviews is structured in accordance with the pattern of causal stories, and it aims to compare the stories the four groups of the social work profession. In addition, the analysis strives to identify the strategies of the professional groups, with which they push their interest on the policy agenda, but also to detect, where applicable, the lack of such strategies. The analysis also considers groups'

methods to persuade others of the validity of their definition of problems within the policy-making agenda.

Regarding the analytical process, the interview data were analysed according to the themes of the theories used: firstly by Stone's causal stories and then by the theories of the professions. The themes of Stone's causal stories are as follows: problem, mechanical/accidental/intentional/inadvertent cause, victim, responsible agents, solution, and ways of persuasion. Mechanical causes are characterised by unguided actions that lead to intended consequences, most commonly through an intervening agent. Accidental causes feature as unguided actions that result in unintended consequences, situations that are less likely to happen in the social welfare system. Intentional causes include purposeful actions followed by intended consequences, and this represents the most powerful stories. Inadvertent causes are used in stories when purposeful actions generate unintended consequences such as side effects or neglect.

The analysis of the data started with deductive identification of the themes outlined above within the pre-defined inter-professional groups, and then recognition and categorisation of the range and the most repeated perspectives of the interviewees concerning that theme (see Chapter Three Methodology, p.80ff; Appendix F: Example of Interview Coding). It is important to emphasise that also new themes arose independently from the data and were accordingly analysed. An example of categories of the coding scheme related to the themes of *Solutions* to problem of the child protection system and *Professional Status*, is presented in Table 7 to illustrate the process of coding and analysis:

Table 7   Categories of Coding for Themes of *Solution* and *Professional Status*

Inter-professional group	Categories	Codes
Policy-makers	Prevention services	Importance of prevention, foster care, new family norms
	Regulation of practice	need for guidelines, additional training, additional inspection, evidence of means used
	MLSA responsibility	Municipal authority, ChP agenda under state
	New legislation	social workers as managers, regulation of co-operation with NGOs, diversion of funding

Child protection social workers	Working conditions	Negotiation of working conditions, professional association/union,
	Changing the system	Poor system can't be changed, no vision
NGO social workers	Social services	Workload from ChPD, support for social services
	Prevention services	Importance of prevention
	Active approach	Relationship with clients, good social workers
Lecturers	SW professional act	Definition of the profession, conference, platform
	Market closure	Social Service Act, restrictions on qualifications
	Professional association	Ethics committee, organiser of professional association, (non)compulsory membership
	Professional identity	Organisational identity, socialisation, Code of Ethics

Inter-professional group	**Categories**	**Codes**
Policy-makers	Low professional status	Negative media, need for better image, incompetence of social workers
Child protection social workers	Low professional status	Lack of appreciation, low remuneration, negative media, unrealistic expectations, low status of clients, need for better image
NGO social workers	Low professional status	Negative media, unrealistic expectations, low status of clients, need for better image

The emphasis in detecting causal stories of interest groups rests on the most repeated and salient narratives of the groups regarding an issue at stake. The quotations presented in this chapter represent the most repeated views on certain subjects shared amongst the members of a particular inter-professional group. The results of the analysis are presented as the most prevailing causal stories of the particular inter-professional group. An effort has been made to present quotations from most of the interviewees that represent the most salient perspective of the inter-professional group; and when significantly different perspectives occurred within the theme, these are also revealed here.

Different causal stories were conveyed by the different social work inter-professional groups, who defined problems of the current child protection transformation according to their roles and experience in the child protection system and in relation to their position within the profession. The stories demonstrate different perspectives and definitions of

problems of the child protection agenda and the role of social work within it. They include various strategies of the groups to pursue their interests, or on the other hand, show the lack of strategies of the less powerful groups. Overall, the stories capture the opportunities as well as the barriers that determine the ways of professionalisation of social work.

In the later stage of analysis, categories of causal stories and interview data were analysed according to the themes of chosen theories of the professions: professional associations, professional knowledge, status, market closure, labour market, social work market and state authorities. Again, firstly each of the themes was reviewed within the inter-professional groups and then the most frequent views were compared between the groups. The results of the analysis are presented according to the most repeated topics describing the state of the social work profession and ways of professionalisation.

After the introduction of the policy-making agenda of child protection, the chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section, individual causal stories of particular inter-professional groups are presented; first the of the policy-makers is given, followed by the story of social workers and managers from non-governmental organisations, then the stories of social workers and managers from the statutory child protection departments, and finally the stories of social work lecturers. The latter section presents the results of the analysis according to the themes framework, drawing on the theories of sociology, thereby revealing the current state of the profession and the pathways to professionalisation.

5.2   Child Protection Transformation as the Context of Causal Stories

Stone argues that interest groups use causal stories to define a problem and a solution, and to identify causes of the problem as well as the victims and those who are responsible for it. Issues of the welfare system are described by so-called 'complex' causal stories, in which several causes and responsible agents can be detected. The official definition of the issues of the child protection system was described in the previous chapter; however, a summary is presented here as a causal story. It is emphasised that the background information to the child protection transformation is drawn from the policy documents published by the MLSA; therefore it can be considered as a part of the causal story of the policy-makers. The official policy papers certainly resemble the perspective of the policy-makers; however, the policy documents are products of child protection expert groups, who are delegated to analyse and design content of the child protection transformation.

Moreover, in this part of the chapter the background information predominantly aims to illustrate the key points of concerns within the child protection system.

According to the MLSA (NAP, 2008a), the problem of the child protection system resides in the fragmented character of the system, in which each department follows its own philosophy, interest and agenda regardless of the effectiveness of the activity and possible harmful effects that this may have on children. The victims of the problems are clearly recognised as being mainly children who are, or will be, in residential care instead of growing up within a family. These children, according to the MLSA, suffer emotionally, intellectually and socially as they do not have opportunities to fully develop their potential within the settings of residential care. Not least, the policy documents (MPSV/ MLSA 2008a, 2008b, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) argue that residential care is also a very expensive method of care, paid for by tax payers. As this is a complex issue, there were many *subjects* and *interests* identified that contribute to the unsatisfactory performance of the system. First, policy papers indicate that other ministry departments, who manage institutions and organisations such as schools, health service providers, residential care institutions, police force and courts, work towards their component goals without consideration of the interests and well-being of children who are in the child protection system.

The MLSA emphasises that the most fundamental condition for a child's well-being and development is the environment and the advantages of a family. The current system of child protection, however, does not value this, and drives children into residential care instead.

"The focus of the current child protection consists of finding the solution to the consequences of a critical situation of a family and a child. The impact of failing co-operation between the present institutions in the field of child protection is the long-term placement of a child in residential care, which as a consequence can mean emotional violence (the same understanding of child residential care held by the United Nation and the World Health Organisation)." (Policy paper MPSV 2010b, translated by the author)

In terms of Stone's theory, the *ignorance* of the institutions of the child protection system about the *best* interests and development of children in general, and those in the child protection system in particular, is the primary cause of the suffering. Importantly, the

assertion of the policy papers about the validity of child protection discourse is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the experience of child protection systems in western European countries. Secondly, the policy papers claim that organisations involved in the child protection system intentionally strive to preserve the current ways of funding for their services and activities, even though the services do not contribute to the children's development. In addition, professionals employed in these organisations prefer to work for component organisational goals instead of co-operating with other professionals in the interests of the well-being of children.

"Motto 5: A child should grow up in his/her biological family unless it is against his/her interest. All forms of residential care should be the last alternative and only a temporary solution for children at risk. The key tool is prevention and family rehabilitation, and then the support of foster care." (Policy paper MPSV 2010b, translated by the author)

In order to reform the system, the policy papers propose the following action plan:

- to agree on the child protection discourse as described above;
- to divert funding from the current service providers towards services of primary and secondary prevention that (a) prevent a child's placement outside their original family in the first place, and (b) help children to be placed into foster care rather than residential care;
- to appoint child protection social workers as case managers and produce practice standards for professionals in order to work in a multidisciplinary way.

It can be concluded that foster care and preventative services such as family rehabilitation have been defined as one of the solutions to the problem of the system. The proposed changes of distribution of resources are significant, and undoubtedly favour non-governmental and for-profit organisations as providers of the services in demand. The method of case management brings new responsibilities and also a new role for child protection social workers in relation to other professionals.

Policy papers also established that social workers from child protection departments need training and guidance in order to work with children and families efficiently, due to work overload and their lack of competence. In other words, the current competences, skills and performance of many child protection social workers are inadequate, despite the fact that

the Social Service Act 2006 requires that social workers in public administration have at least an undergraduate qualification. It is stated in the policy papers that child protection workers do not use preventative social services effectively and that they work according to social stereotypes. Also, the policy documents argue that child protection social workers lack the guidance to assess conditions and circumstances of children and families appropriately, and need quality measures for their performance. This indicates that the professional training provided by university courses does not prepare social workers sufficiently, as well as the professional discretion of child protection social workers being found inadequate; for this reason the MLSA assumed certain responsibilities for professional training. In this way, through guidance and quality measures the MLSA achieves further control over social work performance.

Importantly, according to the MLSA, the problem of shortage of child protection social workers and the subsequent limited focus on the most urgent cases and critical situations is also the responsibility of municipal administrations. It is claimed that municipal administrations do not have an interest in resolving social issues of families and children at risk at a deeper level and in a comprehensive way, and instead of supporting preventative measures and taking advantage of community planning, they opt for residential care. Therefore it is proposed that municipal administrations should participate financially in the administration of children's residential care, and this would then force them to support the social services of primary and secondary prevention because the latter services are less costly.

"Municipalities are financially involved in residential care according to the permanent residence of a child, and in this way they are economically motivated to improve prevention measures and the support of families at risk. Municipalities also participate financially in supporting children leaving placements in either residential or foster care, with the same motivating aspect to prevent children being placed outside their original families (tertiary prevention)." (Policy paper MPSV 2008b, translated by the author)

In conclusion, the issue of the child protection system is defined by the policy-makers at the MLSA as a problem caused by purposeful actions of institutions and organisations of other ministry departments, child protection workers and municipal administrations, who either intentionally or inadvertently act against the best interest of children at risk. The ignorance, lack of competence and financial self-interest of the responsible agents have

been mostly identified as the basis of the problem in the system. The MLSA successfully designed methods of rectification, which include changes in the distribution of resources and responsibilities. Certainly, providers of prevention services, both non-governmental and for-profit organisations, receive significant new positions in the system, as also do child protection social workers with the shift towards managerial aspects of their work. On the other hand, the MLSA has substantially reinforced its position in control of social work training and performance. Moreover, the MLSA has avoided inspection of its own work despite the fact that it was previously, and still remains, the chief authority for child protection.

5.3   The Story of the Policy-Makers

The story of the policy-makers resembles arguments presented in the transformation policy documents. The story of the policy-makers resonates with the official representation of the problem and the reason for transforming the child protection system, which is the overreliance on the residential care system and the consequent denial of a normal family life and healthy development to children in residential care.

"So people know well what is good within their own family, but what then happens in the system … is that we put infants into residential care and it harms them. But can we imagine putting our own children there? As you know what your children need, you should think whether what we provide for these infants is absolutely acceptable." (MLSA official 2)

Undeniably, children in residential care were defined as the victims of the current system; nonetheless, MLSA officials tended to expand the circle of victims to families or clients of social work in general.

This quotation, and all subsequent quotations from the interviews, has been translated from the original Czech by the author, as previously mentioned in Chapter 3 (Methodology). *"Well, I wish the people there* [social workers] *would really consider the children in their work, that's all, so that they could truly realise that their work is about the children. And not about their ... hmmmmm .... pathologies and conceptions… and worries about their jobs. I wish instead they would work together for the sake of the child. It means that a director of residential care institutions is not concerned about the building and a director*

of infant residential care wants to have a home full of children, ideally without the parents' interest. And in divorce cases people would be able to talk with each other, which is sometimes impossible. It would be good for the child." (MLSA official 2)

"The departments are set on the residential care of children outside families, so we are basically trying to make sure the children stay in their families, and they are helped while being with their families so they do not need to go through the net of residential care institutions." (MLSA official 1)

However, there was disagreement between policy-makers about who carries the main responsibility for the malfunctioning system. Two of the interviewed policy-makers worked directly in the MLSA family department that is in charge of the transformation, and the other two participated in one of the policy working groups. Whereas the MLSA officials placed the blame mainly on child protection social workers, the other two interviewees, also employed in the public administration, tended to defend the work of child protection social workers against the practices of non-governmental organisations.

Social workers, mainly from child protection departments, received the most criticism and blame for the problem. MLSA officials described cardinal errors in the work of social workers, such as their communication with clients being based on personal prejudices, and their interventions being oriented towards residential care as a terminal solution rather than long-term co-operation with parents and supportive services. Indeed, MLSA officials confirmed the presumption of the transformation policy papers about the incompetence of social workers.

"Well, I feel that here the problem occurs ... when a social worker comes to the office and works for the sake of the family and does his best together with a range of other people who he meets while solving the case. ... But here it seems to me as people go to their offices, they work their hours and then they go home. There just isn't the professional interest in ... thinking more about and seeking alternative ways." (MLSA official 1)

"To be honest, they [social workers] *lack the foundation. They lack the notion that 'I am here for the people, and not for the children.' And they should not think that they have the right to judge the lives of others."* (MLSA official 2)

"... when someone finds out about the opportunity to become a foster parent and goes to the office, then the social worker tells them: 'Jesus, do you want to ruin your life? After all, you have your own children, don't you? Do you know what the Gypsies do when they are in puberty?' And that is common! That is common." (MLSA official 2)

Nonetheless, the story of the policy-makers unequivocally and clearly referred to the problem of a high number of children being placed in residential care resulting from the practice of municipal administrations and residential care institutions wanting to maintain their sources of funding. According to the policy-makers, municipal administrations are responsible for aggravating the working conditions of social workers in child protection departments, for example by limiting the number of social workers employed, by inadequate ways of using special child protection subsidies, or by putting restrictions on social work training. Politicians in the municipal administrations were regarded as neglectful of their responsibilities, giving preferences to different agendas.

"Well, indeed the problem is that it isn't the priority of councils. And also the way it has been developing, the question of child protection isn't the key interest of the council. For them the important matters are the investment money or money that flows somehow into this kind of activity and helps to develop some infrastructure. And the fact that there is a child in need and the family doesn't function and the child is tortured; this isn't their main concern." (MLSA official 1)

"I will be open; for example this city council argued that they do not have space to place the social workers, basically that they do not have room for them. So they return to me around five million [CZK] of the state subsidy every year. Last year it was less because we indirectly tried to put pressure on them so they hired more social workers ..." (Policy-maker 4)

Apart from blaming social workers and institutions of child protection, the policy-makers declared that certain values and points of view held in Czech society also need to be changed, together with the attitude of the municipal authorities towards the child protection agenda. Interviewees proposed specific steps to change the actions of responsible groups in order to establish a child protection system based on prevention and family union. The major amendments consisted of shifting responsibilities, competences and ways of funding between organisations and institutions engaged in the system.

"I say that we have too many children in residential care because we do not support prevention. I say it openly. I've been going to the ministry for years and attending different meetings at the ministry for years, and the biggest problem I see in the Ministry of Education. Huge amounts of money go into residential care. And pennies go into prevention! I can tell you that a couple of million goes towards primary prevention in schools but several billion goes into residential care! Why don't they change them round? Billions should go towards prevention and then the residential care institutions would not need that much ..." (Policy-maker 4)

In order to replace residential care with foster care as a new principal solution to child protection cases, the policy-makers asserted that the general public has to change its prevailing view on family organisation, a view which does not accept fostering and adoption, but nevertheless approves residential care as a reasonable alternative. The policy-makers concluded that this perspective is not *normal*; according to them, it originates from the communist regime and contrasts with the values and tenets of child protection in West European countries and the European Union in general. An informational and promotional campaign has been already launched with the assistance of the mainstream media focusing on the positive impacts and options of foster care (MLSA 2013a).

"I think that it is right to enforce foster care on a temporary basis .... Until now, a foster parent for a short time has not received any money. So I think that this is good and it should successfully lower the number of children in children's homes." (Policy-maker 3)

"I have a strong opinion that society was damaged a lot by communism. People are not open-minded, they are not positive. That means that the response to foster care was something like: 'Oh my God, so they are taking some problematic child home. No one from the neighborhood should know about it!' Basically, it is bad." (MLSA official 2)

The solution to assumed incompetence of child protection social workers, according to the two interviewees quoted above, lies in creating guidelines and quality standards for child protection performance, together with specialised training and increased inspection. For example, social workers should be obliged to present to judges evidence that they have made use of all alternative measures before applying for a child residential placement.

"But it will be regulated by the standards, yeah. Actually all social workers will act upon quality standards of work with vulnerable children and families. And there they will have basically defined the criteria and procedures about how they should work. And at the same time, people who should participate in this according to the version of our act then they will be, in fact, obliged to follow it." (MLSA official 1)

"I personally cannot imagine working at the child protection department because the situation is desperate there, isn't it? I have to say honestly that it is terribly difficult to work in the conditions there. So ... but I think that the role of the state is to create good conditions for the people working there." (MLSA official 2)

On the other hand, child protection social workers should acquire further responsibilities for managing services and professionals within the framework of a multidisciplinary approach. In this way, the co-ordination of services, including those falling under ministries other than the MLSA, should come under the control of child protection departments. In addition, child protection social workers would have a wider range of social services at their disposal so that they could delegate some of their responsibilities to service providers. Child protection social workers would be assumed to shift their role towards management, whereas actual social work based on relationships with clients should be provided by social workers from service providers, in other words, from non-governmental organisations.

"The transformation plans that social workers in the councils will be co-ordinators ...and based on the family assessment they suggest an intervention and would be the intermediary. They are the extended hand of the state, if I can define it in this way. ... because they [child protection social workers] *have control over social services ... so the vital work with the family in the field is done by the non-governmental sector."* (Policy-maker 4)

The other policy-makers added that the transformation has to include regulations on co-operation between child protection social workers and non-governmental social workers because at this moment non-governmental organisations carry little responsibility for their work with clients, and sometimes they work independently regardless of the requirements and supervision of child protection social workers.

"The social worker in the municipal administration is in the role of an official and a social worker. He has to see every client who stands behind his office door and comes to his office. The social worker has to accept him and start working with him; whereas the non-governmental organisations can choose. This means that they can select their clients, and they choose those with whom there is some prospect of success." (Policy-maker 3)

However, the realisation of a child protection transformation largely depends on the co-operation of the municipal authorities; but, as the policy-makers admitted, they have limited power to influence them.

"Well, we have been successful in the sense that we go to meetings of the Association of boroughs and municipalities and meetings of council secretaries and meetings of the Association of counties, where we explain our activities. But this is the only thing we can do. Anyway, the ultimate decision-making positions belong to mayors and council secretaries as to whether they hire another social worker or fire one. They, the council administrations, get subsidies from the state administration for the execution of child protection ... But we know well that they return the money and don't use it up." (MLSA official 1)

"Actually, the ministry doesn't have the authority to order them to use the subsidy in a particular way, by saying, 'You must use the money for this and that, hire more social workers for the team, do this and that'. Unfortunately, things are not like this and so the municipal administration interferes unlawfully in the running of the state administration, and basically there is no one who could get it under control because they are public corporations that procure state administration. So this double-track character of the administration, in fact, prevents development." (Policy-maker 3)

The current strategies of persuasion rely on informative meetings, and programmes of training courses for free or pilot schemes. The future plan is to withdraw the child protection agenda from the municipal-delegated responsibility and establish it again under the administration of public services, more precisely under the remit of the MLSA. In this way, the influence of local administrations would be significantly reduced.

"So if labour offices fell under the public administration and the county offices were like the foundation of a new national state office, then I would agree. I have nothing against

this and we have already proposed establishing a national state social office two or three times. It would be under the administration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which would control the agenda from top down. So the ministry would be the law-making as well as the managing authority." (Policy-maker 3)

"The vision for the future is that the whole administration of child protection comes under the state administration. So the state is the authority, as well as the administrator and manager of social workers who carry out child protection. But now in the first phase we have only the methodical and recommending role. So it is about whether the social workers implement it or not." (MLSA officer 2)

Also, policy-makers of the transformation depend on the support of politicians, as well as top management at the MLSA and the Treasury, for funding the preparation activities and for endorsing their proposals in parliament. In other words, policy-makers strive to present the issue of child protection so that it becomes a priority of the government. Media scandals presenting the appalling consequences of failures of child protection social workers help to draw the attention of the public and politicians to the subject of child protection.

In conclusion, the policy-makers described the problem as a denial of the right to a life in a '*normal*' family for children in residential care, and clearly identified the causes of the system's problem as firstly, intentional and inadvertent actions of child protection social workers, and secondly, underfunding of social services resulting from conflicting the economic interests of professionals and policy-makers from other ministries and of municipal representatives. One of the proposed solutions was to change the focus from residential care to foster care, as well as shifting the method of the system's intervention, which is now based on addressing consequences and effects of child neglect, maltreatment, abuse, or delinquency, but which should rather concentrate on primary and secondary preventative measures. This also means that social service providers, mainly represented by non-governmental organisations, are more likely to increase their share in the service provision at the expense of residential care organisations. The policy-makers also proposed to increase regulation of social work education, working conditions and performance of professionals. The suggested steps for quality improvement of social work include amplified supervision over the discretion of child protection social workers, also through the provision of training and guidance. In the long-term plan of the MLSA, municipal

administrations will be by and large excluded from the state-delegated responsibility of the child protection agenda, which will enhance the authority of the ministry. The policy-makers chose to launch a campaign about the advantages of foster care in order to gain support from the public, and organise both informal and formal meetings with representatives of interested parties.

5.4   The Story of the Child Protection Social Workers and Managers

The following two quotations do not describe the causal story, but nicely illustrate the work approach of field social workers. Four basic rules of a good social worker were defined by a child protection social worker as follows:

"Always have your packed lunch with you. Always wear comfortable shoes. Always be on time." And the golden rule was: *"Always look busy! Even for your colleagues ..."* (observation notes, August 2010)

The story of the child protection social workers is a story of practitioners: street level workers in Lipsky's terminiology, residential care social workers and child protection department managers. Child protection social workers admitted that the current child protection system failed to systematically and comprehensively protect and improve the lives of children at risk.

"I would have to start from the foundation, from the social benefits, housing policy, unemployment... from the problems when it comes to placing a child ... It seems to me so complicated here and the system is so stupidly set up from each angle. And I don't know where it would be best to start in order to make some changes." (Child protection social worker 6)

I do not understand our system and I think that we could copy some system that works. Our society is not worse or better than in neighbouring states. I think we only have special problems with the Roma community. But I can imagine that in ten years' time demographically the population will be larger, but with the same social problems in the minority, including children taken into care. We're going to face big problems in twenty years with respect to children who grow up in children's homes and everything around them. They come out of the care system as people who do not contribute to society. The

model of a family can probably make an individual more beneficial to society than residential care institutions. ... At some training course, someone clever offering some services defined these children in children's homes as greenhouse flowers." (Child protection social worker 9)

They all agreed that placing a child into residential care should be the final option of intervention that they would decide to suggest to the courts. The social workers stressed and repeatedly stated that orders for residential care for children are made by judges in charge of the child protection agenda; however, the social workers themselves are viewed by the general public as those *"who take children from parents",* although they are not the ultimate decision-makers.

"Whenever you watch a movie with a social worker in it, then we are portrayed there as the witches that cannot do anything else apart from stealing children." (Child protection department manager 1)

Many interviewed child protection social workers blamed the *system* that was set up to protect children by forms of residential care, and which restricted them instead of supporting them to work with clients holistically. They complained that they have to deal only with the critical situations of children and did not have *time* or *means* to focus on the wider problems of families.

"Before, I could spend half an hour here with a woman who was crying because no one came to see her. But now it is not possible." (Child protection social worker 7)

"It is a vicious circle. It is a circle. We need some additional support because we only try to sort out the urgent problems. We do not have time or opportunity to care about the family deeply. Or if we care about the family deeply, then we do not have the complementary services and ways to help them. ... So we need support in the number of social workers and also our position in general ... We do not only repress people, and we know that the families cannot do anything, do not have the means, and so it is a vicious circle." (Child protection social worker 3)

On the other hand, social workers in residential care tended to moderate their criticism of the residential care system, suggesting that children in residential care always have better

care in an institution than in their own families, and that they attempt to provide the best care possible.

"The children here have everything with respect to material care! What they have here I didn't use to have when I was little. They have toys, clothing. And each of us tries to give them something, talk with them, sit with them, hug them, laugh with them. I think that it isn't that bad but it definitely depends from institution to institution." (Residential care social worker 1)

"Well, regarding the number of children here. If they [child protection social workers] *were nasty, they would take all children, because there are many families from which children should have left a long time ago. But because children's homes and residential care institutions are full so … I have here one child protection social worker who said that she had a long list of children that she would like to take out of their families but had nowhere to put them. So she really takes only children who are beyond the limit and whose situation is unbearable."* (Residential care social worker 2)

According to the child protection workers, the responsibility for the problems rest mainly with the municipal administration but also with policy-makers, other professionals, social norms and parents.

"I thought that we could use this money for counselling services for Roma people because these are services for them. But I was told that it is too complicated to proceed with the contracts. The council authority intervenes in this somehow. So according to them it is not possible, it is too complicated with respect to the legal arrangements. It is all interconnected." (Child protection social worker 8)

"So I would appreciate it if someone composed some long-term strategy with the assistance of experts, people from the field and some research. Really, and not that someone writes something up in order to… it needs to be well planned for some years ahead. I really mind when a new government comes in, and comes up with … it may be good but then another new government comes in and comes up with something new. And it seems to me that they never follow it through. I would appreciate some kind of plan like this." (Child protection social worker 3)

"Nowadays, at this time I have the feeling, I must say that it is because of our modern society. ... I must say that really nowadays people are not capable of communicating with each other and making some agreement. We deal with lots of conflicts between parents and they fight for their children. This wasn't the case before, I must say that it didn't happen." (Child protection department manager 2)

Although the council administrations are delegated by the state to carry the responsibility for protecting children and tackling social problems in the area, they have little interest in social issues in general, and in child protection in particular, because, according to social workers, this field does not generate income but only used resources; and also it deals with taboo subjects that in the case of scandals can bring unpopularity to politicians amongst voters. Therefore, municipal administrations were blamed for not taking up their responsibilities towards citizens, particularly the population groups in need. For social workers, this limited the alternatives of work with clients, because of things like shortage of social housing or lack of availability of complementary services.

ChPSW5: *"Here the municipal administration interferes in everything. And they don't understand it. The municipal administration doesn't understand how the state administration works. And in some towns, for example in T…, there Mr. Mayor pronounced that social workers simply cannot go to visit children in care. They have a ban."*
Researcher: *"A ban? Against the law?"*
ChPSW5: *"Even against the law. He doesn't care. And the county office was involved in this case and they had a meeting together, but still…"* (Child protection social worker 5)

"I wish people would care in a way so the children would not have to go to residential care. I think that now the financial situation of people is worse, and more and more people are poorer and poorer and there are more children in residential care institutions. First it is the stress and then social reasons. Today you cannot place a child into residential care for the reason that the family does not have anywhere to live. But there is no social housing; the towns do not have social flats to offer or social benefits to support them. So it doesn't work here." (Child protection social worker 4)

Secondly, council administrations significantly restrict the working conditions of social workers, and this had an essentially de-motivating effect on the working attitudes of social workers. Social workers are not recognised as professionals and are treated as other

employees of municipal administrations, with mostly clerical responsibilities, which above all is reflected in their low remuneration. Municipal administrations decide on the use of the special state subsidy for the child protection agenda, which can also be used to employ new staff or for financial rewards; however, many municipal administrations return large amounts of this money. The social workers claimed that this is proof of ignorance and lack of interest of politicians with respect to social issues. Also, social workers have to obtain permission for attending training courses as part of their obligatory professional education; however, administrations usually allow attending only cheap courses with low hours of attendance, or influence the selection of training in another way.

"But you know, when you know that it [the subsidy] *could be used for wages and it isn't, and the money is returned, that it is incomprehensible and you feel sorry. And you don't understand it. I understand that we are only front-line workers and what happens at top management goes beyond us."* (Child protection social worker 2)

"All of us see that public administration is an expensive business, and they would like to reduce the number of employees. Only this work has started to be done much from the desk! So if they cut the staff, then of course they save some resources, but they will also destroy the people completely or this work will be about nothing." (Child protection social worker 5)

"So it means that when they issued a resolution that my salary should be in the ninth class so they should pay it to me since … but I find it may even be dangerous to be so brash as to ask for the ninth class money. Give it to me! I could later find out that I am not wanted here. So unfortunately things like this happen here and you have to be cautious about what you say and what you ask for." (Child protection social worker 4)

"Definitely, I think that the work is not valued financially. Probably everyone says this, but it will never be different. For example if you have a superior who has no empathy, then for him this work is needless and he would abolish it. For what? It [social work] *is useless. So if he hasn't got at least a little bit of empathy, you cannot explain to him that something is not true, unless he gets into the situation himself where it is necessary to work with the people and solve their problems, and where it is necessary to give them a minimum standard of living and help them to escape from the bottom - because he has never been at the bottom."* (Child protection social worker 7)

The social workers did not suggest any concrete solutions on how to improve their working conditions or how to curtail the control of council administrations over the child protection agenda. Individual social workers did not feel they have any power to improve their positions or to prevent children being placed in residential care institutions. Most of them refrained from joining the strike of public administration employees in April 2011. However, they argued that the MLSA should consider the negative effects of action on public administration, and suggested that a general professional association, as yet not created, would be the most appropriate authority to negotiate working conditions of social workers.

"You know, after all, no professional organisation that would support us exists or works here ... an organisation that we could consult with and that would fight for us. The Association of Social Workers doesn't work, in my opinion. I know that there is nothing like this in reality. So I don't know who should stand up for us (?) We social workers as individuals? Us, here, would we revolt...?" (Child protection social worker 2)

"I think that if something is done for the social workers in the same way as the nurses have got [a professional association] *here, that would be great. Because I think that it would at least increase the status of social workers. You know, many times I have the feeling that we are girls for everything. And it really annoys me! Because one has to have the knowledge. And I make decisions about the lives of people here."* (Child protection social workers 9)

The MLSA, which represent policy-makers in the eyes of child protection social workers, was responsible for *"nice visions"* and *"appealing targets"* included in policies and regulations, but without understanding the real context or the problems of children or working with them. An example of this would be the pressure to place children into foster care instead of residential care, which was an excellent idea according to child protection social workers; however, the discrepancy between the high number and conditions of children suitable for foster care, and the low number and limited supply of potential foster parents, presented a real obstacle.

ChPSW6:*"Well, I don't know, they have still got this vision that there will be foster care for a temporary period but I don't understand where they will find the people. Where do*

[or will?] they find the foster parents? We have a problem getting foster parents who wish to take a child from a children's home."

CPSW7: *"They simply have very high demands! Something like this: healthy child, of our ethnicity, without history."*

"I think that they [MLSA] *don't know how to influence people. Because, according to my estimation and findings from my research about foster families that I look after, then this year there have been fewer applicants in general. And recently we were told at a meeting that there are 50% fewer applicants for adoption and foster care."* (Child protection social worker 10)

Child protection social workers and even department managers felt that they have limited power and ways to be involved in policy-making and potentially change policies and procedures that regulate their work. However, some of the managers claimed that earlier, in the 1990s, it was easier to influence preparation of policies than it is now with the new composition of policy-makers and administrators at the ministry departments, admitting that personal connections were more effective than official procedures of legal amendments.

"Of course, I compile suggestions for legal amendments whenever there is a call for it from the ministry. The previous composition of the people working there [MLSA] *were more approachable than nowadays. I used to have a couple of people from the branch and we consulted about things many times… but only a few are left there now."* (Child protection department manager 5)

In fact, personal connections with other professionals or administrators are used by the child protection social workers in many ways to speed up procedures.

"The social worker went to the office of the judge who was in charge of a divorce case due to proceed. He explained to her the circumstances of the family. They agreed on the steps they would take and said they would see each other in the court room." (observation note, August 2010)

"The social worker admitted that sometimes she called a social worker from a certain children's home and asked her about a child whom she was supposed to visit. When she thought there was no point in visiting the child, they agreed that they would record her visit even though she did not actually go there." (observation note, August 2010)

"Now the situation is different .... We used to be in the same building so we could come anytime to see the guardianship judge and speak to him or outline the situation so we didn't need to discuss it too much in the courtroom. So they understand the situation well. So we could tell them about the reality that a woman was being beaten but didn't admit it." (Child protection social worker 6)

Child protection social workers create a network of professionals, with whom they have a good working relationship based on personal familiarity and trust; and then, in particular, sharing information and exchanging reciprocal services become common between them even outside the formal procedural method.

"*He* [a judge] *calls everyone 'doctor' - 'So, what would you suggest, doctor?' I mean, I don't mind being promoted to a doctor but the first time I was a bit confused as to who he was speaking to. And when he started he had problems with people seeking divorce. He took a really long time. He is a strong Christian.*" (Child protection social worker, observation note, August 2010)

"*I think that within ... as the child protection department is in the council building ... when she writes to the benefits department, they go to coffee together, so she probably gives it to her, she doesn't have to write it; she just tells her and she passes it to me and I find out that parent's work officially ... .*" (Residential care social worker 2)

Co-ordination of services and co-operation with other professionals already take up a large part of child protection social workers' time, and they discussed the topic of multidisciplinary teams widely. However, they did not identify a particular profession that caused problems in the organisation of services. Instead, they distinguished some professionals, who followed the objectives of their employing organisations and were not willing to co-operate with child protection social workers effectively, from other professionals whose concern was the *best interest of a child*. The social workers concurred that those professionals with whom they found it difficult to co-operate lacked professional

dedication to their work. This means that they only work towards the goals of their employing organisation but do not carry out the mission of their profession, which consists of working for the welfare of the public and which requires personal involvement. In other words, some professionals do not take on the responsibilities of their professions but rather work only as employees of certain organisations.

"They are colleagues from T town, they have a concept of work which is a little bit different, and it seems to me that they do not do many things although it is part of their job. So they say: We are not going there. We are not going to discuss the case, because it is not obligatory. They understand it in this way and do not do many other things. ... So I asked for it [information] *in another town but there I have very good co-operation with them. Just once they told me that they were on strike. Otherwise I must say that they are willing to help via phone or letter."* (Child protection social worker 10)

"It is like this everywhere; you have it here with the police, you have it in the court. You can always find people with whom you can co-operate, who simply do their job plus something extra, yes, which they don't have to do. Yes, hardly anybody does what isn't stipulated by law. Basically he does his own part and then says: 'I don't care about this, there is no obligation to do it so why should I do it?' Yes, but someone just goes and does it. It is like this everywhere – the police, the courts, the same as schools." (Child protection social worker 1)

According to the child protection social workers, some professionals including judges, policemen, teachers, general practitioners and social workers from other departments complied with the procedures and culture of their organisations, but did not co-operate, mainly in terms of providing information related to clients.

"Then we should cooperate with the non-governmental organisations, where the key worker, the child protection social worker, should set out the steps to take – we did this and we can do that. What is your point of view? So they exchange information. But it doesn't work, as they say: We cannot tell you. We are bound to confidentiality of information and bla bla bla." (Child protection department manager 3)

Although the social workers complained about the lack of available complementary services, they considered that social workers from non-governmental organisations

providing such services were uncooperative in some cases. They often complained that non-governmental social workers withheld important information from them about clients, as they felt that they were on the clients' side but did not understand the pivotal role of the child protection departments. According to the child protection social workers, the problem is that non-governmental organisations select for their programmes clients who have a good possibility of a successful outcome from intervention, and they avoid difficult cases, so-called *cream skimming*. In addition, non-governmental organisations can discontinue their services, if clients do not cooperate with them, without further responsibility for a case.

"And we need to work where the problems start. The other problems can be solved in the current system. But what we need to focus on is prevention so that children do not need to go to residential care institutions. So there should be a sufficient number of primary services in the field." (Child protection social worker 8)

"The thing is that it should not be business. Many institutions are connected to these veins of funding so everyone wants to get something out of it. I can see it in FOD organisations that accept children and have some duties towards them. They have facilities for children in need of immediate help. But they choose only some of them. They are very picky." (Child protection social worker 5)

In summary, the most important aspect of co-operation between professionals, according to the child protection social workers, is *professionalism*, which refers to personal input and responsibility for work with clients. Conversely, lack of professionalism was related to a preference for organisational goals and procedures and promoting one's own interests instead of communication in a child's interest.

With respect to the public, the child protection social workers stressed that the expectation of them from the general and political public is based on bias and an unrealistic understanding of their position and of social work in general. Both the general population and also politicians presumed that social workers could respond to cases of child neglect, abuse, youth criminality, and related problems with a *one-time intervention and a permanent solution.* To put it another way, child residential care as an alternative to child protection is in accordance with a populist perspective more than long-term therapeutic work with children and clients. Social workers felt that the public expect them to "*quickly*

sort out all problems", *"hide the social problems* or *problematic people"* and *"fix these people".*

"I have the feeling that the general public, who don't have insight into social work, expect us to keep them clear of these people and that we repair them! The people come here; we repair them somehow and then basically return them back repaired. Yeah sometimes I have the impression that they expect such things that we are not capable of. But I am afraid that most of society just expects these people to disappear from the earth." (Residential care social worker 4)

Evidently, the child protection social workers felt resigned to a lack of understanding and support from the public. According to them, there is no point in explaining about their work to others outside the child protection field as the general public would not understand.

"We do not have the reputation of being useful for society. Doctors, yes, doctors have offers from abroad and can lobby. What can we do? How shall we present or demonstrate our usefulness?" (Child protection social worker 10)

The child protection social workers partly assigned responsibility for overstrain of the residential care system to parents. According to them, certain groups of parents, mainly of Roma origin, have many children because child benefits are their main source of income. The child protection social workers described the system's approach to the Roma community as positive discrimination. Although views on the Roma community were not a focus of the research project, it should be mentioned that the state social workers described Roma clients and their experience with Roma people in a significantly more negative way than the non-governmental social workers did. The child protection and residential care workers considered the distribution of limited resources such as their time, services, and financial benefits to Roma receivers as systematically unfair with respect to other clients.

"Here, especially in Roma families, the Roma people have x children just for the sake of receiving social benefits. So they have social benefits for them. So they have money for them. I have such a ... basically they want children from 0 to 3 years. They can get money for children until they are 3 years and then they want children of 18 years so they can earn money and bring it home. So the parents stop being interested in a child after he is older

than 3 years because they stop giving them the maternity benefit. So they decide to have another child so they can get more. But one day it is over and suddenly they have 4 children at age 4, 5, 6 years and they don't receive any maternity benefits for them and now they have to look after them. And they do not work; they are not entitled to anything, x people live in one room and so on." (Residential care social worker 3)

"Yes, that is the positive discrimination. In our country the positive discrimination is really obvious. Honestly I had always been looked favourably on the Roma community, I always defended them, and always when we held discussions at university I was saying that not all of them are the same and things like this. I was like ... saying to myself ... I know that as a matter of fact many mistakes were made and we actually raised them like they are now ... In O town they had a problem with a particular area there, where in the communist time certain things were given to Roma people and they damaged them, and they were saying things like "No problem we'll give you something else." And now they are surprised that Roma people have jumped on them asking for a more appropriate house because they cannot live in that one. We raised them up to be like this. That is the truth. We gave them new housing in such a way that they don't need to worry about it and we arrange everything for them. Let's be honest, many of them have slipped into the attitude of wanting to have their ass carried ... if I don't need to do anything why would I bother? But on the other side, the longer I am here in this position the more it annoys me. The positive discrimination of Roma people really exists and it exists to a great extent. In general I don't have anything against them but the majority of Roma people in our country are simply ... I don't want to be rude ... They basically benefit from positive discrimination. They abuse social benefits; they live easy lives without going to work. Basically they will not work in their life but they will receive their pensions. I will work all my life and I will be grateful if I save some money for my retirement." (Child protection social worker 7)

"So they defeat us simply by complaining and taking their rights. I am afraid that soon there will be a war between the majority and the minority ... One side becomes xenophobic, more racist, because it is employed, works, pays taxes, and this is the result." (Child protection social worker 1)

In addition, the social workers pointed out the changing interpersonal behaviour of parents, particularly during the divorce process, as a cause of the strain on residential care. Children become a means of manipulation for parents, and although abuse, maltreatment or neglect

is not usually present in these cases, due to the child's affected behaviour or unsolvable care arrangements, he/she become a subject of residential care.

"There is a great pressure on us at this moment, because of course it was a different thing twenty years ago. Moreover, today people divorce much more and they are ... the parents are kind of more aggressive than before. Not towards children, I think towards each other. Before people did not have such wealth, and it makes things worse. So I think if we were more in number here, we would have more time to spend on prevention. There is no time left for it." (Child protection department manager 4)

"Years ago, villains from the lowest social classes came here, they were thieves and bullies, normal naughty kids. Nowadays children are worse, they usually have a family environment, they are cared for maybe more than is necessary. ... parents can't cope with them. They cannot communicate with their children. The children are empty. ... Suddenly they find out that they do not understand their children and their children don't understand them." (Residential care worker 1)

To conclude, the child protection social workers defined the problem of the child protection system as the high number of children in residential care and the negative effects of residential care on children. They believed policy-makers, society, parents, but mostly municipal authorities, are responsible for it. The child protection social workers felt that municipal authorities constrain their working conditions and, above all, the possible methods that they could use in work with children. Often the social workers did not identify a particular agent but blamed the *system* that places limitations on protecting children. Social workers referred to the unworkable ideas of policy-makers and neglect of local politicians about social issues as the main causes of the problem. From their perspective, their working conditions and resources were curtailed by these powers, which significantly limited their ways of working with children and families.

On the other hand, the child protection social workers did not offer any convincing solution apart from establishing a representative social work association that would negotiate better working conditions on their behalf. In terms of Stone's theory, the child protection social workers have got a weak story in terms of policy-making influence. They identified actions of responsible agents mostly as unguided in the cases of the public and ministerial policy-makers, and as inadvertent in the case of municipal administration. In

this way, they did not ascribe to them direct responsibility for problems in the child protection system. Above all, they did not know who to tell their story to, and offered an ambiguous solution to the situation. This reflects their recognised position in the system and notably their resigned attitude to formal control of their working conditions.

"I am thinking [about what measures social workers can take to improve their working conditions]; *I have never thought about it before. We always grumble about it here but we know that we don't have many possibilities* [of improving anything] *from our position."* (Child protection social worker 4)

However, the narratives and observation show that child protection social workers also use informal ways of controlling their work at both street and policy-making levels. In everyday practice, social workers may choose to circumvent burdensome regulations through connections with other professionals such as magistrates, doctors or policemen. Until recently social work was embedded primarily in the public administration, and therefore remaining connections inside the public services are used to lobby for more favourable conditions of child protection social workers.

5.5   The Story of the NGO Social Workers and Managers

"So … simply it [social work] *is not an occupation, it is a calling. Same as the meaning of the word is."* (NGO social worker 3)

According to the NGO social workers and managers, the problem of the child protection system lies in the lack of complementary social services, such as family rehabilitation, that could restore the functions of a family or otherwise prevent children from being placed in residential care. Also, the very limited availability of social housing was considered as one of the main reasons why parents struggle to sustain reasonable conditions for their family and to prevent related problems from occurring.

"If there is anything needed, I think that it is much better and more professional care of children. Because here we lack really, I don't know, therapeutic services, psychiatrists and this social net for children is very poor. Here we have residential care institutions where all children are sent immediately instead of working with them. I think that children are not provided with sufficient help and services." (NGO social worker 2)

Although the NGO social workers agreed that the system does not endorse the best interests of a child, they tended to focus on the whole family as a victim of the system. They often emphasised the unequal economic and political organisation of society and the negative and prejudicial attitude of the public towards their clients.

"Basically, now they have come up with a regulation that inadequate housing conditions are not a reason to take a child out of a family. So they simply cannot take children regardless of whatever conditions they live in. Or before it was that we have too many children in children's homes so we shall not place children in children's homes. But on the other side, there is no work with the families! It was just decided that we shall not take children out of families. But we do nothing to help the families or supervise them. So regarding children, there is great inadequacy there." (NGO manager 1)

In general, the social workers from non-governmental organisations identified local municipal administrations, and mostly child protection social workers and managers, as the agents responsible for the problems of the child protection system. They blamed municipal politicians for showing a lack of interest in social issues of the municipal areas, and child protection social workers for being heavy handed. However, the non-governmental social workers recognised and stressed that child protection social workers and municipal authorities each have an individual approach to their work and child protection issues. As they mostly cooperate with a number of social work professionals within their services, they emphasised the individual differences in their work.

"So like this, we have been trying to set up a children's emergency centre for 10 years. Unfortunately we haven't been supported either by the child protection department or the social department or the county or municipal authorities in setting up such a facility for children. So in the whole county there is no facility such as this that would serve children in emergency situations. ... So it is obstructed in the sense that the child protection department would like to have it but there is no initiative from them. There is no effort from their side. And that is a problem." (NGO manager 2)

"With the youth social workers in charge of K. B. area and M. the co-operation goes really well. We communicate a lot and they recommend families to me. There the co-operation goes well. So they are two people. [However,] *the youth social worker for N. area*

responded to my first e-mail in which I introduced myself and that was it. Then I contacted three child protection social workers and they haven't replied to me in half a year." (NGO social worker 5)

"There are child protection departments that are – I say it frankly – totally, they are totally stupid! Then there are child protection departments where there are certain … it is very individual in terms of particular social worker or particular group of social workers. Never is the whole department perfect! So one can co-operate with some particular people. With others it is worse." (NGO social worker 6)

Nonetheless, the NGO social workers and managers have learnt to communicate with child protection departments as they are dependent on them for referrals and subsequent funding. Social workers organise presentations for the departments about their services and negotiate conditions of co-operation. Their main argument was that they can relieve the departments of particular areas of work with clients that are time-consuming or that require special training or facilities. The practice of triple agreement made between child protection social worker, non-governmental social worker and a client has become common.

"Of course, the first invitation is an extra job in terms of someone having to come here or invite us and having to manage the work. But then if we divided the field of activities and each of us was responsible for something, then of course the state social worker would have the main say in sorting things out: 'so you supervise this for me, and I want a report once in two months, and you oversee this problem, then we will make it together" (NGO social worker 1)

Furthermore, they also create informal networks of professionals including child protection social workers, with whom they co-operate beyond the formal procedures such as maintaining confidentiality.

"We discuss emergency cases and unofficially she [youth social worker] *sends me children and in return I can ask her for information about cases that are complicated. So regarding these youth social workers, the system works perfectly. We have a bit of a problem with sharing information due to the confidentiality regulation. In theory, we should not tell them such things so we find a way round it."* (NGO social worker 2)

"It depends on the personality [of a child protection social worker]. *Indeed it depends on the personality. If the person is approachable, empathic, and able to understand how much work we have ... And I am like that, I try to get on well with everyone and it is fine in this way. We have a child protection department here in K. town, which we call every day as they have three children here. And we get on really well. Then there is a child protection department, which tells me that I have one month to proceed with the child's application otherwise I can't do anything."* (NGO residential care manager and social worker 8)

The NGO social workers assigned a great deal of responsibility to politicians in council and municipal administrations as they do not follow social programmes and lack willingness to deal with social issues. Nonetheless, as organisations they are financially dependent on funding from the ESF administered by the MLSA, and from county and municipal grants, and therefore politicians have become important subjects of their attention. The social workers and managers described various strategies to influence the policy-making process and distribution of funding.

"We were in charge of services in seven towns in D. region, each of which has its own little council authority. In each town the co-operation is very different. So there are towns where the co-operation is great, where the mayor or deputy chairman lives for the town, knows it very well, and so they think that co-operation with some non-governmental organisation is good, even though it is about psychological social assistance. Then there are, of course, mayors who do not care about the town and do not want anyone to interfere. For example, they have the opinion that if they can cope, anyone else also can. So they do not need any help." (NGO manager 2)

"This pressure has already been apparent and someone is smarter than another one in securing financial resources. One has an excellent idea and manages it well and the other one has connections. It happens often that things are done through connections with politicians or an association. In this way co-operation between organisations is under threat." (NGO manager and social worker 4)

The non-governmental organisations propagate the idea that intervention based on active contact and relationships with clients is effective in terms of prevention, family functioning and life skills. The non-governmental social workers claimed that the workload of child

protection departments is too high and therefore their own social services can help with the work. However, child protection social workers, according to them, tend to control how they with clients, including requesting personal information, regardless of the principle of confidentiality between the non-governmental organisation and children or parents. Non-governmental organisations like to present themselves as the "good" social workers, in contrast to the "bad" social workers from child protection departments, whose main methods are control and the potential power to place a child into residential care, whereas they work on the basis of a trustful and intensive relationship with a client.

"I think that, in the eyes of the public, we are the good social workers and unfortunately they [child protection social workers], however hard they try, they are always considered as: Jesus Maria, that is the social department! It is not the same with us. They do not fear us." (NGO social worker 5)

The non-governmental organisations have become skilful in conveying their story to people and groups with decision-making powers. There is an overall effort to maintain good relationships with politicians at all levels. Some non-governmental organisations have even developed public relations programmes to promote their services to the public and to the political circle. Most of them realise that arguments based on economic efficiency and savings for municipal and state budgets are most effective. The calculations derive from lower costs of services that achieve long-term rehabilitation of clients, compared to costly residential care or expenses spent on tackling criminality caused by failure to solve social problems of families. The NGO managers admitted that this line of reasoning based on money saving is better received than assertions about improving the quality of life of clients. In other words, the story used by non-governmental organisations to convince politicians about the importance of their work shifts the problem of the system to a matter of money, and identifies tax payers and budgets as suffering a loss.

"It took a long time to explain the idea to the politicians and then we had to find a politician who said "Yes, I will try to push it through." (NGO manager 3)

"That was very successful programme, actually still is. Yes, it is still running and it has a great response. It has like ... it is actually great at this kind of programme to enumerate the impacts of it. That is a great advantage of it, but as for other programmes this is not possible to do. Because at the moment when a mentor helps a client in a way whereby

community service is not changed into imprisonment it has in this way saved something like 100.000 Crowns [£3000] a month. We save money for the state." (NGO manager and social worker 4)

However, non-governmental organisations also find less formal ways of bonding with politicians. For example, non-governmental organisations are involved in organising public "charity" events, at which politicians create a public image of being good-hearted people. Some non-governmental social workers also organised team-building events or workshops for politicians according to their needs. Sometimes politicians are interested in arranging matters within a community with the assistance of a non-governmental organisation in exchange for a reciprocal service such as securing a grant.

"It happens that we sell ourselves out. Yeah, that ... because we are little bit afraid what is going to happen after 2012 then some of the organisations sell themselves out in a way that councils, especially councils, sometimes want from them things that are contra to services for clients. ... So let's take a particular example: one social organisation, I won't name it, that helps socially excluded people, so Roma, and when a council decided to privatise this particular area, where the Roma lived, so they told this organisation that if they help them to move the Roma out then the council will give them a grant for next year. So this organisation sold itself, went to the Roma and gave them papers to sign that they didn't understand. They didn't explain the matter to them and suddenly a few residents where they lived found out they were homeless. And they got 200.000 (Czech Crowns) for a flat that was worth 2 million. On the other hand, I don't condemn this organisation, for the reason that owing to this they survive and then they are able to help other clients. Yeah, they just have to decide between two evils; 'if we don't support the council in this way then we won't get funding and will have to cease to exist. Whom will we help then? Or if we support them, we will behave unethically towards this particular group of people, we survive and we can continue to help. Awful ethical dilemma! ... We compete with each other! There, I think, is the important area affected by the cuts; because we want to survive so we basically work this way that ... we suck the bums of parties which give us orders, so that we can prove that we are better than other organisations." (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

"We get half of the funding from the council authority. It is a worry each year whether we will get the money or not. But we and our director have a good relationship with the

mayor. He is great. Every year he plays in a football match against our children.” (NGO manager 5)

As in any other market field, even non-governmental organisations compete amongst one another for the resources available in the form of grants. The non-governmental organisations described ways of discrediting other organisations as part of the competition. Also manipulation of statistics and analysis of service outcomes were carried out in order to meet the targets of a grant authority and number of clients served. Some social workers mentioned back-biting and “stealing” clients as a ways of enhancing the position of their own organisation.

“Because indeed there are pressures ... and because these pressures come from the local council administration and it may be de-motivational for the service providers to co-operate ... Then the organisations are in fact competitors against one another, rather than co-operating with one another. The co-operation between them may result in them not being able to prove themselves. These various calculations of number, I feel like some of the analyses are elaborated only so that they can conveniently be used for writing projects.” (NGO manager and social worker 4)

Nonetheless, the competition between the organisations was felt mostly at the managerial level, not amongst field social workers, and also some of the non-governmental managers confirmed that they tried to agree with each other on providing complementary services and dividing the available funding. For example, before funding is distributed in formal ways, informal agreements are made between some organisations about dividing grants for services and in this way preventing others from taking part in the distribution process.

NgoSW2: *“Well here it was about a deal. The organisations agreed about who would kind of ... hmmm... basically it was known what bundle of money is available there, who draws how much in order to cover everything. Basically they assisted each other.”*
Researcher: *“Within the community planning?”*
NgoSW2: *“No. They set up a kind of informal group.”*

“Well here it works on agreement. The two clubs [social services] *made a deal. Who kind of ... basically they knew how much money it was, and decided who would get what and how much so it covered everything. Basically they just cooperated.”* (NGO manager 1)

On the other hand, non-governmental organisations tend to group in professional associations that concentrate organisations and social workers with similar specialisations, such as an association of providers of asylum centres for mothers with children, a street work association or an association for youth clubs. According to social workers and managers, associations partly improved their professional standing by providing further training and a platform for exchanging contacts and experience, but mainly as representatives, who strived to negotiate about their responsibilities with policy-makers at the ministerial and governmental levels. In other words, associations become active proponents of non-governmental organisations and particular areas of social work.

"It is officially called the Czech Association of Streetwork and it unites all streetwork and low-threshold activity and facilities. So they organise various training, PR events, actually do their own audits, and if you become a member then you have some status amongst the low-threshold facilities. So here the communication and information sharing work well." (NGO manager 5)

"We are a member of the Association for Asylum Centres. Recently the Association of Asylum Centres kind of rose from the dead, because it had existed for many years but there were problems with funding and for a long time the organisation wasn't working at all. ... I see benefits in that we meet each other; it is far better to deal with someone who you know personally than with someone you don't know. And also the network of centres has become wider for us not only in this region but nationally. And also there is the chance to come with some incentives from the field. And for me it is a kind of assurance that there are people from the field who are better able to bring the incentives to the negotiation groups." (NGO residential care social worker 4)

In conclusion, the story of the non-governmental social workers and managers defines the problem as the system being overstrained with children in residential care and dysfunctional families because of the lack of alternatives to the state execution of child protection, which is based on methods of control and supervision, but does not lead to permanent changes in the behaviour of individuals and families. In the interviews, the non-governmental social workers clearly identified local politicians and child protection social workers as responsible agents, who inadvertently or intentionally work to maintain the contemporary status quo of child protection. Again, politicians in municipal administration

were blamed for ignoring social issues of the region, and child protection social workers for complying with and carrying out the restrictive measures of child protection. Nevertheless, both local politicians and child protection social workers hold significant decision-making powers related to working conditions of NGO social workers and the organisations in general, as they decide about funding available to non-governmental organisations. The NGO social workers and managers indicated that *the system* is not only repressive towards children and parents, it is also *expensive* and *inefficient* in the long run. According to their view, increased funding and support for a wider range of social services is crucial. Non-governmental organisations offer a long-term, budget-friendly and client-focused solution to these problems, and they have developed many ways to deliver their message to people with decision-making responsibilities.

Non-governmental organisations represent social work with less emphasis on control and more emphasis on therapeutic relationships with clients. However, their position as service providers is ambiguous since most of them were set up during the 1990s as an alternative to state service provision, and they struggled financially over a long period. Some of the social workers mentioned that even now they are not always recognised by the public or politicians or they are sometimes mistaken for being a voluntary group. Nonetheless, their position has been reinforced, as shown in the case of child protection transformation. The organisations are striving to take over some areas of work and responsibilities that currently belong to state child protection social workers. They have been fairly successful in their efforts, which is evident from the inclusion of their types of services as alternative ways of working with children and parents in the new child protection legislation. Specialisation of services and specialised professional associations seem to work for the organisations as a way towards professionalisation. Their work is substantially limited, and dependent on local political arrangements; however, they manifest flexibility in developing strategies to influence the policy-making circles to promote the importance of their services.

5.6   *The Story of the Social Work Lecturers*

"...because you see it everywhere on the billboards along the roads where there is Nečas (a previous minister of labour and social affairs) on them, and basically ... or Drábek (current minister)... it absolutely doesn't matter which one of them says it, that we as social workers should check clients so they do not abuse benefits." (Social work lecturer 2

and part-time NGO social worker)

Although the interviewed lecturers did not specialise in teaching the subject of child protection, each was involved in some way in the system through work experience in governmental or non-governmental organisations related to child protection, or they were members of an advisory working group. The number of social work lecturers in the research sample was smaller than the representation of the other inter-professional groups, and therefore generalisation or composition of their particular causal story has limitations. Moreover, it was apparent that the lecturers with previous work experience in the third sector were more critical of the state social system and its influence on the social work profession than the lecturers who worked mostly in public administration.

"... social workers in the child protection department, whether they like it or not, their main task is to ensure the performance of the state administration. And I think that the state cannot guarantee social work! I come back to the putting out of the fire. The state can guarantee that it does not let people get burnt. ... I am not sure where they take all the people [NGO] *from, who will work with the families and offer them something other than co-ordination."* (Social work lecturer 1)

"And in this article they just talk about it, that [child protection] *social workers will be managers. Managers! A social worker is a social worker, alright. And he has to do his work within the relationship with a client. And just when he cannot manage, hasn't got the competence or when some assistance from someone else is needed, then yes of course. That is the normal practice."* (Social work lecturer 3)

In their narratives, however, the lecturers tended to view the problem of the child protection system in a wider context and focus rather on problems of the social work profession in general. According to them, the major problem of child protection and social work generally is the unrecognised status of the profession. The public, politicians, other professionals and even clients basically do not know what to expect from social workers, in the sense that they are not familiar with what their competences, responsibilities and targets are.

"I say that I think it won't be better because everywhere in public it is said how social work is very important, but it is controlled by financial resources or ... it is the reflection

of the ignorance about the nature of social work or its issues or the field. Or many people criticise and the media criticise social workers ... they talk only about female social workers although there are many male social workers. And in the press they write half-truth or nonsense." (Social work lecturer 3)

According to the social work lecturers, the problem of social work practice in general is that social issues are dealt with by repressive means and from a temporary perspective, and consequently social workers face restricted working conditions and opportunities. However, state and non-governmental social workers deal with different issues. The lecturers made the correlation between disregard of the situation of vulnerable and disadvantaged people by politicians and the public, and the lack of appreciation of the social work profession.

"Because they talk about us [social workers] *as a hole for throwing waste into ... we are simply like some hole for them into which falls loads of money that could be invested in different ways in their opinion. So basically we are those who drain the large sums out of the national revenue instead of bringing it into the system."* (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

As mentioned above, the lecturers set their story in a wider context of social affairs, emphasising social work's dependency on political interest in social issues, and the primary and neglected goal of the profession to relieve disadvantaged people and the majority from deeper social problems. Nonetheless, the major responsibility for the low status and constraints on performance and quality of social work was assigned to the employing organisations (mostly municipal administrations), and also social work professionals themselves.

First, as mentioned above, the lack of consensus in the actual profession about its aims and mission is harmful to the profession because social workers comply with the targets of employing organisations although these can be in conflict with their professional principles. Secondly, public promotion of the social work profession is difficult to achieve when social work professionals themselves do not share similar notions about the profession in terms of values, ethics and goals, and at the same time specialised activities of social work often based on similar types of employing organisations are preferred. Applying this to the case of child protection, social workers from non-governmental

organisations and child protection departments cannot agree on the methods and targets of co-operation as each of their employing organisations follows different goals. However, the lecturers self-critically admitted that social work academics in particular do not strive to reach some kind of unity in the profession, but rather exacerbate the differences through the establishment of social work academic activity which is significantly separated from social work practice.

"I think that at this moment it is extremely difficult just because the academic world has drifted away from the field social work. And I think that fundamentally, that there are very few links and common subjects and common ... that we don't speak the same language!" (Social work lecturer 1)

"... when I discussed this with academics of Czech social work, one of them felt very offended by this article (about the failure of Czech social work). So I have the impression that many academics, instead of considering whether it would be possible to take it as a challenge and change something, then rather they feel insulted because this author didn't argue in an academic way. Well, he didn't because he's not an academic but a social worker, isn't he? So they swept it off the table on the grounds that he is a practitioner who can't use arguments or cite references." (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

As suggested above, the quest for the professional identity of social work and the delineation of its mission is inherent as a solution.

"It means - first it is necessary to declare, again and in a better way, to ourselves but also to the public, law-makers and so on, about what social work is, how it differs from other professions, what are its objectives, and what means it has at its disposal, and how ... it is not quite exact to say how it delineates itself from others but it is implicit there." (Social work lecturer 1)

Secondly, according to the lecturers, social workers have not been able to organise an independent professional ethics committee or other authority that would hold the responsibility for assessing the performance of social workers according to professional tenets; at the moment complaints and cases of misconduct are dealt with by the MLSA and judged by the media. However, the lecturers were undecided about who from within social

work should carry out the task to promote and establish an ethics committee.

"Basically now anyone judges the work of social workers. Anyone calling himself an expert. But, indeed, he is [probably] not an expert; however, having some authority, he acquires the right to judge social workers. In my opinion, this is wrong. Social workers should be judged by inspectors or by the ministry which set the direction and can directly manage the offices." (Social work lecturer 3)

Currently the quality of social work is measured by the outcomes of intervention but not by the methods of work. For example, this means that the work of a social worker is assessed according to whether a child under his/her protection has to be placed in residential care, regardless of whether or not he/she employed all possible methods to prevent this from happening. Social work lacks a professional institution that is able to evaluate decisions and take measures with regard to the professional ethos and standards; however, the lecturers were sceptical about forming a unifying professional association.

"If some activity is initiated by the MLSA to establish some professional association. why would they do it? I wrote about it in the article, after all they would establish an enemy! We cannot expect it from them. And if it should be an initiation from the bottom, then it is true what Libor argues, that the people feel identity with the area they work in." (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

Social work lecturers raised a concern about different motivation factors of social workers to carry out their work, and even of social work students to study social work courses, with respect to issues of ethical and professional principles in their work. This was particularly expressed with respect to social work students, whose motivation to take up the social work programme is often different from their interest in the profession itself; for example, it might be an easy way of obtaining a university degree or avoiding science subjects. Many mature students are those who either recently undertook undergraduate courses as an obligatory completion of their education ordered by the MLSA, or they come from different areas of public administration with the same goal of completing their education.

"… the motivation is so diverse, starting from that they want to help to that they have to because the Social Service Act orders them as they work in the field. Or because they have to have the title or they just want to attend a programme without maths. So I think that the

starting position is very different. I cannot say how to motivate the unmotivated who would ... I know from some institutions who ... I don't know, it may sound harsh, if not to change and replace the incompetent ones. I don't know if it is possible to motivate some people, whether they are not burnt out already, or they do it because there is no other job available." (Social work lecturer 4)

All the lecturers referred to one of the articles of the Social Service Act 108/2006, which allows candidates with degrees other than in social work, such as special pedagogy or even law, to practise social work, as one of the factors detrimental to the status of the profession, caused by other disciplines striving to expand their field of influence. However, these people do not possess the appropriate skills and knowledge. To amend the legislation and limit entry to social work jobs to people with social work training is the prime goal, according to the lecturers.

"...one who studies social work should work as a social worker, and one who studies a special pedagogy, should actually work as a special pedagogue and not as a social worker!" (Social work lecturer 1)

"How can a lawyer be a social worker? Without any knowledge about social work theories or methods, etc.?" (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

The lecturers' narratives concentrated on the status of the profession in general rather than only on the child protection field, identifying the public, employing organisations managed by politicians and social workers, including street-level social workers and those in decision-making positions, as agents responsible for unsatisfactory care and services of clients and disadvantaged people. Both politicians and social workers cause the problem by intentionally or inadvertently ignoring their responsibilities and the conditions of clients. Some social workers are found guilty of not committing themselves to the professional tenets and standards, but rather complying with the organisational aims, which can conflict with clients' best interests and the mission of the social work profession. Resonating with the stories of the social workers, even the lecturers argued that social work services are poor because politicians and decision-makers fail to provide satisfactory working conditions or give appropriate focus to social affairs.

"I think that at this moment many things don't work but there is a common reason for it. The system has stagnated in the position of being rather more of a control body in the sense of control as a way of working with a client - assistance or control. In the sense of a control body that aims to ensure that some things don't happen and others do. And the idea that our principal mission is to work with people has got completely lost! And when I meet colleagues I see that in fact they deal only with things on fire! And at this moment when we only fight the fire then maybe we save a lot but on the other hand we don't prevent the fires, we don't enable the people to prepare themselves for the fact that a fire may start and to find with them ways to protect themselves against the fire, or when it starts [to show them] that it is possible to carry on." (Social work lecturer 1)

"There have been some horrendous problems on some councils, where in fact there is double scope of authority, isn't there? There is self-governing competence and transferred competence. And unfortunately some councils actually interfere in the execution of state administration. So for example for the execution of child protection money is designated from the state budget in the form of subsidy, and there are councils where instead of making use of the money that the state gives for the execution of child protection, instead of availing of it for quality social work, rather they return money from the subsidy! (Social work lecturer 3)

The suggested solutions to the problem of professionalisation consisted, first, of restrictions on qualifications, as mentioned above; second, to legally define the responsibilities and competences of the social work profession; third, to establish an independent social work ethics commission; and fourth, to increase the professional identity and dedication of street-level social workers. Certainly, the constraints on qualification requirements for social work jobs would significantly improve the importance of social work education, as compared to the current situation in which social work courses are just one of the alternative ways of entry into a social work post, and in this way it seems unnecessary to master social work theories and competences to carry out social work.

Undoubtedly, the need for delineation of the social work profession means a continuance of long-term academic discussion on the integrity of social work, undertaken by university teaching and research staff. Nonetheless, the lecturers recommended defining the social work profession by law as for the other professions in the Czech Republic, such as doctors,

lawyers, or teachers, who have their own *professional Acts*. In fact, a debate amongst interested parties about the drafting of such legislation was launched by the conference *Does social work need a professional Act?* in 2011[5]. The primary concern of participants and lecturers was the formation of a platform for discussing the potential professional Act. Various social work professional associations, representatives, university departments and individual academics had the utmost interest in being involved in or, better still, leading the policy-making group. The MLSA is the authority that supervises the preparation of the legislation under its auspices.

The problem of the professional, as against the organisational, identity of social workers is closely associated with the professional socialisation of social workers. The lecturers admitted that at the university level there is no formal strategy in place that would build loyalty among students to the profession, and therefore once in practice they are more likely to adhere to the culture of the employing organisations. Furthermore, they acknowledged that in fact employing organisations of social workers have significant influence over the social work training programmes such as courses for employees of public or municipal administrations, who need to complete their education.

"Of course, I strive for it, basically to build up the pride in them and to impress in them somehow the values and norms that are related to the professional culture. But... I still have the impression that the [professional] *socialisation of the people isn't systematic. ... but if you would ask me how to do it systematically then I don't know. I still think that it is pretty much up to the schools and it is very much up to the missing professional association; umbrella professional association. But at the same time I think it is a long-distance journey, yes. It isn't possible to expect that in twenty years some kind of profession would be built up that would have some united professional culture, values, norms and so on."* (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

In conclusion, the social work lecturers insisted on the primary importance of professional integrity achieved through acknowledgment of a mission of the social work profession and its professional tenets and standards. The deep concern about allowing other professionals to occupy social work positions without social work training shows the desire to further control the means of professional closure. Undoubtedly, the lecturers concurred that now is

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[5] Conference Sociální práce potřebují sociální pracovníci profesní zákon? RAROSP, APSS ČR, Charles University (9th March 2011)

a difficult time to promote social work and raise awareness about social issues amongst the public and politicians; nevertheless, they did not present any concrete ideas about organising collective action to respond to it.

The lecturers also urged a more active approach to collective promotion and protection of the profession, such as the establishment of an ethics committee and a united professional association. However, their involvement is limited to academic activity and possibly participation in particular policy-making processes.

5.7   Summary

Table 8 below encapsulates the causal stories of each group of the social work profession. It shows that social workers, policy-makers and lecturers did not concur with each other in identifying the primary problem of child protection and who carries responsibility for it. Policy-makers considered children in residential care as the main victims of the system's failure, whereas NGO social workers referred more to socially deprived families, and lecturers generally referred to victimised clients. Consequently, every group suggested different ways of resolution according to their roles and experience. While child protection and NGO social workers called for more distinct and particular responsibilities and working conditions, policy-makers and lecturers argued for more regulations of their work. Each of the groups targeted a different audience and chose multiple strategies to convey their story. Policy-makers launched a public campaign about the advantages of foster care, NGO managers established connections with representatives of councils and the MLSA, and managers of child protection social workers relied on former links with decision-makers across the public administration. Above all, each group puts most of the blame on other groups of the social work profession for the problems of the system, rather than other professions as was initially assumed.

Table 8   Causal Stories of Social Work Professional Groups

	Policy-makers	**Child protection social workers**	**NGO social workers**	**Lecturers**
Problem	Children under protection are normally placed in residential care and denied a family life	Children and cases of child protection have to be treated hastily and therefore major changes for	Children and families are not provided with assistance that would prevent them from developing problems	Clients of social work are not respected and do not receive their full rights as

		improvement in their lives are hindered	of family dysfunction	citizens
Victim	Children and parents under child protection	Children under child protection	Socially deprived families	Clients and socially deprived people
Cause	1. Intentional diverting of funding and responsibilities to areas other than social services 2. Adverse consequences caused by professional incompetence of child protection social workers 3. Inadvertent actions of professionals based on societal values	1. Mechanical cause of the well-intended policy created negative consequences 2. Municipal administrations purposefully constrain work and working conditions of social workers 3. Poor co-operation caused by lack of professionalism of other professionals	1. Municipal authorities deliberately avoid dealing with social issues in the region 2. Child protection social workers tend to control clients and their conditions, and prevent other professionals from working with them	1. Public, employers and politicians have bias or unrealistic expectations of social work, and give priority to controlling measures 2. Street-level social workers ignore tenets of the profession in their work
Resp. agent	1. Other ministries 2. Municipal authorities 3. Child protection social workers 4. Public	1. The system 2. Municipal authorities 3. Parents 4. Public	1. Child protection social workers 2. Municipal authorities 3. MLSA	1. Employers of social workers 2. Street-level social workers 3. (non-existent) professional association
Solution	1. Changing services and provision from tertiary to primary and secondary prevention 2. Increased regulation of child protection social work 3. Transfer of delegated responsibility of municipal administration under the state 4. New legislation assigning responsibilities and defining new system of funding	1. Representatives of child protection social workers to negotiate working conditions 2. Changing the system	1. Financially and strategically support a range of social services 2. Emphasis on the first and second forms of prevention 3. Active approach to dealing with social issues	1. Enact social work professional Act 2. Better control of access to jobs - market closure 3. Establishment of professional association and ethics committee 4. Enhanced professional identity
Strategy	1. Campaign about foster care for public 2. Presentation of the problem to government groups in	1. Contribute to amendments of the legislation at the first and second amendment process	1. Maintaining connections with politicians through "exchange services" 2. Promotion of	1. Academic debates and conferences 2. Lecturing 3. Involvement

		services 3. Submitting proposals in grant projects 4. Disregarding other service providers within the competition 5. NGO managers take posts in politics	in policy-making groups
order to become a political priority 3. Formal meetings with municipal authorities, managers of child protection departments and NGOs	2. Personal contacts with officials of public administration		

Comparing the stories of the four groups of the social work profession in the framework of Stone's theory, it can be concluded that policy-makers at the MLSA have the most compelling story, in which the problem refers to suffering of under-protected children without a satisfactory family environment. This is likely to receive sympathy from the public and politicians. Identifying the lack of professional competences of child protection social workers as one of the causes of the problem is likely to be accepted, especially after cases of serious errors found in social work interventions presented in the media. The progressive social service providers would like to be seen as a better alternative to residential care facilities, which are depicted as obsolete features of the detested communist regime. Moreover, the concept of engagement of independent social service providers as the main solution to the problem correlates with the enforcement of the current 'third way' course of the social welfare system. The proposition that a significant volume of responsibility and provision of social services is handed over from the state and municipal administrations to (quasi-)independent providers with a business-like and competitive market-like approach is likely to win favour with both the public and lawmakers.

Child protection social workers defined the problems with considerable caution derived from their first-hand experience with the complexity and reality of life situations of children and parents on their register. Their story contains the fundamental dilemma of social work – they considered themselves as the advocates of children but they claimed powerlessness in the face of constraints imposed by the municipal administration and the public. The problem is not depicted as deprivation of children's right to a family, as proposed by the policy-makers, but rather as children being negatively affected by the lack of alternative measures of prevention and intervention. The weakest point of their story can be seen in their placing of the blame on the *system.* Child protection social workers found themselves within the hierarchical bureaucratic systems of municipal and public administrations, and regulated by laws and orders. They considered themselves as a part of

the apparatus, with little power to change the system from the top. Correspondingly with Lipsky's concept of street-level bureaucracy, strategies of child protection social workers to adjust these regulations take the form, for instance, of exchanging personal contacts, and exchanging services with other professionals or social workers in order to circumvent restrictions on their professional discretion. In other words, child protection social workers did not propose any straightforward solution to the problem in terms of policy changes; however, they developed tactics to amend the policies from below. Nevertheless, they indeed lack the power, means and a 'good story' to change their working conditions, such as control over remuneration, training or quality standards.

It can be established that the story of non-governmental social workers resembles the other inherent dilemma of social work, which is found in the conflict between being defenders against the unfair distribution of power in society causing poverty and deprivation, and their financial dependency on the public treasuries. However, the story of NGO social workers certainly demonstrated their flexibility and progress in the policy-making field. Even though the problem was described from a relatively wide perspective as the suffering of disadvantaged families resulting from an intricate complexity of social, economic and psychological problems rooted in the unequal organisation of society, and even though politicians and child protection social workers are identified as being responsible for the problem, nonetheless, the story on non-governmental organisations still offers attractive solutions to decision-makers. Most non-governmental organisations can calculate and present their services as economically favourable, time-saving and providing successful results. Moreover, non-governmental organisations, as independent entities from the state administration, represent a solution to the overstrained public bureaucracy. The pressures of financial uncertainty and competition have forced them to develop various ways to gain support and convince key players about their beneficial effects. The successful enforcement of their story is reflected in the design of the proposition of the new child protection Act, in which social service providers play a much more important role in comparison with the previous establishment.

The story of the lecturers may not seem to be persuasive as such; nonetheless, recently it partly succeeded in bringing about the preparation of another piece of legislation regarding the legal establishment of the social work profession. Although the first draft proposal of this legislation was submitted to the MLSA as early as 2009, the Ministry agreed to deal with it, and opened space for debate about the conditions of the Act, only in 2011. The

perspective is that the Act will be legally enforced in 2017. The content of the Act should address the subject matter raised by the lecturers, including the establishment of a professional chamber as a representative and inspecting authority, and the foundation of more stringent requirements for professional qualifications and competency. Although it is still unclear and subject to discussion how social work will be defined, and to what extent the professional chamber can be independent of the MLSA, preparation of the social work professional Act is evidence of fundamental progress towards the professionalisation of social work in the Czech Republic, and signals that it is approaching the status of other professions which already come under such legislation. Besides that, however, social work academia has publicised problems that mainly concern their sphere of influence. Certainly the preparation of the professional Act also presents a picture with many conflicting interests and interpretations. As stated by the university lecturers in the interviews, representatives of social service providers and social work colleges are significant players in the design of the legislation.

The comparison of the stories primarily reveals that the social work profession does not represent a collective entity but rather a composition of groups based on employing organisations and working conditions, who strive to enhance their influence in the field as well as pursuing their definition of social work. With the example of child protection transformation, it was demonstrated that social workers from the non-governmental organisations improved their status and influence in the field by enhancing the demand for social services provided by them. It became evident that the strategies which they used to promote their services result from their dependency on the granting authorities rather than market principles. Undoubtedly, they challenge the dominance of statutory social work and continue to expand their sphere of influence through specialisation. Furthermore, non-governmental organisations have established several professional associations that are actively involved in the field of policy-making. Nevertheless their attempt to endorse social work with a strong focus on clients and the unequal organisation of society has been curtailed by this financial reliance and the related political interest of the authorities. Child protection social work derives a privileged position in the system from representing the state, which is the guarantor of children's rights and safety. Nonetheless, as professionals they face significant curtailment of working conditions due to their embeddedness in the hierarchical structure of public administration and the overlapping of municipal and state authorities. Although being a part of public administration has the advantage of organisational interconnection with the policy-makers at the MLSA, statutory social

workers generally lack the ability for collective action and the flexibility of non-governmental organisations to negotiate their perspectives and interests. The expected promotion of their work to managerial level and an increase in the volume of responsibilities can elevate the status of child protection social workers; on the other side, the introduction of a multidisciplinary approach indicates the need for additional negotiation of child protection social workers' discretion with other professionals. Without doubt, the transformation signifies further control over everyday work performance of child protection social workers by the MLSA.

Positions of social work policy-makers and lecturers already carry considerable influence in deciding relevant policies and transforming the social work profession. However, even policy-makers have to strive considerably to argue for their policy recommendations; in this case to the management of MLSA, co-operating groups from other ministries, representatives of non-governmental organisations and of child protection departments, members of parliament, and not last to one another. The key matter for them is availability of funding for the transformation project approved by the MLSA. As mentioned above, the transformation attempts to achieve better recognition of social work on the one hand, but it means further concentration of control in the hands of the MLSA on the other. Drawing on the social work background of policy-makers and differences in their stories, the notion that policy-makers are a consistent group of the social work profession should be reconsidered. Although all of them are either directly employed by the MLSA or engaged in one of the policy working groups set up by the ministry, their connections, social work perspectives and policy preferences differ according to their previous working experience, acquired from working in either one of the state social work departments or non-governmental organisations. This is reflected in opportunities for organisations of social work to engage in the policy-making process being created or denied by the policy-makers. In the case of the transformation, the increased participation of non-governmental organisations is apparent.

Social work lecturers conceived of as an interest group have a great potential for influence over the social work profession transformation However, at this stage their primary concern is to secure access to social work positions through acquisition of specialised training, which has not been yet guaranteed by the MLSA. The academic staff tended to focus on their field of social work training and research, and in general had limited aspirations with respect to the organisation of social work as a profession. In other words,

although social work lecturers are participating in the preparation process of the social work professional Act, the initiative came from professional associations and representatives of social service providers. The social work lecturers defined the lack of a unified professional association, and the absence of the authority of an ethics commission, as obstacles to the professionalisation of social work; nevertheless, they do not feel that formal involvement in the organisation of the social work profession could be an opportunity for, or the responsibility of, academia. Therefore, even though they call for the organisational and ideological independence of social work, they do not try to form powers in opposition to the MLSA and employing organisations. In this way, the questions of professional autonomy mainly remain subjects for academic discussions.

In conclusion, the social work profession in general has made considerable progress in the legal establishment of its sphere of influence and the share of the labour market since its revival after the Velvet Revolution, as demonstrated in the examples of the child protection transformation and the social work professional Act. Undoubtedly, the profession is still intricately connected with, and embedded in, the state system through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which provides the profession with a guarantee of organisational establishment, on the one hand, but restricts the development of autonomy, on the other. However, the implementation of market principles in the welfare system has created opportunities for social work to be delivered by social service providers, particularly non-governmental organisations. Nevertheless, the expansion of non-governmental organisations is also curtailed by the limitations of the social work market, in which the government, municipal administrations and the European Union represent the customers and determine the demand. The professional groups tend to protect and compete for their sphere of influence and resources, which is evident at the policy-making level as well as in street-level practice. Recently, the non-governmental social service providers have challenged the primacy of state social work with a future perspective aimed at securing a larger market. Although the position of state social work is irreplaceable, many responsibilities can be, and have been, delegated to non-governmental providers. Some strategies of professionalisation that were described above indicate that social workers from all social work professional groups depend considerably on the political priorities of employing organisations; in other words, they are engaged in a bargain with the state and social attitudes of the society. Indeed, it can be concluded that although the social work profession in the Czech Republic has achieved considerable recognition and autonomy in the last twenty years, it still lacks the organisational independence from the state needed

for a favourable position in negotiations of working conditions. However, the distorted character of the social work market, with the state and the EU governing the demand for services, is the overriding variable for the development of the social work profession.

Chapter Six

The Contemporary Social Work Profession II.

Interview Analysis – Professionalisation

This chapter continues the analysis of the causal stories and interview data by looking at the following themes of the chosen theories of the professions: professional associations, professional knowledge, professional status, the social work market, market closure, and state authorities. It focuses on the aspect of professionalisation in each of the categories.

6.1   Professional Associations

Although the social work professionals from each of the inter-professional groups had different experiences with some of the social work representative organisations, each of the inter-professional groups expressed the need for a powerful social work representative authority for very similar reasons. The social workers desired some representative social work organisation to communicate with politicians about the importance of social work services, as well as to independently assess matters of correct practice carried out by social work professionals.

"And if we take it this way, it was also on the television, wasn't it? The returning of an Italian child. And us two! We were at the committee in V. where it took place and they said it was inadequate! That the Hague convention, we of course can, we must follow the international conventions. It can just meet the decision made in Italy… And us two were taken in front of the committee in the court! You see that it is upside down here! Why two of us? Where is the child protection authority? Where is the social workers' advocate?" (Child protection social worker 6)

Interestingly, the state social workers viewed the potential of a representative professional authority in being a labour union type of mediator negotiating for better working conditions and especially wages, whereas the non-governmental organisation social workers with more experience with specialised professional associations appreciate activities such as information and practice sharing, opportunities for connections, training provision, and lobbying for recognition of the particular social service provision. On the other hand, the social work lecturers emphasised the supervising function of a representative association with respect to ethical and practice disputes.

"Of course I would like it if we could appeal to some organisation, the association, and they would fight for our case. I would like that. This is our forever low status ... I don't know. The people have a very biased notion, even from my circle, they do not know, they think that I sit here in a warm office and that is it. That I have a great position and God knows how much money." (Child protection social worker 3)

"You know, certainly the salary of social workers, it very much depends on the organisation, on the director of the organisation and how she decides what salary class one belongs to. For example I have ninth salary class. I think I do many things from the tenth salary class, definitely. But I simply will not get the tenth salary class! We do not have any professional association here and I think that everyone is just glad, because there are no other jobs available. And many people, I am not just talking about me, fight for jobs."(Child protection social worker 2)

Only the social work lecturers mentioned the possibility of establishing an umbrella social work representative association with the perspective of the forthcoming Social Work Professional Act. However, obstacles were identified in the fragmentation of the social work profession, in particular significant differences between state social work and non-governmental social work, and the power struggle between the representatives of the inter-professional groups.

"I like the idea of a professional association in terms of: if you want to be a social worker, then you must be a member of a professional association. The Social Work Professional Act should order this. So compulsory membership with the presumption that the professional association will be more like a guardian of professional integrity. I can imagine a professional association similar to what they have for instance in Germany or somewhere. It means the authority that issues registration or certificates or permission to someone to practise the profession. I can imagine that it would work like the medical association works now. But it assumes that all the parties have to agree with it and that is difficult." (Social work lecturer 1)

The establishment of an umbrella professional organisation is at this moment being discussed by academics and social work representatives as part of the preparation of the Social Work Professional Act organised by the MLSA. However, it is obvious that apart from social work lecturers, other social work professionals are not aware of this.

6.2   Professional Knowledge

All the social work professionals agreed that social workers need to have a wide range of knowledge across disciplines, a point which is not appreciated by politicians or other professionals. However, each of the inter-professional groups had a different perspective on the current state of social work knowledge. Social workers' experience with social work university education is very diverse, depending much on the individual, so that any general conclusion is hard to draw. Field social workers, state or non-governmental, gained from social work university programmes focused on work experience and disregarded subjects such as philosophy or sociology, while social work lecturers and policy-makers emphasised the importance of ethical subjects and social work theories.

"Definitely there was some benefit with respect to theoretical foundations that one understands how the development of social work or some technique took place. But I can't say that it would have given me something valuable for the practice. ... I must say that various theoretical things such as philosophical concepts, sociological ... really, I think, it is not necessary." (Child protection social worker 7)

"Then I think, at least here, what we emphasise is not to teach only about helping because we were thought only to be teaching about helping. But we focus a lot on how one can work with client directively and ethically! Yes, because the directive work is an essential part of social work and we inquire into ethics a lot." (Social work lecturer 2 and part-time NGO social worker)

The child protection social workers acknowledged that they would appreciate methodical guidelines for complex cases they have to deal with, and simultaneously the policy-makers confirmed that they prepare such methodological assistance at the instigation of child protection social workers' failure cases. Non-governmental social workers usually develop methodical guidance within their own organisation or a specialised professional association.

"I think that I miss a little bit of something, some possible methodical guidelines, some safeguard that is clearly defined, because each of us has a different perspective on the family. Because we live here in such conditions, so the status and the social value and position of the family, we assess them differently than, for example, somewhere in the south

of Czech, where they have, I don't know, three problematic families, and I have 40 of them here." (Child protection social worker 7)

The greatest issue for social work university programmes mentioned by the lecturers was the various motivations of students to undertake social work study. They indicated that a substantial number of students consider a social work programme as one of the easiest ways of obtaining a university degree. On the other hand, the managers in the state or non-governmental organisations questioned the necessity of social workers having university degrees, a requirement set by the law, claiming that social workers have a greater need for practice knowledge and that social work remuneration does not correspond to the rewards of university degree holders.

*"I think that many people from the full-time course come here and they do not care, they know nothing about social work, and they are not interested. And always some of them find a way to the profession during three years. And some of them don't, that is clear." (*Social work lecturer 4)

The perspectives on the role and importance of social work knowledge and training seem to clearly differentiate between social work professionals working in the field and social work policy-makers and lecturers.

"This is the problem, that a university raises social workers who are incompetent to start working. Unfortunately the university here does not ask for advice about what social workers should have, which competences they should learn. That is another thing." (NGO manager 2)

6.3   Professional Status

Without exception, all the social work professionals agreed that the social work profession is not appreciated by politicians or the public, and has a low status amongst other professions. This is reflected in low remuneration, the negative media portrait of social workers, and the public's misunderstanding about the profession.

"But society as it is, recently we have been presented as the awful, bad, grim reapers who take children. This is the social department that does not do anything else, just meddles in

everything. Or it is the opposite, when everything is the matter of the social department and why haven't they done anything or don't do something immediately? But I think that this is the general attitude of society and the media. Especially because of the media, people have this in their heads." (Child protection department social worker 4)

"I feel that normal society, which hasn't got any insight into social work, so they expect that we clear them of the people or repair them! The people come here; we repair them somehow, and return them back repaired. Yes, I have the feeling that society expects from us things that we are not able to fulfil. And I am afraid that the majority of society or simply society expects us the people to get lost from the face of the earth." (NGO residential manager and social worker 7)

As mentioned above, social work lecturers ascribe this problem to lack of clarity about the mission, means and methods of the profession. The field social workers admitted that other professionals in multidisciplinary teams are not clear about the role of a social worker.

"And some other organisations such as schools or doctors don't have an overview about what we have to do, meaning that we have boundaries and cannot do as they would like and think is best .... yeah I don't think it will work. Besides I don't think they perceive us as fully-fledged colleagues. So they will not like to see that someone who they don't respect will co-ordinate them. That is the key problem for them." (Child protection social worker 10)

Other social work professionals pointed out the public's opposition to their clients and how their low status transfers to the reputation of the social work profession. Moreover, the social work professionals felt that the public expects from them unrealistic performance and results, based on incomprehension of the complex issues their clients live with.

"So actually if the social worker does not work, then nothing much happens for a certain time. The person will live in undignified conditions, will live for a certain time, then when he falls to the bottom no one notices him. But when a doctor does not prescribe a medication or does not operate, it, of course, hurts differently." (Policy-maker 3)

Some of those interviewed mentioned the need to improve the public relations efforts towards the public in order to enhance the status of the profession. The policy-makers have already realised this in promoting aspects of the child protection transformation.

"On the television, social workers always appear as witches that take children. Otherwise we don't represent ourselves anywhere. Never does anyone compliment that we done something good and so on. And this is not seen anywhere. Why can't this be shown? To show examples of good practice in social work, which television channel would be interested? Why would they?" (Residential care social worker 3)

"We actually wanted to start a campaign within the transformation effort, but had found out that we can do awareness campaigns about different subjects and that we will at least launch a campaign about the right to childhood where there will be ... but for now we are doing some awareness programmes so people realise that the activities in children's homes, residential care institutions are not that great, and that this harms the children." (MLSA official 1)

6.4   Market Closure

The social work professionals suggested that a clearer definition of their field of influence, competences and responsibilities would assist them in improving their position amongst other professionals. The field social workers, state and non-governmental, mentioned this with respect to co-operation with other professionals, who need the assurance about the function of social workers in multi-disciplinary teams. The social work lecturers and policy-makers agreed that delineation of the profession is imperative. It would prevent employers from overloading social workers with responsibilities inappropriate to their profession and education, usually administrative or social care duties.

"Maybe they take us for non-professionals. Because ... they don't know much about it. Many officers unless they went through some experience with a non-governmental organisation, they do not even know what the facility does or does not do. And it is kind of extra work. But as I say, it isn't .. actually when I co-operate with those teachers then I hear from them how we helped them." (NGO social worker 6)

"Often social workers are asked to carry out the work of a carer. It is about explaining to the directors what they should do and what is not their job or ... Although there is the Act, you can always go around it." (Social work lecturer 4)

Only the social work lecturers were concerned with closing access for people with other than social work training to enter social work jobs, whereas other social work professionals omitted this recommendation. For social work lecturers it was a key goal to amend the version of Social Service Act 108/2006 that allows other graduates from other courses to enter the profession. However, social work managers did not mention the need to hire exclusively social workers with social work training, and nor did field social workers mention any difference between social workers with social work education or without.

"It is about qualification requirements that in his perspective, that I share with him, it should be more narrowly focused than it is today. And that it is desirable that social work is carried out by those trained in social work! (Social work lecturer 1)

On the other hand, some of the non-governmental managers confirmed that they require specialised training from job applicants or new recruits, such as in emergency intervention, domestic violence or debt counselling.

6.5   Social Work Market

The social work professionals, state and non-governmental, argued that they deal only with urgent issues of children and families, and that there is a much greater need for various social work services in order to improve the situation of their clients. In other words, according to the social work professionals, the demand and market for social work is present and large, from the clients' side, but not so much from the fund holders. Non-governmental social work professionals are very much aware of the need to pursue politicians about the importance of dealing with social issues and employing their services.

"Of course, there are financial resources for child protection administration that we get especially for it. Here I see only one problem, which is that the state administration is hidden under the municipal administration and here we sometimes unfortunately encounter certain forms of, let's say, misunderstanding, and we have to justify what we ask for. So I prepare statistical data, analyse the issue; of course when it is supported with such

documents then what we want to push through has greater strength, because statistics has of course value of evidence." (Child protection department manager 3)

Funding of social work services was the key topic for the interviewed social work professionals, as they are existentially dependent and limited by only a few options to draw money from. The social workers from state and non-governmental sectors have to deal with different funding issues due to separate funding systems. Child protection social workers and residential care workers depend on the state salary class tables and approval from municipal politicians. They feel frustrated by the low remuneration, which is at the same level as other officers' salaries, and by lack of options to change this.

"We are talking about doctors, about teachers, about nurses, police force, Czech train workers, and I don't know who else. But meanwhile social workers sit on their ass and keep their mouths shut. So I got furious there and said 'Don't tell me that you like the fact that the charity money that you get for your work get scarp even more? Will you sit and wait for whatever they give you?' ... I said 'Of course. Now it is September and the wage-cutting comes in January but let's sit and wait to see what comes'. They threaten us, take away thousands of our koruna and in the end we will say 'Thank you for only taking away 10 percent!' So messages such as 'Let's go on strike' were raised or 'Let's write a letter' or 'Let's go for a demonstration' but in the end there was none. The trouble was, I think, that we are not able to do anything at the municipal council until we go there, all of us from the department. .... The number of social workers is increasing, or at least number of people with adequate training, but the number of job opportunities has been falling and that's why people are glad of their work. 'Be happy that you have a job, maybe you should be paying to us.' So we could find some people here unwilling to go for it. Perhaps they didn't say it frankly but it was obvious that they will distance themselves from it or maybe will sit silently somewhere at the back. But we needed everyone to say something to him [Council Secretary]. *So we could go there as one man and tell him 'That's enough! We are not so stupid that you can throw us from one side to another.' Meanwhile we nod obediently and smile ..."* (Child protection social worker 8)

On the other hand, non-governmental social professionals depend on, and closely monitor, available funding resources operated through the state, municipal and council authorities. Their financial security has stabilised compared with previous years; however, they still need to strive every year to receive funding. Although non-governmental organisations

have more options to source their funding, funding resources are still limited and this creates competition between non-governmental organisations. According to the non-governmental social work professionals, methods of securing funds are multiple, from very official, such as community planning, to less official, including slandering other organisations, fixing statistical reports, colluding about service and funding divisions, forming connections with important politicians, and even organising banquets for politicians.

"Always there is a worry, because the individual project does not cover all the expenses we have. Payments from people cover just gas but not any other energy. And the individual project is unfortunately set in a way that if you receive any gift from a sponsor then they deduct the money from the individual plan. So it is counter-productive to search for sponsors. Of course, we apply to the municipal authority, we apply to the county authority, we apply to the ministry. We are constantly striving to get money from different sources." (NGO residential social worker and manager 8)

"I am talking about a case where two providers fight with each other. As one thinks that the other is unqualified or receives an unreasonable amount of money. So they start a kind of fight with each other and spread poisoned comments about each other. But this is just between them and when the comments get outside, you really don't know what to think about it. I think it results in stretching the credibility of individual providers and it is absolutely incomprehensible for people outside the circle because they are not able to assess the validity of accusations and then it is only 'Oh so they are awful, so then they are ripping us off, hmmm'." (NGO manager and social worker 4)

Non-governmental social workers are also dependent on co-operation with child protection social workers in the sense that clients are referred to them, and their services are utilised by child protection departments. In this way, child protection social workers significantly influence the work of non-governmental social workers, who feel under their control. Incorporating a requirement to use complementary services within the transformation of the child protection system was one method suggested for increasing the importance of non-governmental social services.

"I think that is, kind of, like a hunt for clients, or like winning clients. It means that the non-governmental sector, it seems to me, wants to win the client in order to have clear

records and get funds for their service. So they tell people things that are not always feasible. And then the people come across a problem in the public administration telling them it is not possible as they told them. But sometimes it is possible." (MLSA official 1)

"I know that non-government organisations do not communicate. But I can put pressure on them in the sense that I can terminate the contract with them. And money comes first, doesn't it? If I leave them then they really don't have their money. Really you know that money ... everyone listens to it." (Policy-maker 4)

6.6 State Authorities

Although child protection social workers feel constrained by the public and municipal administrations, which they are part of, and they represent rather the agent of control in their relationships with clients, the delegation of the state's obligation to protect children makes them the corner stone of the child protection system and social work. This is reflected in key responsibilities for children being under the surveillance of the child protection department, and means making decisions about children and parents. Child protection social workers hold the prime position amongst other social workers and are aware of this.

"We of course co-operate with non-governmental organisations that work with children, I don't know, deprived families, Roma families. So we co-operate with them really well. I cannot complain. But I can't imagine that they could do our work. They have a different approach, they do free-time activities. They do fieldwork visiting families and checking children whether they go to school. It works like this. But I cannot imagine that they could do our work with respect to arrangement of contacts between children and parents." (Child protection department manager 2)

The child protection social workers' position amongst other professionals is planned to be improved and strengthened by a regulation that requires other professionals to share information about clients with child protection social workers, by assigning them further managerial responsibilities and giving funds to contract out and purchase services from other professionals, including non-governmental social workers. Although this is a plan of the policy-makers, and child protection managers have some information about it, field

social workers still feel that their position and successful co-operation with others rather depends on personal relationships and connections with others.

"It was a big mess. There are people [NGO social workers] *to whom you can come and agree on something and then it is fine. But again, it is about people, isn't it? And then it is obvious when you agree with them to do something, and they stop working with him as the boy does not co-operate and then it is too late. He commits some offence."* (Child protection social worker 5)

From the narratives of the child protection professionals, the ever-present rivalry between the state and non-governmental sectors and social workers is obvious, and represents a significant split in the profession. All of the inter-professional groups agreed that there has been an improvement in co-operating with one another. However, different organisational settings, employers, approaches to work with clients, and funding resources, all make the state and non-governmental social workers establish different kinds of relationships with the state authorities, including municipal authorities and the MLSA.

6.7   Professionalism

Although the theme of professionalism was not part of the particular thematic framework, the social work professionals in their narratives often mentioned it in relation to alleged lack of professionalism among some social workers and other professionals. In the narratives, the social work professionals associated professionalism of social work with adherence to ethical standards. Nevertheless, there was a difference in the approach to the concept of professionalism conveyed by lecturers, policy-makers, and field social workers.

Policy-makers and social work lecturers criticised field social workers, especially child protection social workers, for a lack of professionalism in dealing with clients in terms of poor ethical consideration. They mainly highlighted the lack of ethical standards in reference to misconduct in social work practice, the lack of empathy of field social workers in relation to clients, and poor communication. They ascribed the cause of this to insufficient training, personal failure or burn-out syndrome.

"Well, we don't want to admit it but even in 2011 we have to deal with completely basic things. We found out that we must start from the beginning. When we started organising meetings with

towns and social workers and county workers, we found out that they don't have ... they don't consider clients as human beings, to whom they need to behave politely and they are there for them. Kind of, it is a failure in terms of meeting the ethical standards of social workers. The workers are burnt out, they cannot behave properly or respond to work overload in various ways." (MLSA official 1)

However, the field social workers themselves, from across the range of social organisations, understood professionalism as adherence to universal standards of working conduct, shared by all professionals regardless of their specialisation or employing organisations, standards which are based on work experience with complex life problems of clients; and it includes the notion of finding workable solutions for a client, and understanding the workloads of other professionals. The field social workers described professionalism as a shared rule of conduct that extends beyond an organisational code of ethics or the organisational culture of employing organisations. The problem of professionalism was described as excessive compliance with objectives and the culture of an employing organisation, pursuing personal interests at work or lacking personal suitability for social work.

"Because someone is not capable ... he may be an excellent technical administrative type, which means that the inspection never finds any faults with him. But he never understands the point .. that is a disaster. And then it happens and it can be between different council authorities, that we are totally somewhere else. And this again brings down the status! Because they see an amazing father but we see a totally different thing and then of course we cannot find a common language." (Child protection social worker 9)

6.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the inter-professional groups shared a similar point of view on certain themes of professionalisation, whereas the others rather accentuated the division of the social work profession. Most of the interviewees agreed on the role of the professional association in advocating for social workers. However, the state social workers would like to see the professional association lobbying for better working conditions for them, while the non-governmental social workers would appreciate the professional association as a networking platform, and policy-makers and lecturers considered the professional association as a suitable agent for ethical supervision. With regard to professional

knowledge, a clear division occurred amongst the inter-professional groups and their perspectives on the relative importance of theoretical and practical content of social work expertise and related education.

The perceived low professional status of social work was felt and expressed by all interviewees, with particular reference to unrealistic expectations from the public and politicians. According to the social work professionals, people would like to see them as the control agent of the state, fixing the problems of clients, or the actual clients, in a short period of time. Some interviewees across the inter-professional groups partly ascribed this miscomprehension of the social work profession to lack of promotion of successful social work stories. Interestingly, market closure and the related access to social work job positions was a concern mainly of lecturers, who saw it as necessary for social work practitioners to be limited to those with social work training.

The themes of the social work market and state authorities were the most controversial amongst the interviewees of particular inter-professional groups. Although most of them agreed that the discrepancy between the limited resources in the hands of fund holders and the demands of clients and the field for social work services restricts the development of the profession, they encounter many different problems due to the different position of each group in the funding system. In particular, managers from the non-governmental organisations realised the existential dependency on fund holders and involved decision-makers such as child protection social workers, council authorities and the MLSA, but they confirmed a developing flexibility and strategies to address such organisational vulnerability. Undoubtedly, the interwoven character of child protection social work with the state institutions represented not only limitations but also opportunities to the child protection social workers, who recognised their key position in the child protection system as the representatives of the state. On the other hand, the non-governmental social work professionals described their efforts to take over some of the responsibilities from the state social work agenda.

The following chapter discusses the results of the interview data analysis, with reference to the sociology of the professions and to the social work profession in particular. First, it considers the theoretical framework based on the neo-Weberian approach, including the strategies of professionalisation. Secondly, the discussion addresses the main topics of the sociology of the social work profession regarding the definition of the profession and its

position within the state bureaucracy and in the market. Finally, it discusses the limitations of the research project and makes suggestions for further research.

Discussion

7.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the major findings of the research in relation to the literature on the professionalisation of social work, it reflects on the case study approach, and it defines the limitations of the research project.

Three main arguments are set out on the basis of the research. First, it is argued that the social work profession in the Czech Republic has not reached the status of a fully-fledged profession as defined by the traits theory. However, it has managed to strengthen its position in the labour market through successful pursuit of strategies that respond to the present economical and institutional systems and economic opportunities of the social welfare field.

Secondly, it is argued that the professionalisation of social work cannot be considered as a project of a single coherent occupational group but as a complexity of strategies pursued by different professional groups, which are interlinked through formal and informal relations. It is suggested that the groups are formed according to the type of their employing organisations and related economic opportunities, and that the strategies of the groups aim to secure their positions only in the particular areas of service funding, policy-making, and legal establishment. The neo-Weberian theory considers the free market-oriented economy as a precondition for the professionalisation of occupations. This argument was found to be of limited applicability in the case of the social work profession because of the character of social service market. Nevertheless, the thesis argues that the introduction of quasi-market principles in the social services has had a stimulating effect on the expansion of the scope of influence and activities of the non-governmental organisations.

Thirdly, it is maintained that strategies deployed by professional groups are a combination of strategies described by the traits, neo-Weberian, and neo-institutional theoretical concepts. The research suggests that for the professional groups, in their endeavours to enhance their profession's social and economic status, legal protection in the labour market is of the same importance as the establishment of professional activities within institutions

of public administration. The results illustrate the flexibility of a profession to respond according to the existing wider political, economic and institutional structures of a country.

Examining the professional development of social work since the beginning of the 20th century, it is also suggested that the main factors of the social work professionalisation in the Czech Republic are (1) political attitudes towards social problems and a related system of funding of social services and social welfare in general; and (2) the institutional system that allows access to and participation in policy-making. The first factor refers to the generally accepted argument that the professions strive to attain dominance over the subject of specialisation. However, in the case of social work, the social issues are still not considered as the sole purview of social work professional expertise, and because of their political importance, the political and public perspectives on social ailments substantially determine the professionalisation of social work. Lastly, the factor of institutional structure of governance refers to official institutional means available to the profession through which it can enforce its interests. This factor is concerned with the participation of professional groups in policy-making during the development of the social work profession.

This chapter first discusses in turn the main conclusions of the research and shows their significance in relation to theories of the sociology of the professions. The following section reflects on the case study approach utilised in the thesis project, it points out the limitations of this research project, and it suggests potential areas for further research. In the next chapter, the conclusion of the thesis discusses the significance of the research and its contribution to current knowledge about social work professional development. Recommendations regarding professional development are suggested at the end.

7.2   Social Work, a Semi-profession

The first conclusion suggests that the social work profession in the Czech Republic can be described as a semi-profession according to the definition of the traits theory and Freidson's concept of the third logic of the professions (Friedson, 2001:11). However, the profession has significantly improved its status and its position in the labour market since the Revolution in 1989, and has also partially secured some of the controls and privileges of fully-fledged professions as described by neo-Weberian theory. This section of the chapter discusses the traits of the social work profession as a semi-profession according to

the descriptions of the theories of the profession, and it highlights the signs that indicate the transformation of the profession.

To recapitulate, according to authors of the traits theory and the sociology of social work, the social work occupation is often regarded as a semi-profession because of (1) less control over its work than fully-fledged professions, (2) a less specialised body of knowledge and a related lower status, and (3) its embeddedness in the bureaucratic apparatus of a state. From the perspective of the third logic, as set out by Freidson, a semi-profession does not have sufficient cognitive control over the jurisdiction and public discourse concerning its work. According to the third logic, work is controlled by a profession rather than a hierarchy or the market, with the precondition that the profession possesses special knowledge which is necessary for solving situations of uncertainty.

In this respect, the findings of the research suggest that the social work profession in the Czech Republic falls within the definition of a semi-profession, mainly because of the limited control over its working conditions, which is attributed by traits theory to the lower significance of social work professional expertise and the strictly hierarchical structure of the employing organisations. State social work in particular encounters difficulties in changing working conditions and defining the goals of their work. As Freidson (2001) and Hugman (1998) stated, the professions within bureaucratic settings subordinate their interest to public interest. The findings of this thesis correspond with the arguments of Hugman (1998) and Dominelli (1997), that conditions of practitioners and professional goals are influenced by the employing organisations and the political process. The key indicator of professional autonomy lies in the access to resources, which are very limited in the case of the state child protection social work.

Historically, the social work foundation, especially the administration of child protection, was always inseparable from the public administration, and under the control of the municipal or council authorities. According to Dominelli (1997), the ways of compensating for these pressures are through formal structures such as professional associations and the control of training. In the era of the first republic of Czechoslovakia (1918-19380), the social work professionals indeed established a strong independent professional association and training institutions. In the present era, social work professionals are making an effort to establish professional associations, but not with such success, as previously the social work profession was absorbed into the communist regime.

On the other hand, neo-Weberian theory suggests that the specific knowledge of a profession may be of less importance than the traits theory argues. A legally-based exclusionary market closure is achieved through certification and credentialisation, by which the professions shelter their scope of activities and favourable position in the market. According to Saks (2010:895), a profession has to be recognised by the state through "*a competitive political process*" in which professional knowledge does not necessarily play an important role. Saks (2010) describes a profession as an occupation that has direct market control of specific services managed by professional associations, the privilege to define the needs of a customer, and the independence of discretion and work organisation. Saks argues that a profession employs various strategies to convince the law makers of its potential to solve public issues as well as to create demand for its services. Therefore it is concluded that despite the semi-professional character of social work, the profession has also made some progress towards securing its position in the labour market, allowing it to approach the privileges enjoyed by traditional professions.

The analysis of the formation of the new child protection legislation showed that generally the social work profession has significantly improved its working conditions in the current labour market, which was achieved primarily through the establishment of a legislative shelter, and partially through changing the public discourse on issues that fall under the domain of social work. The first legislation defining social work was the Social Service Act 2006, which set out the particular educational prerequisites for carrying out social work, as well as describing all services that are considered to be social services. The Act also defined some social work activities as recognised social services, and distinguished the position of a social worker from that of other workers in the social services. Also, the Child Protection Act 1999 established the requirements for levels of certain educational achievement and experience for a practising social worker, as well as defining social services in the child protection field. Nonetheless, both pieces of legislation established quite a wide spectrum of educational training necessary for the social work profession, which allows many other professions to enter the social work labour market. Further, the amendment of the child protection legislation ascribed managerial responsibilities to child protection social workers, and defined further the responsibilities of other professionals towards child protection social workers. In addition, new professional social work legislation is in the process of preparation, in which the self-governance and authority of selected professional associations are to be recognised. However, at present the legislative protection still does

not attribute to social work the privileges of the traditional professions, such as control over certification or registration of professionals. Also, with respect to social work working conditions the interests of politicians and other interest groups mostly prevail over requirements of social workers, such as their enumeration or supervision.

The following discussion presents an argument which supports neo-Weberian theory in that social work knowledge itself does not secure the profession an economic or social status as claimed by the traits theory; rather, it is the way of presentation and promotion of that knowledge, to which politicians and the public respond positively and which allows the profession to have market privileges. Subsequently, it is argued that the social work profession is not so much restricted by the public administration in which it operates, as proposed by the traits theory, but rather by the specific character of the social service market.

7.3   Social Work Expertise, a Means to Market Closure

In this regard, first, the research findings suggest that the current social work profession in the Czech Republic is still in the process of creating a firm body of knowledge that would be based on relevant research and experience from practice, and which could be presented as professional expertise. This is best illustrated by reference to the intensive academisation of social work that was pursued since the Revolution in the 1990s, but which has had only a limited effect on the improved social and economic status of the profession.

On the other hand, as both Roth (1974) and Freidson (1986) stated, there is a division between social work academia, administrators and practitioners about the content of the expertise in terms of the theoretical and practical character of the knowledge. The analysis of policy-making in the child protection field showed that social work expertise is handled differently by different professional groups. Moreover, some groups within the profession have become more successful in the presentation of their knowledge and definition of problems than others. The sociology of the social work profession suggests that one of the main factors in pursuing social work knowledge is a consensus among the professionals and professional groups about the role and purpose of social work (Aldridge 1996, Lymbery, 2001). The interviews and the observation show that the current profession is going through the crucial process of establishing a professional profile, and at the same

time, confirm that various professional groups with significantly different perspectives on social work discourse have emerged. This thesis agrees with most authors (for instance, Aldridge, 1996; Hamilton, 1974; Haynes and Whites, 1998; Gibelman, 1999; Lymbery, 2001; Hugman, 2009; Gray and Webb, 2010; Munro, 2011) that a shared definition of the aims and objectives of the profession is fundamental to the professional project of social work.

Freidson (1986), in his analysis of the helping professions, emphasised that the different professional groups - academia, administrators and practitioners, according to the author - have different approaches to handling specialised knowledge according to their work objectives. Academics are keen on understanding and following theoretical concepts, whereas practitioners adapt their expertise to the demands of their work, and the administrators concentrate more on the regulative aspects of social work. Such contrasts in approach were evident in the narratives of the research respondents, and were reflected in their interpretation of the problems, which were the focus of the new child protection policy. For example, as described in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), the lecturers attributed the problem of the high number of children in residential care to the failure of the practitioners to follow the social work ethical code, whereas the policy-makers, who were also the administrators at the MLSA, argued that the problem lies in practitioners neglecting their responsibility to use preventative measures. The practitioners claimed that they have very limited resources to prevent children from entering residential care, and that they are restricted in their work by incomplete and ambiguous regulations and policies. The new child protection policy mostly corresponds with the perspectives of the administrators, who have successfully defined the major issues of the system, as described in the previous chapter.

It is argued that the profession does not necessarily adhere to specialised knowledge if this hinders potential economic or social gains. In some cases, for the sake of economic or social advantages the profession appears not to pursue perspectives based on specialised knowledge but seems instead to accept the definitions of dominant groups. In the process of policy-making and social work job creation, the representatives of professional groups strike a balance between their social work knowledge and the economic and political interests of other actors. An example to illustrate this is where non-governmental organisations agree to work on projects contracted by council authorities despite acknowledging that the projects do not address the main causes or consequences of a social

problem they deal with, or even despite recognising that the projects work in contradiction to what they define as clients' needs.

The discussion also includes one of the inherent dilemmas of the social work profession, that is, whether the objective of social work is to change conditions and policies that discriminate between certain groups, or whether it is to change people who have social problems in order to adapt them to the socio-economic environment. In other words, the question is whether social work is an agent of the state apparatus or the advocate of people in need. Taken from the perspective of the profession as a form of organised labour, the social work profession may achieve a more favourable position if their services and approaches to problems correspond with the political preferences of the powerful institutions of the state. In the UK in the 1980s, a group of radical social work proponents strongly opposed such a course of social work development, and currently many Czech social work professionals also criticise the willingness of professionals to accept the conditions and methods of social work determined by political administrations. Nevertheless, on the grounds of economic interest, the profession has to adjust to the demands and opportunities that come from the institutions which pay for the services.

To conclude, the research results of this thesis support the argument of the neo-Weberian theory that professional expertise does not inherently earn the profession social and economic status and advantages on the labour market. Rather, market closure and other legal privileges guarantee the profession an improved position in the labour market, and thus control over its work and its sphere of influence. Based on this research, it is clear that the strategies of persuasion about the advantages of professional expertise are of similar or sometimes of even more importance with respect to the economic and social privileges of a profession than the actual specific knowledge. Moreover, within the profession utilisation and presentation of knowledge differ according to the position of inter-professional groups within the profession and the social welfare system. Furthermore, it was illustrated that the specialised knowledge of the professions can even be an obstacle to economic benefits for the professions if it opposes the dominant discourse.

7.4   *Professional Association, the Missing Authority*

Most theories of the professions emphasise the primary importance of professional associations for the development of a profession. As described in the literature review,

professional associations serve several functions, mainly acting as the cohesive agent for the members of the profession and as a representative in negotiations with other actors. In some cases, professional associations are authorised to deal with registration, certification and inspections. Currently, several professional associations operate in the social work profession in the Czech Republic, but only for a limited number of social workers or in certain specialised areas of social work; none of them have any authority with respect to the representation of the entire profession, the organisation of working conditions of the profession, or accreditation. This corresponds with the findings of Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008), confirming that in some other countries there is also a problem of diversity of associations representing social work only in particular settings or practitioners' backgrounds, rather than a single professional body. As Popple (1985) and Musil (2008) concluded, due to the very fragmented character of the social work profession, searching for unity is a difficult task.

According to Kornbeck (1998) social work associations represent social work professionals and their key role should lie in their involvement in professional training and accreditation, standards of professional work, and professional registers. None of the existing social work professional associations holds any of these responsibilities. Also, it is important to note that in the Czech Republic the social work degree is an academic certification issued by the Ministry of Education but it is not a professional qualification accredited by a professional body. The Association of Social Work Educators has influence on the content of social work training. However, the organisation of education is in the hands of the state. Nevertheless, the providers of training of social work continuing education are accredited by the MLSA or other ministries.

The importance of professional associations is widely discussed in the sociology of social work. Etzioni (1969), and Perry et al. (1980), refer to a semi-profession as an occupation with a lack of organisational independency, which inherently implies external supervision over professionals' performance. Czech social work is organised either in the public administrations or independently in the non-governmental organisations. However, in both cases their performance falls wholly under the supervision of several offices of the state. There is no independent body of professionals that could supervise social workers in the field. This implies that the profession is assessed, and sometimes judged, not according to its own expertise and ethical standards, but by external regulations. As a consequence of the absence of a representative association or another type of professional body with

authority for regulating the work of social workers, the profession is more dependent on the policies of the government ministries and council administrations. Similarly, the lack of such a professional authority has a disabling effect in cases of publicly discussed instances of social work failures.

The analysis of the interviews suggests that the lack of a representative professional association has a significant effect on the discretion of social workers. The professionals claim that when making decisions they conform to less innovative and more standardised practices because they do not have the support of any professional institution. This is particularly significant for child protection social workers, who tend to adopt indirect strategies for dealing with organisational pressure and ambiguous policies, rather than searching for proactive solutions and challenging their working conditions, a phenomenon described by Lipsky. An important strategy of this kind, mentioned above, is information sharing and withdrawing. Lipsky (1980) suggests that frontline workers develop strategies to curtail management supervision, and interpret policy and organisational regulations, and this is especially the case with child protection social workers, who work under strict organisational and policy regulations, and who develop social networks of trusted professionals in order to deal with the pressure. Informal social networks of professionals may be viewed as a substitute for a professional association, providing the necessary peer support and practical assistance in everyday work. Influential social networks even significantly impact upon the policy-making process; however, social networks do not represent a wider group of professionals and therefore cannot substitute for a professional association in this respect.

Finally, the lack of an independent professional organisation is reflected in the low remuneration of social workers, particularly in the public administration, and consequently in their lower professional status. The remuneration of social workers depends on the pay scales for public employees, based on level of responsibility and years in service according to their qualification, and no professional authority has been established and delegated to challenge this system.

As discussed above, the social work profession in the Czech Republic does not have a professional association with direct control over their services or organisational independence. Nevertheless, specialised social work services such as curators for youth, half-way houses for mothers and children, and street-workers, have established separate associations. Although at

this stage they do not have control over credentials or other forms of authority, they do work as influential groups in the 'competitive political process', as Saks defines it. The professional associations represent a particular group of social workers such as street-workers, but they can also be representative of a specific service provider, such as half-way houses. However, although the enactment of a Social Work Professional Act and the establishment of the social work association have been under discussion since 2005, they were largely disregarded until 2011 when negotiations between the MLSA and various representative groups of social work organisations were re-opened[6]. In January 2013, a research committee of the MLSA produced a recommendation regarding the Social Work Professional Act that would address the matters of working conditions, qualification requirements, requirements for life-long learning and quality control of social work performance (MLSA Vědecká rada 2013b). It is likely that the social work profession will achieve an act relating to its profession and to the establishment of a self-governing professional association with supervising or accrediting authority. The form of such legislation, as one social work lecturer who was interviewed mentioned, depends very much on the agreement between the representative groups of academics, social work employing organisations and social service providers.

It can be concluded that the absence of a representative social work professional association contributes substantially to the dependency of the profession on other, mostly state, institutions and offices in matters such as professional training, performance supervision and remuneration. The profession has not yet been separated from the state administration, which undermines its professional autonomy and places social work in the category of the semi-professions. Establishing a representative organisation with some authority would enable the profession to have better control over its members and a more favourable position when negotiating with third parties. Nevertheless, certain steps have already been taken towards founding such an organisation, and the chief actors in this endeavour are the professional associations of specific social work activities, who, although they do not hold any of the authority mentioned above, have already established organisational capacity and relationships with government offices. This is a clear illustration of the transition of social work from a semi-profession to a more secure economic and organisational position, where it can enjoy the advantages of a fully-fledged profession.

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[6] Conference Sociální práce potřebují sociální pracovníci profesní zákon? RAROSP, APSS ČR, Charles University (9th March 2011)

7.5   Professionalism of Professionals

Although from the perspectives of the neo-Weberian and neo-institutional theories, the social work profession has achieved significant accomplishments, the narratives show considerable dissatisfaction among the professionals with the state of their profession. The main reason given relates to the lack of professionalism among social workers and other professionals. Interestingly, the description of professionalism presented in the interviews resembles the concept of ethical responsibility and the dedication of the professions to the public good; which is one of the core, but most criticised, attributes of the professions proposed by the traits theory.

One of the most important findings shows that the understanding of professionalism by social work professionals across organisations significantly corresponds with the central proposition of the traits theory, namely that professions intrinsically work for the general good of humanity. It is suggested that this altruistic ideology of the professions is incorporated into professional codes of ethics (Parsons, 1951, cited in Křížová, 2006; Greenwood, 1957; Parker, 1994). Parsons identified the main ethical principles as universalism, affective neutrality and functional particularity. The primary function of professional codes of ethics is the establishment of a relationship between the professional service and human needs and interests, and protection against any harmful or immoral actions of a professional (Hayry and Hayry, 1994). The social work profession in the Czech Republic has not established a code of ethics that would be enforceable or legally in force. This means the profession is more susceptible to the judgments of other professions, media and other organisations (Janebová, 2010).

In the narratives, social work professionals associated professionalism of social work with adherence to ethical standards. Nevertheless, there was a difference in the approach to the concept of ethics and professionalism conveyed by managers, policy-makers, and field social workers. Managers and policy-makers mainly highlighted the failure to follow ethical standards, referring to misconduct in social work practice and the lack of empathy of field social workers in relationships with clients. On the other hand, field social workers from across the range of social organisations understood professionalism to mean following universal standards of working conduct which are shared by all professionals regardless of their specialisation or employing organisation, based on work experience with complex life problems of clients, the notion of workable solutions for a client, and an understanding of the workload of other professionals. Field social workers described professionalism as a shared rule of conduct that extends beyond an organisational code of

ethics and organisational culture of employing organisations. The problem of professionalism was described as excessive compliance with the objectives and culture of an employing organisation, or pursuing personal interests at work.

The results suggest that strong loyalty of social work professionals to the organisational culture of their employing organisations limits the professionalism of social work. This confirms the arguments of Klenovský (2010) and Musil (2008), who argue that the professional identity of social work has been hindered by determined allegiance of social work professionals to their employing organisations. Two different organisational cultures, based on diverse values and missions, are particularly evident in non-governmental organisations and in state or council social work departments. Distinct legislative and regulatory frameworks significantly shape the character of the work of state or council social workers, who tend to emphasise their own legal obligations, and those of parent-clients, whereas non-governmental social workers have fewer delegated responsibilities and therefore they tend to be more client-focused.

The differences in the understanding of professionalism between the inter-professional groups can also be explained by Greenwood's notion of professional culture. Firstly, there are evident discrepancies in values and norms of observed inter-professional groups; and secondly, there are social roles associated with hierarchical and organisational positions of the inter-professional groups. Managers and policy-makers value compliance with ethical codes, but field workers prefer co-operation and practical selflessness amongst professionals. The current research revealed that there was an apparent idea among policy-makers and state department managers that field social workers need to be controlled and regulated; and conversely, there was an obvious reluctance among field social workers to put up with the control and the interference of decision-makers in their work. This suggests that the traits of professional ethical standards and professional culture proposed by traits theory, and Greenwood (1958) in particular, are valid in understanding the professionals' concept of professionalism.

It is therefore concluded that, in accordance with the argument of the traits theory, social workers consider a code of ethics as a main attribute of the profession and as a crucial feature of their professionalism. However, what exactly is meant by ethical standards in the profession differs between managers, policy-makers and field social workers.

7.6   Social Service Market as a Limitation

In relation to the discussion above, it is argued that limited control over working conditions is not primarily a consequence of less specialisation of social work expertise or the bureaucratic embeddedness of the profession in the public administration. Rather, it derives from features of the social work market, which does not respond to potential demand but instead depends on state and council budgets and political ideology, as described by Barth (2003) and discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2). Barth explains that in traditional markets need translates into effective demand; however, in the case of social work many people have a need for social work services, but this does not translate into demand until there is somebody to pay for the services. The neo-Weberian theory presumes that professions develop in a system of free markets based on relationships with demand and supply. This argument is challenged by the evidence of the formation of the professions in communist countries. Nevertheless, the research findings confirm that limits to the social work market based on the intermediary role of the state between the profession and their clients restrict the economic opportunities of the social work profession more, compared with other professions that operate in the free market. It is suggested that free-market principles in the social work market in the form of a quasi-market had a stimulating impact on the expansion of social work services in the Czech Republic. At the same time, even this kind of market depends on the purchasing power of the state or on other funds administrated by the state, and therefore it is by its character limiting for social work professionalisation. With reference to the discussion above, such organisation of the social service market, which is determined by the availability of funding resources, makes the social work profession dependent on the social policy and political ideology of the paying institutions. The findings of the research correspond with Barth's argument that, in contrast with other professions, the social work profession primarily depends on, develops with, and is restricted by, the character of the social service market, in which the state or other governing institutions such as the European Union determine the demand.

The organisational and financial dependency of the profession on preferences of the political parties in the government significantly limits the potential to develop its professional project in the same way as other professions that operate in the private market. In the child protection field, this can be exemplified by the types of social services provided by the non-governmental organisations, and which are called for in the public

commissions. Project managers from NGOs run programmes that match the descriptions of calls from funders, such as the organisation of leisure time activities for socially-deprived children or advocatory assistance for poor families. However, social workers from the non-governmental organisations argue that in order to treat the real problems of their clients, wider social issues have to be addressed, such as housing, job creation or child social-psychological counselling. Nevertheless, the non-governmental organisations do not have the opportunity to provide services in these fields until they attract funders that best suit their interests. The new public promotion of foster care services and its treatment within the recent formation of new child protection legislation can serve as an example of successful negotiation between non-governmental professional groups and other stakeholders. The new policy secures the legal attribution of some of the child protection responsibilities to the non-governmental organisations. These are responsibilities that used to be the sole domain of the state institutions.

Stone's theory (1989) is based on the presumption that interest groups strive to pursue their own definition of a subject of public concern in order to gain access to resources. Social work is more or less dependent on the social policy of a government and resources made available to deal with consensual social issues. The main argument of the sociology of social work (Payne, 1979; Ambrosino et al., 2011; Wenocur and Reisch, 1989; Jordan, 2001) suggests that social policy is ideologically determined and dictates the objectives and goals of the social work profession at a particular time. Others assert that the relationship between social policy and social work is interconnected as they influence each other. In this respect, the thesis agrees with the assertion of Meeuwisse (2009), who argues that social policy significantly determines and forms the features, position, organisation and practice of the social work profession, and, in addition, it is suggested that the profession, above all, responds to obstacles and opportunities of a funding system enforced by particular social policies.

Chapter 4 above, which described social work professional development in the Czech Republic, identified three distinctive historical periods, which accord with different national social policies and ways of social service funding. In the following paragraphs, it is illustrated how the professional project of social work responds to the changing social policy and conditions of funding.

Between the two World Wars, the Social Democracy Party, following its socially-oriented policies, initiated the launching of many social services with partial funding liability. The social policy was a response to the acute problems caused by the First World War. Yet the primary financial responsibility for social service delivery was carried by the council authorities. However, the social issues at that time were immense and state or local funding was not sufficient, and in addition the church had only a limited influence and made a limited contribution in the country. Therefore, the social service organisations providing social work mostly started as groups of volunteers, which with time changed into charities with their own fundraising responsibility. Social workers even established a professional association and other expert committees on their own initiative. Nevertheless, the charities experienced serious financial difficulties, and therefore the first social work graduates strived to establish legally a social work agenda at the Ministry of Social Affairs, and working positions in the council administrations. The professionals realised that the continuity of the social work profession required financial security guaranteed by the government.

In the communist era, the entire social welfare system fell under the authority of the state, and all social workers became state employees as charities and church organisations were abolished. The Communist Party enforced socialism with central planning in the economy, and the state administration replaced all other forms of organisation. This engulfed the profession: it depended on state resources, and was designated only a limited sphere of activities as the communist ideology denied the existence of social problems or viewed them as a relic of capitalism. The history of Czech social work demonstrates that strong political views on social problems have the power to even dissolve, in part, the social work profession. Over the four decades of the communist regime, there was very little progress and few changes were made regarding the professionalisation of social work. Social work activities and social workers were entirely embedded into, and controlled by, the state administration, which on the one hand afforded a secure position but on the other hand provided only minimal opportunity for the formation of professional identity and self-governance.

As discussed above, the current social work profession operates in a quasi-market system based on a combination of free market principles and central planning, which subsequently determines the market potential and opportunities for social work. Social policy in the Czech Republic has changed according to the ruling parties in the government, ranging

across a liberal to social-democratic political spectrum but not with significant differences. Deacon (1993) described the welfare systems in the post-communist countries in the 1990s as a post-communist conservative corporatist welfare regime, and predicted gradual development towards Western types of welfare regimes. It can be concluded that governments have had different priorities for their social policies; however, their common objective is similar to that in other European countries, which is to transfer some of the welfare agenda from the state to private subjects.

The most important turning point for the social work profession was the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union in 2004. The subsequent availability of funding within the EU operational programmes resulted in the expansion of the non-governmental sector and consequential division in the social work profession between state and non-governmental, as described in previous chapters (Chapter 4 and 5). Non-governmental organisations have only a limited share of income generated from their own fundraising activities or service charges, and thus they are still bound by their dependency on external donors and on the state budget. Nevertheless, the greater possibilities of funding have enabled social work to develop organisationally and across a range of services. In the case of the state child protection, social workers as employees of council authorities are dependent on the council administration with respect to the management of their special funds; however, this is more likely to change in the future as the ministry has proposed removing the child protection agenda from the province of councils.

Most of the theories of the sociology of the professions presume the existence of a liberal market system for the development of professional projects, which has limited applicability in the case of social work due to the specific character of the social welfare market. Healy and Meagher (2004) even argue that the introduction of market principles into the social work sphere leads to the de-professionalisation of social work. However, the examples above illustrate that the relation between the professionalisation of social work, social policy, and a system of available resources, is pivotal. It is suggested that a variety of funding opportunities stimulate professional progression and the variety of social work.

7.7   Council Administrations Rule

The Czech Republic is a country with a 'high degree of stateness' as described by Le Bianic (2003). The history of the Czech social work profession illustrates a close

relationship between the state institutions and the profession. The findings of this thesis agree with Le Bianic's argument that the state consists of different agencies and procedures, some of which help the professions to support their position not only by market closure. Although the MLSA significantly determines the administration of child protection and the work of social workers, it also delegates them further responsibilities and protects their sphere of influence. An example of this is the resolute effort of MLSA officials to redirect funding and responsibilities held by institutions of other ministries under its agenda. However, the area in which the social work professionals feel limited is the means to actively participate in policy-making and changing working conditions. Finally, the findings suggest that the council and municipal administrations are more powerful than the state institutions that influence social work.

The institutional establishment of the governance and ways of policy-making is considered to be the other central factor for professionalisation of social work. In other words, the thesis agrees with the view that professionalisation depends on the institutions of a state that enable the profession to negotiate its interests and to influence policy-making, and suggests that the lack of formal ways induces professional groups to rely on informal and behind-the-scene dealing to influence the decision-making processes.

Krause (1991), in his research on the professions in the communist countries, emphasised the factor of civil engagement, which is understood in terms of the extent of sharing power between political groups and with other interest groups. Kraus indicated that institutions of a state that facilitate professional groups to access decision-making procedures, through which they can negotiate their position significantly, determine their ways of professionalisation. Civil engagement refers to the possible means through which interest groups or individuals raise a matter in order to pursue it as a public issue, and eventually to participate in the problem solving. Similarly, Macdonald described the different state institutions of selected European countries, in which the professions pursued their projects, and argued that the distinctive institutional and economic establishment of a state is a crucial factor for professionalisation. The literature of the sociology of social work in this respect mostly discusses the role of professional associations, and their power to represent and promote their professions through formal ways, such as legal changes and the formation of professional unions.

During the first period of social work development, it was very important that social work representatives communicated about the significance of the profession, as the social work organisational establishment was still in its early stages. At that time, politically and publicly eminent persons were engaged in the formation of the social work profession, such as Marie Krakešová, and Alice Masaryk, the daughter of the first Czechoslovakian president, who had the influence to initiate important steps for the profession such as the establishment of training institutions and research activities. Furthermore, the Czechoslovakian social welfare system was in the early stages of development between the wars, and therefore negotiations between important professionals, interested persons and state officials played an important role. Furthermore, the First Republic was firmly based on democratic principles, and, as described in Chapter 4 above, the non-governmental organisations and civil organisations raised awareness about many social issues in society. The social work professional association was established and actively negotiated the working conditions of social workers.

The communist regime relied on the decisions of the heads of the Communist Party in all aspects of the state governance, and any deviation was severely restricted. Civil society did not exist, and any proposals that contradicted the socialist doctrine were not allowed. Therefore the social work profession had only limited opportunities to influence policy-making and to develop outside the scope of party control. Nevertheless, some professionals found ways to progress in the professional project, even though some activities were hidden or considered illicit by the regime. For instance, some lecturers from different departments, as social work tertiary education was abandoned, inquired into social issues from the social work perspective under the name of other disciplines. Neglected social problems were highlighted just before 1968, when political control was relaxed for a limited time. A number of motivated social work professionals organised secret debates about pressing issues. On the other hand, social work operated as part of the extensive state apparatus of social security and social assistance. Later, in the 1980s, it was recognised as a discipline through the pressure of dedicated persons. There was even some academic work published; however, this was highly censored and had to follow the dominant political understanding of social affairs.

After the Revolution of 1989, the country re-established a democratic system with a developing civil society; however, the social work profession was for the following decade still predominantly operating within the state administration until the eventual growth of

the non-governmental sector. There are several formal ways by which professions can actively contribute to policy-making. The official way for all professional groups to influence policy-making is through the instrument of legislative objections, by which they can criticise and propose changes to legislation during the first stages of preparation. In this way the procedures of legal enactment allow professional groups to join the wider circle of policy-making; however, the finalisation of legislation is designated only for parliament members. Another formal way of inclusion for social work professionals in policy-making is through community planning, which in the Czech Republic means a process that helps representatives of council administrations and social service providers to decide about the needs of a community and about the distribution of funding for social services.

Nevertheless, this research suggests that the formal ways of participating in the policy-making process are considered by the professional groups as rather ineffective, and this encourages professionals to rely on less formal ways of interference. For instance, representatives lobby MPs before the last parliamentary rounds of legislative enactment or, with respect to community planning, what happens is that representatives of funding authorities and established NGOs make decisions about the outcomes of the dealings beforehand. Such practices favour those with positive long-term relationships with decision-makers.

Therefore, the procedures and institutional methods through which political groups share governance and authority over issues of public concern and the allocation of resources determine predominantly the strategies of professionalisation. Although the current institutional method of policy-making allows interest groups to participate, they are deemed as inadequate. Accordingly, the research suggests that the lack of formal ways of communication between the decision-makers and the representatives of the profession or managers of social work organisations encourages the development of informal strategies that rely on personal contacts, the informal procedures or coping strategies of "street-level bureaucrats".

Traits and neo-Weberian theories argue that the position of child protection social work in the bureaucratic structure of public and council administrations significantly curtails the discretion of child protection social workers. Based on the research findings of this thesis, it is suggested that bureaucratic administration restricts professional autonomy but also

enhances its position. Furthermore, neo-Weberian and traits theories consider the state as a power in opposition to the profession, while the neo-institutional theory argues that the state or the profession are not integrated entities, but rather a compound of institutions, organisations and offices that may contest or support each other. The theoretical concept of this thesis also draws on neo-institutional theory, and the findings suggest that council and municipal administrations have a more powerful, often contradictory, influence on the social work profession than governmental ministries and their offices. Although little reference was found in the literature of the sociology of the professions about the role of regional self-government units in the professionalisation of the occupations, the research findings indicate that the council administrations in the Czech Republic are the main actors that shape social work professional conditions, while the interconnection of child protection administration with the state institutions reinforces the position of the state social workers.

Traditionally in the Czech Republic, the local councils are authorities with delegated state power, and carry a great deal of responsibility for the organisation of social care services and social security administration, which was further enhanced in the 1990s by the national project of decentralisation of the state administration. However, in the social agenda a considerable amount of friction emerged. This research showed that even though the relevant legislation establishes the MLSA as the main authority over child protection and social services, council politicians still have the political power to circumvent the laws and pursue their own interests by interfering in the work of the ministry. Therefore, in the case of child protection, the profound level of controversy between the interests of council administrations, child protection departments and the MLSA has led to the ministry proposing the withdrawal of child protection from council administrations. In the future, the ministry plans to transfer the system and place it solely under state control as part of a new state social welfare institution.

As mentioned above, the political representatives of council authorities have great power over the work of social workers as well as over public discourse on social affairs. First, council administrations strongly determine the working conditions of social work, including the number of social workers employed and their remuneration, as well as the financial and training resources available to them. Secondly, council administrations have political influence over professional autonomy, discretion and public discourse. Gibelman (1999) states that the socio-political and economic environment has always had an

influence on the methods and goals of the social work profession. In fact, the influence and intrusion of local politicians do not always act against the interests of the profession, but according to the narratives of the respondents, council administrations often do not support the perspectives of social workers. From this research it is difficult to define more accurately the role of council administrations in the process of formation of social work professionalisation. From the analysis of the interviews, however, it would appear that social work is employed in a region according to the political preferences of the council administration. However, the interests of political representatives of council authorities vary widely; their objectives and approaches largely depend on the political affiliations of the council members, and on the perspective of voters on a certain problem.

Thus, it is suggested that the literature has not recognised the substantial extent of the influence and control of local authorities over the social work profession. In the Czech Republic the councils hold significant responsibilities in social affairs, but are also highly autonomous from central state governance, and therefore they are a major factor in social work professionalisation. They determine extensively the working conditions of child protection social workers, the demand for social services, and the public attitudes towards social problems.

7.8   The Strategies of Social Work Professionalisation

The professional groups utilise various strategies to achieve the goal of professionalisation, not only by directly participating inpolicy-making but primarily through claiming and acquiring a preferential position in dealing with certain social issues. In actual fact, the demand for new responsibilities and a greater sphere of influence developed organically in the field before representatives of the profession proposed a concrete form or change in relevant legislation. Some of the strategies have already been described, such as academisation, establishing professional associations, and lobbying. The findings show that inter-professional groups rely to a significant extent on formal and informal connections with influential politicians and officials at the council and governmental levels. Field social workers establish and rely on their networks of allied professionals across organisations, and this enables them to secure a field of influence, and circumvent burdensome regulations and responsibilities. This research was able to capture fundamental and present strategies specific to the current social work professionalisation in

the Czech Republic. However, each of the professional groups employs strategies specific to their organisational and economic establishments; therefore, with reference to the relevant theories, the following section describes the methods of professionalisation carried out by the respective professional groups.

7.8.1   Strategies of the Non-governmental Organisations

Non-governmental organisations started operating in the Czech social service system after the Revolution in 1989, when the concept of private ownership was re-established. From that time they became an important pillar of the social service provision, and an increasing number of activities were transferred from the state administration into their province. Although external conditions were favourable for the development of the NGO sector, such as the restoration of free markets, social-democratic governments, and the availability of funding from the European Union, the organisations had to struggle to achieve favourable conditions for their survival. In this section of the chapter, the strategies by which non-governmental organisations achieved their current, more stable, position are summarised and described. Based on the findings of this research, it is concluded that NGOs successfully employ variety of ways in order to secure better economic and social status, including: (1) developing further specialisation of social work activities, (2) supporting the shift of social service provision from the state or councils to the not-for-profit sector, and (3) tailoring their services according to social policies and the preferences of funders and policy-makers.

7.8.1.1   Specialisation of Services

Generally, the rise of the professions is related to and, according to the traits theory, conditioned by, the expansion of science and specific knowledge. Peplau (2003) described the process of specialisation in the nursing profession, according to which the combination of new knowledge or technology, and public need and interest, creates an opportunity for expansion of the professions into a new field. Specialisation is defined as a division of the generic field of the profession or a mixture of aspects from different fields, which creates an initial shortage of professionals with the necessary know-how. Similarly, non-governmental organisations search for opportunities in which they can expand with new activities. Often the inspiration for a specialisation and a new service comes from foreign

practice, as in the case of the exchange of social work knowledge and examples of good practice within Europe, and this is becoming increasingly common.

In this way, the foster care services and services of family social activation which were introduced in the Czech Republic were based on the relationship of certain NGOs with their foreign partners. The NGOs managed to raise the interest of the Czech public and policy-makers in the subject, and had to consider funding foster care services. Currently, foster care and family social activation services are considered to be the best solutions to the issue of overcrowding in the child residential care system, and therefore were included in the new child protection policy. Funding was made available for these services, and an increasing number of NGOs responded to it accordingly by appropriate training of social workers and by the opening of new services.

Specialisation is a successful strategy, employed mainly by the NGOs in order to expand their sphere of activities and influence. The opportunity for specialisation depends on a constellation of new knowledge or different practice, potential interest of the public and funders, and employing organisations or professionals detecting an untreated problem and a related niche in the social service market.

7.8.1.2 *Shift from the State Welfare*

In the sociology of the professions, the majority of authors widely criticise the neo-liberal policies and the introduction of market principles into social welfare because, as they argue, this has a negative effect on social work, on the working conditions of the profession, and on the performance of social workers. The general move away from extensive state welfare associated with the rise of liberal or third way courses of social policies has been adopted slowly in the Czech Republic due to the country's communist past and social-democratic preferences. However, it can be said that at the present time some kind of social service quasi-market, in which NGOs operate, has been established, and the organisations are striving to share and acquire responsibilities and spheres of influence that traditionally belong to the state administration. Based on this research, it is argued, in contrast with authors mentioned in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) above, that the introduction of a quasi-market into social service provision had predominantly positive consequences as it supported the development of social work and the expansion of NGOs' activities in the Czech Republic. It may be that social service organisations respond

primarily to the demands of their funders rather than their clients' needs, and that there is increased pressure and regulation of field social workers as a consequence, but as a profession social work has expanded and has acquired a significant position in the social service market precisely because of the quasi-market principles.

The NGOs actively support the shift of social services from the state into their hands by showing the benefits of their services, such as cost-saving and organisational independence. The NGOs criticize the state administration and adhere to the general view that the state administration is expensive, ineffective, and, particularly in the social sphere, heavy-handed; and they argue that their own services are flexible, cost-effective, innovative and more in line with the social policy of the European Union. In the child protection field, the NGOs often view themselves as the counterbalance to state social work, but present themselves as assistants to the council child protection departments, providing complementary services. With time, they have become part of multidisciplinary teams and have managed to incorporate some important changes into the new child protection legislation. The new policy imposes a duty on a council child protection social worker to use all possible services, mostly provided by NGOs, in order to avoid placement into residential care, and NGOs have a new opportunity to partially carry out the child protection agenda.

The NGOs actively respond to the current neo-liberal tendencies in the social welfare system, and successfully expand their services and strive to take over responsibilities that traditionally belong to the state social departments. This thesis cannot challenge the dominant argument of the sociology of social work that neo-liberal policies are detrimental to methods of social workers and the mission of social work; however, it is argued that in the case of social work carried out by the non-governmental organisations in the Czech Republic the introduction of quasi-market principles has enabled the profession to expand and to assume an important role in social service provision.

7.8.1.3 *Preferences of Decision-makers*

The NGOs rely only on external funding for their activities, and therefore have to be pro-active in order to be able to attract funds. This pressure impels them to develop ways to promote and sell their services to the fund holders or other decision-makers. As social work operates in the social service market, whose characteristics were discussed above, the

strategies of the NGOs tend to focus on addressing the requirements of their funders rather than their clients. First, NGOs tailor their services to the demands of fund holders, and secondly, managers of NGOs maintain good relationships with politicians and decision-makers from councils and governmental offices as these relationships are crucial for their funding.

The sociology of social work extensively debates the dilemma of social work professional objectivity, mission and liability, as discussed previously. The non-governmental organisations have learnt to tailor their services to the policies, objectives and conditions of grant projects, and the prevailing social politics of a government. According to the narratives, the argument of cost-effectiveness of their services has become an important factor in their rationale, even to the extent that some NGOs managers admitted to fixing accounting records in order to comply with the requirements of a grant project. Undoubtedly, the fund holders and their policies have an immense influence on the working conditions and methods of social workers because NGOs have to meet the standards and objectives set by the funding authorities.

Some authors of the sociology of the professions mention only briefly the importance of contacts with the political elite for the professional project. This aspect of professionalisation has not been elaborated upon in sufficient depth, whilst the findings of this study show that connections with politicians are crucial for the non-governmental organisations. The NGOs make a great effort to maintain good relationships with fund holders and policy-makers, through which they attempt to influence the allocation of resources. The respondents mentioned several ways by which they maintain such connections and most of these were described in detail in the Chapter 5. The NGOs, for example, arrange events about their activities or with their clients, at which politicians can present themselves as 'people of a good heart', or they may organise "team-building" weekends for politicians. Often NGOs co-operate with the council or regional administrations on projects in exchange for political support in getting funds for another activity. Managers of the more long-running organisations claimed that they have good relationships with officials from the ministries, and thus they do not need to be concerned about getting grants. Another strategy of the NGOs is to delegate personnel from their management to take up political positions, in order to have their "own people" in the decision-making circles. NGOs have to promote their services, and in the competitive environment of grants distribution, they often strive to discredit other organisations who

are applying for the same grant, by releasing misinformation about them into circulation. Another strategy is to form a coalition with an allied organisation, and divide the scope of activities between each other, and in this way eliminate other organisations from the competition.

The character of the social service quasi-market puts great pressure on the non-governmental organisations to act as if they were for-profit entities that have to respond to the effective demands of the contracting authorities. First, the assumption of a third way policy that market principles make social services more effective and address the needs of clients better is challenged in this way, as shown above, since NGOs tend to follow the requirements of fund holders than clients. Secondly, as the brief summary of strategies that aim to win the support of decision-makers suggests, non-governmental organisations are keen to maintain favourable relations with key politicians even by less traditional or official means. Such an environment favours long-established organisations, and those which are more willing to accept the pre-conditions of politicians.

7.8.2   Strategies of the Child Protection Departments

The sociology of social work is predominantly concerned with the social work profession as it is embedded in the state administration. The current general perspective on the recent development of social work is primarily concerned with the consequences of the introduction of market principles into social services, managerialism and the extensive regulations of social workers' performance. Many authors call for a revision of the social work mission and objectives, in order to allow it act more decisively as a profession, and they emphasise the important roles of professional associations and training. However, the research findings point to more pragmatic strategies employed by the social work profession in the state administration. Nevertheless, the findings also support the theories of street-level bureaucracy, according to which the practice of field social workers is adjusted in ways which enable them to cope with work pressure, regulations and organisational inflexibility; it was found that networks of personally acquainted professionals play an important role for child protection social workers in their everyday practice.

In the Czech Republic, on the one hand, state social work is traditionally ascribed a negative image as an agent of the state apparatus; and on the other, the departments have a

comprehensive range of responsibilities and authority. However, current trends support a multi-disciplinary approach in professional teams and a transfer of state responsibilities to non-governmental organisations, which is forcing child protection departments to revise their own positions. Child protection departments have specific organisational and economic features; first, they are based in council administrations, but fall under the authority of the MLSA; secondly, they are paid by the councils but receive special subsidies from the ministry. In such a constellation of conditions, social work professionals and managers in the child protection departments choose strategies designed to protect or improve their economic and social positions, such as (1) preservation of the key responsibilities within the system, (2) securing the responsibility of contracting services, and (3) reliance on personal networks of professionals.

7.8.2.1   *Key Responsibilities*

Child protection social workers are delegated by the state to carry out the state's responsibility to protect children in the country against abuse, neglect, and immoral behaviour according to the Children and Human Rights Conventions and the Child Protection Act. The majority of authors in the sociology of social work perceive state intervention in relation to social work as a necessary compromise, as aptly described by Jones (1997, cited in Lymbery, 2001:381); the relationship between the state and social work at the end of the 20th century can be characterised as a bargain, by which social work is expected to perform coercive statutory functions on condition that it abandons its involvement in discussions about inequality and injustice. On the other hand, the state creates a great opportunity for social work to dominate certain spheres of influence and economic activity; and this is evident in the keen efforts of child protection managers and social workers to assume and protect the key responsibilities which they have in the child protection agenda under the state authority.

With the expansion of social services provided by the NGOs, child protection social workers have to co-operate with them in certain activities, and in doing so they should share information about clients' cases with them. This is still strongly resisted by many child protection social workers, as they do not consider social workers from NGOs as equal partners, and they resist the new intrusion into their relationships with children and families. In order to limit the NGOs' intervention, child protection social workers may ignore the availability of their services completely, or may not share full information with

them about clients, or may delegate to them fewer specialised activities and more fieldwork activities. In other words, child protection social workers protect their own positions as decision-makers and gate keepers. For this reason, the duty of other professionals, including NGO social workers, to report and provide information about clients on demand to a child protection social worker was given special mention in the new child protection policy. The validity of the argument of child protection social workers lies in the fact that they have overall responsibility for the development of a child, and the situation in a family, for the whole period when the child is registered with the department; whereas social workers from the NGOs are responsible only for certain activities with a client for a fixed period and can cancel a contract with a client under arranged conditions.

7.8.2.2 *Social Workers as Managers*

As mentioned above, for a child protection social worker the new child protection policy includes responsibilities similar to care management, according to which (s)he is in charge of the coordination of social and other services and contracting from service providers, whereas field social work should be transferred into the hands of assisting organisations. Hughes (1995) and Lymbery (1998) argue that the introduction of care management into social work has 'de-professionalisation' consequences for the profession as it restricts the discretion of social work professionals, increases the administrative burden, and makes expenditure a primary concern. However, some authors perceive care management as a way of improving the professional status. At present, it is impossible to assess the consequences for social work professionalisation of the implementation of care management into child protection. However, from the perspective of child protection social workers, by obtaining managerial responsibilities and authority, they gain an advantageous position and power over social service providers. In addition, they are more likely to improve their economic and social status by delegating less specialised duties, including direct contact with clients, to others. Therefore, it is suggested that including managerial responsibilities in the scope of activities of a child protection social worker will result in a stronger position for them in their relationships with other professionals. Nevertheless, from the long-term perspective, there may be other as described by the authors.

7.8.2.3   Networks

Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy demonstrates how frontline workers develop 'coping' strategies in order to manage their workload and working conditions under pressures imposed by clients and policy requirements. Street-level bureaucrats strive to achieve greater control over their work by creating a balance between the policy goals, available resources and accomplishments. The author identified strategies such as rationing resources, screening and routinising clients, favouritism and stereotyping. The research findings suggest that networking between professionals across organisations, who are in everyday working contact and relationships, is an important strategy of social workers to acquire control over their work, and to deal with the requirements of policies, supervision and the demands of clients.

Social workers build relationhips with other workers within their everyday work activity, and create a network of allied professionals such as social workers from other agencies, judges from family courts, police staff, general practitioners and pediatricians, and teachers, managers and secretaries from various departments. Such relationships are based on trust and reciprocal exchange of services and information between professionals. Social workers use these networks in order to handle their workload more rapidly and to enable them to circumvent burdensome policies and regulations. However, such networks are very specific and dependent on the abilities of an individual social worker to establish them.

The research recorded several examples of professionals taking advantage of such networks. In one case, a child protection social worker was obliged to visit a severely disabled child living in a special children's care home 300 km from his office; according to the Child Protection Act, child protection social workers have to visit children in care every two months. The social worker had a telephone conversation with a social worker from that care home, and both of them established that the child's situation was stable and normal, so they could record the visit in the appropriate documents without visiting. Another example was when a judge's secretary, before a court hearing, discussed with an attending child protection social worker the frame of mind and point of view of the judge deciding the case. Once the judge entered the court room, they discussed the details of the upcoming case together, and decided on the ruling. Then the actual court hearing started in the presence of the clients.

The research observations ascertained different approaches of frontline social workers towards other professionals, depending on personal preferences and experiences, rather than a general pattern of relations with other professions, organisations or departments. As described above, social workers establish networks of affiliated professionals, but they also identify a group of professionals with whom co-operation is demanding or problematic, and then develop methods by which they can limit their influence or disruption on their own practice. Withholding information from other professionals is the most common way, but other methods are delaying the submission of necessary documentation, complaining to management, or discouraging clients from using the services of others.

Street-level bureaucracy theory is primarily concerned with the practice of frontline workers as intermediaries between the government and citizens; however, from the perspective of the sociology of the professions, the practice of field social workers is also an important factor in the professional project of social work, particularly with respect to working conditions and professional discretion. It is suggested that, amongst other strategies described in the literature, networking with other professionals is a significant method for child protection social workers to determine their working conditions according to their preferences, and to maintain their sphere of influence.

7.8.3   Strategies of the Ministerial Administrators

Freidson (2001) points to increasing administrative and regulative control over professional work associated with the rise of managerialism. In the same way, authors on the sociology of the social work profession (for instance, Dominelli, 1996; Payne, 2006; Munro, 2011) refer to the current trend of increasing regulation of social work practice and its detrimental effect on professional autonomy. Under the new child protection policy, the ministerial administrators also introduced a considerable number of measures for the purpose of increasing control, supervision and regulation of social work practice in the child protection departments and non-governmental organisations. Specifically, the policy includes additional training for child protection social workers, the imposition of standards of practice, standardised methods, and additional inspection. According to the narratives of the ministerial administrators, who are at the same time policy actors in the new child protection policy, they are seeking more efficient control over the performance of frontline social workers and their managers. However, the long-term intention of the MLSA is more far-reaching as they plan to centralise the child protection system and other social services

under the administration and authority of the ministry, and in this way to eliminate the influence of council administrations.

Also, the ministerial administrators employ strategies to achieve their goal, which was, in this case study, primarily to prepare and create the new child protection legislation. As Stone (1989) described in her work, the fundamental objective of actors in the policy-making process is to promote their point of view and propositions. Accordingly, administrators strive to influence the perspectives of the public and members of parliament, social workers from both statutory and not-for-profit organisations, and other professionals, in order to gain support for their policies. For this purpose, the MLSA launched a public campaign (MLSA press release 2011, 2012, 2013a) in the media to promote foster care and to convince others of the disadvantages of the residential care system for children. The support of senior politicians at the ministry departments and in Parliament is a crucial matter for administrators as they depend on them for financial and personal resources, and practical approval of the legal changes; therefore administrators strive to negotiate with other administrators and force through their agenda as a priority for the government.

The inter-professional group of policy-makers including ministerial administrators was described in Chapter 5 (5.3); however, it is important to note that administrators do not form a well-defined group, compared with other professional groups. Administrators usually have previous working experience in a social organisation in the field and maintain active relationships with some of the professionals, which is more likely to influence their policy-making efforts. The research observation determined that the policy-making team at the MLSA had connections to non-governmental organisations operating in foster care services, which were reflected in the proposed policy changes.

It is concluded that the trend of increasing regulation and bureaucratisation of professional work, as described by Freidson and work on the sociology of social work profession, is evident even in the development of the child protection field. However, this research cannot evaluate the definitive impact of increasing control over social work professionals on the status of the profession. Nevertheless, it is proposed that the efforts of ministerial administration to centralise the agenda of child protection under its scope of authority may limit the encroachment of other authorities, such as council administrations or other ministries, on the working conditions and autonomy of the social work profession. It is

assumed that in this way the MLSA has become the main authority of the profession until an independent professional association is established. On the one hand, being employed by the MLSA, the ministerial administrators have the authority to regulate the profession from the position of executors of the state policies. However, they also represent the interests of allied professionals, organisations and departments operating in social work. Their main method of professionalisation is persuasion of the key actors, including the public, about the advantages of proposed changes or preservation of existing arrangements through campaigns, conferences, informative meetings and training.

7.8.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, social work has made great progress towards being recognised as a profession, and has partially achieved legislative shelter over its market privileges as described by the neo-Weberian theory. At this stage, the social work profession is recognised in the legislation regulating social services; however, the law allows people with qualifications other than those in social work to undertake social work jobs. Nonetheless, independent professional legislation is in the process of preparation, and it is very likely that this matter will come to fruition in the near future. The profession still lacks a representative professional association, but many associations have been established which represent particular specialisations of social work. Most of these actively strive to influence the legal establishment of their working conditions. The council administrations were found to be the major source of influence over the development of social work in terms of job and social service opportunities, funding, working conditions, and public discourse on social affairs.

The findings support the theoretical concept of professionalisation, described in Chapter 2 (Literature Review), which was used for the analysis of the social work development and which was based on particular theories of the professions. There is some support for the traits theory, that social work can be defined as a semi-profession due to its lower economic and social status and professional autonomy. Most authors argue that less specialised knowledge and bureaucratic embeddedness are the major causes of the semi-professional status. However, the findings support the arguments of Barth (2003) that the limitations of the social service market substantially prevents social work from gaining a stronger economic position, and of Saks that social work expertise is a means to market closure, and that the strategies of expertise assertion have a decisive influence. Furthermore, Le Bianic claims that a profession and a state are not two opposing entities,

and it was demonstrated that the professional groups constitute individual clusters with different relations to institutions and offices of the state. With regard to this, it was found that the council administrations, the regional self-governmental authorities, have a crucial influence over the professionalisation of social work with respect to regulation of working conditions and methods of social work.

It was shown that the attribute of professional ethics is regarded by the professionals as the main feature of their occupation. However, in this respect managers and policy-makers place more emphasis on the compliance of field social workers to ethical codes in their relationships with clients in a particular organisation, whereas field social workers stressed compliance with informal standards of conduct common to all professionals. It is important to note that the ethical character of the professions plays an important role in social work professionalisation, although the later theories have contested the argument that the professions are motivated by ethical ideals.

The research findings point out the complexity of strategies by which the professional groups in social work currently strive to enhance their economic and social positions. The most important observation is that the objectives and processes of professionalisation, which are essentially driven by a need for greater control over working conditions, differ significantly, and depend primarily on the resources, organisational establishment, and means available to the particular professional group. In the field, the strategies of the social work profession vary widely and respond to the current obstacles and opportunities in the social welfare market. The strategies described above do not exclusively fall within one particular theory of the professions. However, the findings correspond with the arguments of certain authors (Saks, 2010; Wenocur and Reisch, 1983) that connections with politicians and decision-makers are crucial for the professional groups.

This research does, however, challenge the prevailing arguments of the sociology of the social work profession which assert that the introduction of market principles and managerialism into the social welfare field, and the increasing regulation of social work professionals, have a detrimental and de-professionalising impact on social work. It is suggested that the social work profession is now primarily an economic entity that responds to economic and political conditions as well as any other profession, even though the consequences may contradict the previously defined mission of the profession.

7.9   Reflection on the Case Study Approach

The aim of this thesis research project was to describe the current state of the social work profession in the Czech Republic and its ways of professionalisation. The project applied the case study approach, with the goal of exploring the complex realities of the profession in relation to its professionalisation, using a conceptual framework to guide and support the findings.

It is believed that the project comprises a full description of the situation and complexity of the social work profession, primarily based on the depth and strong internal validity of methods used in the project. Although the case study of the project was limited to the child protection system, the conclusions could be generalised to the whole of the social work profession due to a single system of social work governance and regulation across the country, which is relatively homogeneous, both culturally, linguistically, and in terms of social problems. Also, inter-professional conversation among social workers about their professional work takes place throughout the country.

7.10   Limitations and Further Research

This section identifies the limitations of the research, explains their importance, and describes measures that were taken to reduce their impact. Finally, based on the consideration of the limitations and findings of the research, a number of important topics for further research are outlined.

A number of limitations were identified in the research design and described in Chapter 3 (Methodology), such as the characteristics of the research sample, the lack of prior research studies on the topics, and the shortcomings associated with language translation. This section considers mainly limitations that emerged during the research process and had to be addressed in the course of the research. Firstly, the limitations that apply to the quality of findings are mentioned again in detail, including measures used to collect the data, and the conditions of bilingual research. Secondly, the thesis focused on a specific time period, the preparation period of the child protection policy, which set the primary theme and context for the research. This is discussed and considered as a limitation.

Secondly, the issues of translation were previously mentioned in Chapter 3 (Methodology), though it is believed that the bilingual character of the research also had important consequences on the results of the study; and a few observations will be made in this section.

According to Weidmer's (1994) concept of equivalences in bilingual research, the problem mentioned above would relate to cultural and conceptual equivalences. According to the author, the most common problem in translation occurs when a word or a concept does not exist in the target language, usually because of cultural differences between the researched societies. Problems with conceptual equivalence relate to connotation and secondary meanings of words, which are specific to the language use of a particular social group or class based on historical and political context.

Weidmer and other authors (Birbili, 2000; van Nes et al., 2010; and Temple, 2006) claim that a considerable knowledge of source and target cultures and languages is the primary measure enabling a researcher to tackle such problems of translation. It is recommended to customise translations and use conceptual rather than literal equivalence between the languages. Birbili (2000) identified the main techniques for eliminating translation-related problems as back translation, consultation with other people, and piloting. The author added that translation is an act of interpretation of meanings, the core of qualitative research, and that meanings may get lost in the process.

It is believed that this study followed the fundamental rules for bilingual research, such as the author having considerable knowledge of both Czech and British cultures and languages, as well as the use of back translation and consultation with a supervisor. Nevertheless, the main concern about the translation was which language would be more convenient for conveyance of the data analysis. Translation and analysis of the first few interviews showed that social workers use many colloquial expressions and much professional terminology specific to the Czech context, and this was difficult to translate without losing meanings or without the insertion of additional explanation into the narratives. Since the prior English translation of the Czech transcript caused the data to be impaired by the loss of important meanings, it was decided to perform the analysis of the transcripts in Czech language and then to translate only selected quotes into English, in order to operate with all the possible meanings in the process of analysis. In addition, in

order to enhance understanding of specific terms, an index of abbreviations was compiled with a list of most common definitions specific to the field.

Finally, another limitation of the thesis consists of its focus on a specific period of the policy-making process concerning the child protection system. On the one hand, examination of this particular stage is considered to have considerable research advantages as it enabled observation of the formation of perspectives and positions of professionals and stakeholders; however, the study was not able to capture any changes or development in the process that could be included in the general conclusions about the profession. Accordingly, further research is proposed for the future, in order to examine the effects of the new legislation on the profession and the development of the professional groups, and the standing of the profession in the labour market.

Based on the results of this thesis, it is recommended that future research focus on the relations between the social work profession and the social service market operating in the social welfare system of the country. A limited amount of literature addresses this dependency; however, it is crucial for the development of the profession, as this thesis has suggested. Also, further research should inquire into practices and strategies of professionals and groups of people within the profession, which are employed to reinforce and strengthen their positions, in order to understand the mechanisms of the social work professional project. This study focused on the overall development and position of the social work profession; therefore, it was not able to observe in detail the strategies of professionalisation, which are far more diverse and complex than those described by the main theories of the sociology of the professions.

In conclusion, the limitations of the thesis have been addressed and discussed with respect to their influence on the research process and findings. The changes to the research approach and tools which were made during the research process are believed to be a suitable response to the findings of the data analysis, and therefore have enhanced the validity of the study. In addition, several suggestions for future research were made based on the findings of the thesis and the limited scope of the study. Future research should investigate the relationship between social work and the organisation of the social welfare market, as this was found to be the most significant factor of professionalisation but was also the least mentioned, especially in the social work literature. In addition, an enhanced understanding of the strategies of the professional project employed by interested groups

would greatly contribute to the work of the sociology of the professions, and demonstrate the power and flexibility of the professions.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

This study concludes that the social work profession in the Czech Republic has significantly improved its position in the labour market since the beginning of the 20th century, when the social work professional project was initiated. The profession attained certain privileges, and the authority of well-established professions such as social work began to be recognised in the legislation and by social only work programmes being taught at universities. The profession secured partial market closure, and social work representatives became members of social policy-making groups. However, social work has still not established a representative professional association that would enhance professional autonomy as an independent and alternative authority to organisations employing social workers. One of the reasons is that the profession does not represent a cohesive organisation of labour but rather a notional association of interests groups with their own agendas, who either co-operate or struggle against each other for resources and authority.

The analysis of the child protection policy-making process showed how social work professionals from the state and non-governmental organisations, ministry officials and social work lecturers define issues of their profession differently, with a wide variety of suggestions for a solution. An important conclusion is that the social work profession, similar to other professions, "thinks" economically in its professional project. The groups of the profession actively strive to accomplish higher social and economic status by developing various strategies, considering their institutional establishment and the resources available to them in the existing economic conditions, together with the conditions of the social welfare system of the country. This aspect of the profession is often overlooked and therefore it should be considered, particularly in discussions that regard ethical standards as the main objective of social work and criticise the profession for failing to adhere to its professional mission.

Members of the social work profession still often feel professionally undervalued, and the literature refers to their occupation as a semi-profession. According to the main theories of sociology, the social work professional project is determined above all by the lack of well-defined professional expertise and by the state bureaucratic system. However, this thesis argues that social work is generally limited by the restrictive character of the social service

market and the social welfare system, which do not offer the opportunities of a traditional liberal market which is open to the other professions.

The findings do not support criticism of the introduction of quasi-markets into social welfare which views them as harmful to social work as a professional group, because from the neo-Weberian perspective, which views professionalisation from the perspective of securing and enlarging the potential market, the policy had a significantly stimulating effect on the non-government sector in the Czech Republic. The wider effects of quasi-markets appear to have been positive to non-governmental organisations and therefore to the development of the profession. Accordingly, the thesis supports the argument of Wenocur and Reisch (1989:4) that the main purpose of the professions is to "*regulate the service commodity through which the members of the occupation earn their livelihoods.*"

At the same time, the study claims that the bureaucratic state administration does not limit the autonomy of the profession primarily because of its hierarchical and state character, but because the majority of available funding is located in the hands of the state. Therefore, it is suggested that diversity of funding sources enhances the professionalisation of social work. Nevertheless, at the current time there are limited options for social organisations in the Czech Republic to find alternative ways of funding that would increase professional independence.

The analysis of social work professional development showed the flexibility of a profession to respond to different conditions of the economic and social systems in a country. As illustrated, the profession strives to achieve market closure as proposed by the neo-Weberian theory, as well as utilising the opportunities to establish itself within the institutions of a state, as described by the neo-Weberian theory. Moreover, the profession develops various strategies to maintain and improve its status, which can be formal or informal depending on accessibility to policy-making processes. The findings of the study emphasise the flexibility and ability of a profession as an organisation of labour to adapt to, respond to, and operate in diverse socio-economic and political systems.

Indeed, the market-oriented economy, democratic principles and social policy based on rather socio-democratic tenets of the post-communist Czech Republic supported the professional progress of social work. Nevertheless, the persistent traditional views on social ailments and the political significance of social issues hinder the objectives of the

everyday work activities of social workers, as well as professional influence on policy-making. Social workers consider a code of ethics as a vehicle to unite the profession and a link to other professions; however, there are differences in the understanding of ethics between field social workers and social work professionals in higher positions. The role of ethical standards in social work professionalisation could not be examined in detail due to the scope of the thesis; nevertheless, it can be concluded that although later theories of the professions do not consider the code of ethics as an inherent part of a profession, the social workers made a close link between ethical standards and professionalism and being a professional.

No study in the literature was found that examined the social work profession in the Czech Republic from the perspective of the sociology of the profession, or which was based on interviews with social work professionals and observation. It is believed that this thesis offers new insights into the formation of social work, as it has striven to understand the profession comprehensively with the focus on relationships and conditions of its professional project. It is emphasised that the economic character of the profession needs to be considered when assessing the professional development of social work. Those who criticise social workers for decisions and practice which are non-compliant with the mission of the profession, often vaguely defined and poorly incorporated into practice guidance, should not disregard the inherent trait of a profession to achieve improved economic and social status.

This study points out the close connection between the ways of funding social welfare and the development of the social work profession, and it is believed that future research should focus further on this relationship in order to fully grasp the professionalisation of social work. However, the scope of the thesis did not allow further inquiry into the strategies of professionalisation employed by different groups of the profession or into the significance and understanding of ethical standards in social work practice. These are areas which have the potential to better explain the dynamics of the social work professional project, and on which it is thought that future research should concentrate. It is argued that a qualitative approach in the sociology of the professions is needed, and experience and the perspectives of members of the social work profession are a vital source for further research.

Based on the observations in the thesis, the next step for the social work professional project is more likely to focus on institutional establishment, by the creation of a representative professional association; however, considering the current course of development, the MLSA is more likely to remain the central player and reinforce its key position. The emphasis of the MLSA will be placed increasingly on implementation of practice guidelines, ethical standards and additional training, through which it might be possible to control and encompass field social work. The well-established non-governmental organisations are more likely to strengthen their position as policy-makers and to extend their activities according to available funding. The dissatisfaction of state social workers is likely to grow because of increased control over their work and the increasing authority of non-governmental social workers. The social work profession in the Czech Republic is believed to have achieved a significant position amongst the helping professions, and will strive to transfer the less specialised and recognised competences to other occupations in order to further increase its status.

The main contribution of this thesis consists in the finding that the social work profession is an active player in its professionalisation and not a passive victim of political decisions. However, the profession will always be limited by the social welfare system in which it operates, and by its market relationships to political groups representing clients of social work who cannot afford to purchase social work services.

Based on the findings of the research project, a number of recommendations regarding professionalisation of the social work profession are made. First, the research findings support the current endeavour of social work professionals to establish an independent professional association with a compulsory membership, in order to curtail the strong identity of social workers with their employing organisations and rather enhance a collective identity of social work professionals. With regard to the professional association, it is suggested that it should adopt an advocacy rather than a supervisory role. Social workers are now under a great deal of surveillance, and thus appreciate the presence of an authority that can defend them against accusations, lobby for better working conditions and show the significance of their work to the public and politicians.

The ambiguous experience with social work university education amongst social work professionals also suggests the need for reconsideration of the enforced requirements of higher educational programmes for social work positions. The strong potential of social

work training should lie in practice and specialised knowledge and skills rather than theoretical knowledge. A platform for social work academics, educators, employers and professionals should be established in order to create an arena for the formation of a social work training curriculum that corresponds with the demands of current needs and opportunities of the field.

The social work educators should consider more intensive promotion of the social work profession in terms of showing the public and politicians the results of good practice, the demanding character of the profession, the reality of the lives of social work clients, and the demands of constructing bridges between the worlds of excluded populations and the majority. Social work professionals should learn to evaluate and present the beneficial effects of their services including statistical evidence and research reports.

Social services should be encouraged to specialise further and search for niches in which the social work profession could apply its expertise. Such specialised services as domestic violence intervention, debt consultation, and probation, are highly likely to be attractive to different institutions.

The MLSA should concentrate on examples of good practice and experience of co-operation between the state child protection departments and non-governmental organisations, in order to overcome the splits between the social work inter-professional groups. There is evidence that some social work professionals understand the benefits of one another's work, and building on these understandings, in contrast with conflicts and struggles between groups, can certainly strengthen the profession.

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Legislation:

Child Protection Directive 59/1964 (CZ)
Family Act 94/1963 (CZ)
Social Security Act 121/1975(CZ)
Social Security Act 114/1988 (CZ)
Social-legal Child Protection Act 69/1952 (CZ)
Youth Care Act 48/1947(CZ)

Appendix A
Bangor University Ethical Approval

Ysgol Busnes Bangor
Prifysgol Bangor

Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffôn: +44 (0) 1248 382171
Ffacs: +44 (0) 1248 383228
E-bost:
s.p.chakravarty@bangor.ac.
uk

PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

1884

Bangor Business School
Bangor University

Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Phone: +44 (0) 1248 382171
Fax: +44 (0) 1248 383228
E-mail:
s.p.chakravarty@bangor.ac.uk

30 November 2010

Ms Lenka Divoka
School of Social Sciences
College of Business, Social Sciences and Law
Bangor University

Dear Ms Divoka,

Re: Your research proposal on The Social Work Profession in the Czech Republic

The Ethics Committee of the College of Business, Social Sciences and Law has considered and approved your proposal and permission to commence research on the project has been given as explained in my email message dated 28 November 2010 and confirmed again yesterday in further correspondence.

Kind regards,

Professor S. P, Chakravarty, PhD
Chair, CBSSL Ethics Committee

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

SOUHLAS S POSKYTNUTÍM ROZHOVORU
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Výzkumný projekt: **Profese sociální práce v České Republice**
Research Project: The Social Work Profession in the Czech Republic

Výzkumná instituce: **Univerzita Bangor**
Research Institution: Bangor University

Jméno výzkumníka: **Lenka Divoká**
Name of Researcher: +420 739 492 663, sop815@bangor.ac.uk

Prosím zaškrtněte
Please tick box

	Ano *Yes*	Ne *No*
1. **Potvrzuji, že jsem se seznámil(a) s informacemi o dané studii, rozumím jim, a měl(a) jsem možnost položit případné otázky.** *I confirm that I have read and understood the information about the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.*	☒	☐
2. **Rozumím, že moje účast je dobrovolná, anonymní a že mám kdykoliv možnost přestat bez udání důvodu.** *I understand that my participation is voluntary, **anonymised** and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.*	☒	☐
3. **Souhlasím se svojí účastí v dané studii.** *I agree to take part in the above study.*	☒	☐
4. **Souhlasím, aby rozhovor byl zaznamenán.** *I agree to the interview being recorded.*	☒	☐

[handwritten]   _10.3.2011_   _[signature]_
Jméno účastníka (Name of Participant)   Datum (Date)   Podpis (Signature)

Lenka Divoká   _10.3.2011_   _[signature]_
Jméno výzkumníka (Name of Researcher)   Datum (Date)   Podpis (Signature)

Appendix C
Agreement with the Child Protection Department (in Czech)

S M L O U V A

O bezplatné spolupráci uzavřená podle ustanovení § 51 zákona č. 40/1964 Sb., občanský zákoník, ve znění pozdějších předpisů.

Účastníci

Organizace: _MAGISTRÁT MĚSTA ÚSTÍ N/LABEM, VELKÁ HRADEBNÍ 8A_
OSV - ODDĚLENÍ SOZ. PRÁVNÍ OCHRANY DĚTÍ

Instituce vyššího vzdělání: _BANGOR UNIVERSITY, SOCIAL SCIENCE SCHOOL_

Zástupce: _PROFESSOR IAN REES JONES_

Předmět smlouvy

Organizace se zavazuje zajistit bezplatný výkon odborné praxe níže jmenované/ho studentky/a v oblasti sociální práce v rozsahu a za podmínek této smlouvy.

Pro studenta/ku: _LENKA DIVOKA_
Datum narození: _1 / 9 / 1982_ Typ studia: _PhD - denní_
Bydliště: _P210 Y BORTH, FFRIDDOEDD SITE BANGOR, LL57 2JT, UK_
nebo _HRADIŠTSKÁ 42, OSTROMĚŘ, 507 52_

Praxe bude vykonávána v dohodnutém čase v rozsahu 250 hodin jeden za dva semestry (pokud nebude dohodnuto jinak)
v období od _SRPEN 2010_ do _PROSINEC 2010_

Cíl praxe: Porozumět cílům a působení organizace.

Cíl učení: Získání předem definovaných kompetencí sociálního pracovníka

1. Přispění k práci organizace
2. Odborný růst

Formy hodnocení

Student/ka: zpracuje výkaz o praxi
Konzultant na pracovišti: zpracuje písemné hodnocení výkonu praxe studenta
Supervizor praxe: umožní supervizi

Organizace zabezpečí:
Pracoviště: _ODDĚLENÍ SOCIÁLNĚ PRÁVNÍ OCHRANY DĚTÍ_
Konzultanta: _Bc. MIKULOVÁ IVANA_
Tel.: _475 271 734_ .... E-mail _ivana.mikulova@mag-ul.a.cz_
Organizace umožní studentovi/ce práci na svých zařízeních a poskytne jim potřebné pracovní
prostředky a materiál.

Instituce vyššího vzdělání zabezpečí:
Supervizora: _PROFESSOR IAN REES JONES_
Adresa: _BANGOR UNIVERSITY, BANGOR, UK, LL57 2DG_
Tel.: _01248 38 2232_ E-mail: _i.r.jones@bangor.ac.uk_

Výkon odborné praxe je součástí postgradualního studia, nejedná se o žádnou formu
pracovně právního vztahu podle zák. práce. Odpovědnostní vztahy za případné vzniklé škody
se budou řešit dle příslušných ustanovení zákona č. 262/2006 Sb., zákoník práce, ve znění
pozdějších předpisů.

Další ujednání:

1. Student

- je povinen respektovat organizační řád organizace
- dosahovat dané cíle učení obsažené v této smlouvě
- se zavazuje dodržovat povinnost mlčenlivosti předepsanou organizací

2. Konzultant

- zajistí praxi odpovídající smlouvě a cílům praxe
- seznámí studenta/ku s příslušnými předpisy a interními nařízeními včetně BOZP
- připraví pracovní program pro studenta/ku

3. Supervizor

• umožní studentovi čas na konzultaci

Organizace a konzultant jsou oprávněni zpracovávat osobní údaje studenta za účelem výkonu praxe v rozsahu a za podmínek této smlouvy a pokynů supervizora a zavazují se zajistit zabezpečení osobních údajů před jejich zničením, ztrátou, neoprávněným přenosům či zneužitím. Organizace je povinna ukončit zpracování osobních údajů nejpozději do 1 týdne po ukončení praxe. Organizace nese plnou odpovědnost za případné porušení těchto povinností jejími pracovníky a konzultantem.

Tato smlouva může být měněna pouze písemnými dodatky odsouhlasenými oběma smluvními stranami.

Smluvní strany prohlašují, že uzavírají tuto smlouvu svobodně a vážně a na důkaz svého souhlasu s jejím obsahem připojují její zástupci své vlastnoruční podpisy. Tato smlouva je vyhotovena ve dvou výtiscích, přičemž každá ze smluvních stran obdrží po jednom výtisku. Dodržení této smlouvy je potvrzeno podpisy zúčastněných, jinak je neplatné. Zúčastněné osoby svými podpisy stvrzují, že byly s povinnostmi a právy pro ně z této smlouvy vyplývající seznámeni a že přijímají závazek uvedené povinnosti dodržovat.

Student/ka: ....

Konzultant: ....

Supervizor: ....

Datum ......7/6/10...................... V ....BANGOR UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Organizace: Univerzita:

Prifysgol Bangor/
Bangor University

Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithas/
School of Social Sciences

AGREEMENT

On unpaid co-operation concluded by course of § 51 Act No. 40/1964 Collection of the Civil Code, as subsequently amended.

Participants

Organization:

....

....

Institution of Higher Education:

....

....

Representative:

....

The Subject Matter of the Agreement

The organization is obliged to provide unpaid placement of practical training experience for the student in the field of social work within the scope and under the terms and conditions of this agreement.

Name of the Student: ....

Date of Birth: .... Type of Study: ....

Address:

....

The practical training experience will be practised on agreed time bases in the extent of 250 hours per two semesters (unless agreed otherwise)

from.. to..

Aim of the practical training experience: To understand the goals and procedures of the organization.

Learning Objective: To gain in advance defined competences of a social worker.

1. To contribute to the work of the organization
2. Professional development

System of Evaluation

Student: provides a report on the practical working experience

Work Supervisor: provides written evaluation about the work of the student

University Supervisor: provides the student with supervision

The organization provides:

Workplace: ....

Work Supervisor: ....

Telephone: .... E-mail: ....

The organization enables the student to work within its facilities and provides him/her with requisite means and resources.

The Institution of Higher Education provides:

Supervisor: ....

Address: ....

Telephone: .... E-mail: ....

The practical working experience is a part of the postgraduate research course and it does not have any form of legal working relation in course of the Labour Code. The responsibility for incurred losses will be treated in course of the Act No. 262/2006 Collection of the Labour Code, as subsequently amended.

Subsequent Agreement:

1. **Student**
   - Is obliged to respect the Codes of Practice for the organization
   - Aims to achieve the learning objectives included in this agreement
   - Is obliged to adhere to confidentiality policy of the organization

2. **Work Supervisor**
   - Provides the student with work according to the agreement
   - Arranges working programme for the student
   - Introduces the relevant regulations and internal Codes of Practise including Health and Safety Regulations to the student

3. **University Supervisor**
   - Provides the student with consultations

The organization and the work supervisor are authorised to use student's personal information for the purpose of the practical working experience with accordance to the conditions of this agreement and guidelines given by the university supervisor. They are also obliged to ensure the protection of personal information against the damage, loss,

unauthorised transmission, and unauthorised use. The organization is obliged to finish processing the personal information at the latest one week before end of the practical working experience. The organization is fully responsible in a case of breach of the agreed liability by its workers and the work supervisor. This agreement can be amended only by written additional clauses contracted by all parties.

The participants of the agreement declare that the agreement is conducted according to their free will and in serious manner and this is confirmed by their signatures.

This agreement is made in two copies; one copy for each party. The validity of the agreement and the consent of the participants about the implicit obligations and rights, and their adherence to the conditions are indorsed by their signatures.

Student: ....

Work Supervisor: ....

University Supervisor: ....

Date: ....   In: ....

Organization: University:

Appendix D

List of Interviewees

Number	Date	Initials	Sex	Age	Position	Education	Organization	Type of organization	Regions	Length Interview
1	10.3.2011	V. N.	F	58	child protection legal expert	JUDr	Self-employed	Independent	Prague	0:51:48
2	10.3.2011	R. D.	F	37	lecurer	MA	University - Social Work Department	Statutory	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:51:44
3	8.3.2011	K. T.	F	30	head	MA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affair - Child Protection Office	Statutory	Prague	0:49:02
4	8.3.2011	L. N.	F	28	co-ordinator of Ch.P. reform	MA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affair - Child Protection Office	Statutory	Prague	0:49:18
5	7.3.2011	K. G.	F	35	expert officer for youth curators	Ing et Bc	County Office - Health and Social Care Department - Humanitarian Office	Statutory	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:27:42
6	2.3.2011	R. J.	F	35	lecturer	PhD et MA et MA	University - Social Work School	Quango	Hradec Králové Region	1:08:02
7	1.3.2011	M. P.	F	23	social worker	Bc	District Charity - low threshold youth club	NGO	Hradec Králové Region	Together
8	1.3.2011	E. K.	F	25	social worker	Bc	District Charity - low threshold youth club	NGO	Hradec Králové Region	Together 0:43:39
9	4.2.2011	L. P.	F	28	social worker	MA	Residential home for mothers with children	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:51:15
10	2.2.2011	J. N.	F	53	social worker	Bc	Residential home for elderly people and mothers with children	Quango	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:44:26
11	1.2.2011	H. C.	F	39	social worker	Bc	Children Home - 0 - 3 years	Quango	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:54:21
12	1.2.2011	V. H.	F	55	social worker	college	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	Together 0:38:44
13	1.2.2011	S. M.	F	52	social worker	college	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	Together
14	1.2.2011	H. H.	F	57	head	college	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:59:13
15	1.2.2011	J. V.	F	47	social worker	Dis	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:01:23
16	31.1.2011	J. H.	M	36	head	MA	District Charity - centre for children and family	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:16:43
17	28.1.2011	J. V.	M	27	lecturer	MA	University - Social Work Department	Statutory	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:00:41
18	27.1.2011	O. K.	F	32	head	MA	District Charity -low threshold youth club	NGO	Hradec Králové Region	0:53:35
19	14.1.2011	R. K.	F	27	social worker	Bc	People in Need - social integration programme	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:24:24
20	13.1.2011	I. C.	F	31	social worker	Bc	Magistrate - Child Protection Department - Youth curators department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:57:30
21	12.1.2011	M. H.	F	29	head	MA	YMCA - low treshold youth club	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:54:04
22	10.1.2011	D. R.	M	37	head	Bc	District Charity - low treshold youth club	NGO	Hradec Králové Region	0:41:48
23	10.1.2011	P. K.	F	24	social worker	Bc	Children Home	Quango	Liberec Region	0:54:43
24	7.1.2011	E. P.	F	52	head	college	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Hradec Králové Region	0:52:11
25	5.1.2011	V. K.	F	56	social worker	Bc	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Hradec Králové Region	0:56:19
26	9.12.2010	K. H.	F	25	social worker	Bc	Children Home	Quango	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:38:59
27	9.12.2010	V. B.	F	50	social worker	Dis	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	Together 0:53:18
28	9.12.2010	I. K.	F	56	social worker	Dis	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	Together
29	9.12.2010	S. V.	F	54	social worker	Bc	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:52:48
30	9.12.2010	J. M.	F	45	head	Bc	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:30:45
31	8.12.2010	I. S.	F	55	head	Bc	Magistrate - Social Affairs Section	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:46:22
32	8.12.2010	M. D.	M	32	head	Bc	SPJ - probation and mediation services	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:49:58
33	7.12.2010	D. U.	F	29	social worker	Bc	YMCA - low treshold youth club	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:53:31
34	7.12.2010	K. M.	F	54	social worker	college	Children Home	Quango	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:13:29
35	7.12.2010	I. M.	F	56	head	Bc	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:27:27
36	6.12.2010	Z. L.	F	45	head	Bc	Centrum for children and family	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:34:55
37	9.11.2010	M. P.	F	30	head	MA	Voluntary Centre - Big Brother and Big Sister programme	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	Together 0:58:43
38	9.11.2010	M. V.	F	25	social worker	MA	Voluntary Centre - Big Brother and Big Sister programme	NGO	Ústí nad Labem Region	Together
39	9.11.2010	P. C.	F	37	social worker	Dis	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:44:53
40	8.11.2010	Z. K.	M	34	social worker	MA	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:24:24
41	8.11.2010	I. K.	F	42	social pedagog	MA	Children Home	Quango	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:33:03
42	4.11.2010	M. J.	F	33	social worker	Dis	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	1:12:46
43	3.11.2010	L. Z.	F	26	social worker	MA	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:57:53
44	3.11.2010	T. Z.	M	27	social worker	Bc	Magistrate - Child Protection Department	Statutory - Council	Ústí nad Labem Region	0:48:29

Appendix E

Example of Interview Coding

Rejlek translation - Coding by Node
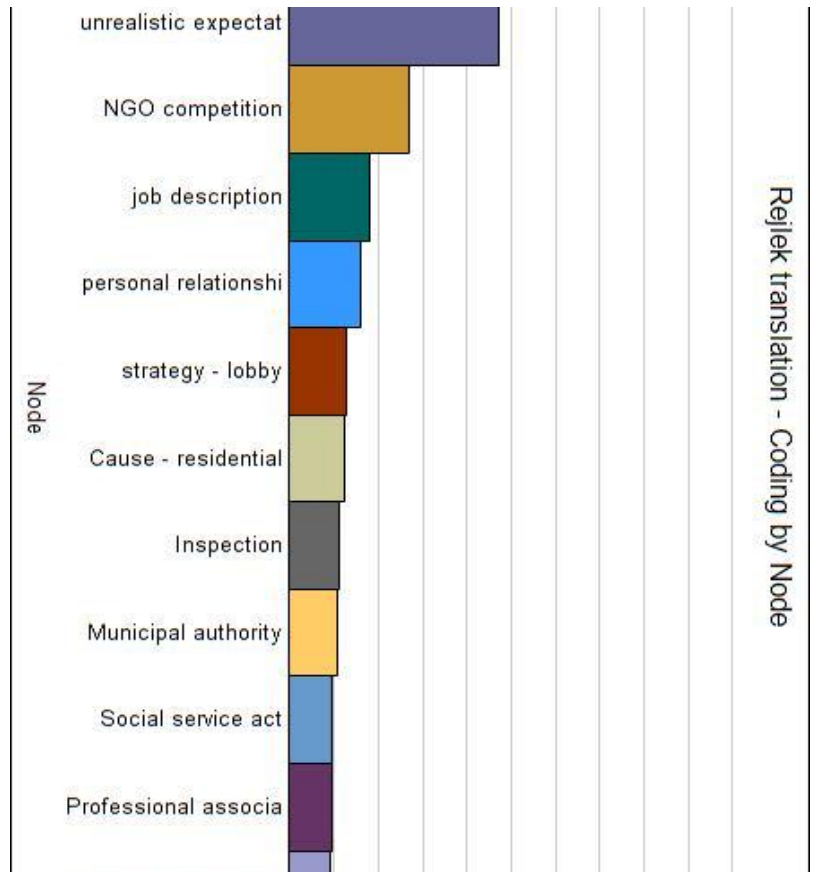
Example of Interview Transcription (translated)

Name: Interview 3

TRANSLATED

M: Mr. R., I would like to ask you to briefly describe your work.

p. R.: Well, you mean my work as a director of a local charity organization? So, I am in charge of funding the services, which means communication with benefactors such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (**Job description)** the district authority, town councils, in places where we provide services, they also fund this activity, and then with small companies. Well, I don't know who gives us donations but these are on average ten thousands crowns. So the state grants are actually the most important, which make up, let's say, 80%, 70%. So, and now we also get money from the European Union. Same as many other non-profit organizations. (**NGO funding**) Then I am in charge of human resources matters. I hire employees, take care of sick leaves, holidays, training for the staff, leading the staff and I communicate with managers of individual projects and develop the projects. Generally, communication with the public or with organizations that we co-operate with, and in addition, I still work with service users but this counts only for 10, 20% of my work.(**Job description)**

M: So are you still a social worker?

p. R.: Hm, in addition to that. It started when I was at the creation of this club for children and there I started to work as a social worker and by the time other services were set up so the system kind of kept pushing me upwards. (**Social work career)** So I had to keep leaving some of my previous work. So I cannot work in the direct social work field so much now. We have 13 employees including me and 3 social services. We have this low-threshold club for children and the same thing in another town, and home care service. In these towns we provide services to around 70 old people, and children who use the clubs were around 110 and 130 last year. (**Organization description)** O.K.?

M: That is great.

p. R.: And regarding visits of the children, they add up to around three thousand a year. So one child comes here thirty times on average.

M: How long have you been a director? You said that from the beginning?

p. R.: I think five or four ... four years, I think. (**Years in position)**

M: And where did you work before?

p. R.: At the town council as a social worker.

M: In the child protection department?

p. R.: Yes.

M: And can I ask about your education? Do you have a Bachelor's and Dis?

p. R.: I have a Bachelor's degree. The Dis is from the higher social-pedagogic and theological institution. And the bachelor is from the evangelic and theological faculty. (**education**)

M: Have you thought about continuing?

p. R.: I have! But I do not have time. Well, maybe someday.

M: I would like to ask you about the creation of the club. Could you describe how it started, where was the order and what was the procedure and your role in it?

p. R.: How did the service start? Well, the idea was about 10 years old, maybe it started in two lines. As a student I started to do a project for high schools that focused on understanding Christian values. Then it turned out that the children found something else in this project, other things like their life values. We discussed it a lot but there was no chance to meet them more. And when we wanted to meet then we met, for example, in a pub. (**Organization description**)

M: So unofficially.

p. R.: That's it. And the second line of the idea came from an antidrug coordinator from the then district authority, who was aware of the need to do something like this here in this town. And so we somehow met, in fact, it was my first job. I took over his job. (**Organization description, Personal relationships**) So we met and found out that we have the same ideals and we started to think about it and went to the mayor, who said that we need to set up a civil organization in order to achieve anything. So we set up one and after four or five years of negotiations with the town hall we received the first 50,000 (Crowns) and we tried to open a low-threshold club. (**Municipal authority NGO funding Organization description**)

M: After five or four years?

p. R.: Yes, something that.

M: Negotiations for financial support?

p. R.: Yes, yes, yes. It took a long time to explain the idea to the politicians and then we had to find a politician who said "Yes, I will try to push it through. Yes." (**Strategy – lobby**) So we did all this as volunteers, which meant the club was opened in the afternoon and around eight people were taking turns there. Yes. It turned out that the children were really interested so the place was really overcrowded so the next question was whether we would be able to carry on like

that. And where we could get the money from for it and who would be our first employee. Out of those eight people we chose one person as the first employee. Out of those eight people we found one person who said he would go for it and the job center gave us money for him. Then for some time it was fine, and then again there was a need to expand it and pressure started coming from above, from the district authority and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Because these kinds of clubs started growing here in the 90s and requesting money. **(Organization description)** And more of them were there so the ministry noticed this kind of work and started issuing regulations about what this work should look like. So they said that a team has to consist of three people so there can be substitution and so on, sick leave, holidays and things like that ... In general, the social services were starting to undergo some transformation, inspectors and so on ... so on .. this service was new so fortunately it was included in the new social service act. **(Social service act)** So gradually it started to grow. After three years operation when we had one room on the square in K club, in fact it was rented, then we got this place and had two employees and me. **(Organization description)** Because I worked for the town and this I was doing in my free time. So then it was time when I had to decide whether to leave or stay. So I decided to go for it. **(Social work career)** And actually me and one lady set up a local Charity organization, because a Charity is a big not-for-profit organization that gives at least some assurance of money. **(NGO funding)**

M: I wanted to ask, as we talked about civil organizations; is this also a church organization?

p. R.: Yes, yes. We are the civil organization that we transformed into this organization. So we did not change people just our organization title. Now we provide consulting and legal services. Me as a director I attend meetings of directors from all Charities. So I can consult about anything that we are dealing with and our director communicates with the ministry. **(Strategy – lobby)** Getting money is done at a different level if you are a non-profit organization of five employees than if you are three. **(NGO funding)**

M: I would like to ask about this influence on funding. Because church organizations do not have such access to grants for providing ...

p. R.: They do have. They have just the same. Exactly the same or I think even better.

M: How?

p. R.: Simply, it is their name taken as the guarantee of something. Yes, I think so ... If I were a ministry officer then I would simply know that an organization that has three and half thousand employees represents something. An organization that has three employees ... if I need to save somewhere then I would probably save on these small organizations. I think. So that was one of the reasons.

(NGO funding)

M: You said that you have some funding from the European Social Fund and then from the Operational Program for Human Resources and Employment. How about the future? Because these funds will terminate ...

p. R.: They will terminate in 2013, yes.

M: .... and then now with the new government starting to cut back, social services in particular will be affected. How will this affect you?

p. R.: It is hard to say. It is hard. Every year it looks bad and every year it turns out fine after all. **(NGO funding)**

M: What do you mean, it looks bad and turns out fine?

p. R.: Well, that no one knows whether the money that we want, we'll get. Always they frighten us saying that it will be, let's say 20% less or simply that we will get nothing and so on. But in the end they give us only 10% less or they give us the whole amount. It varies. Here in the Czech Republic you cannot plan social services in advance because you don't know when and what money you will have. The state does not want to guarantee anything. It always says that we are not entitled to grants. So when you don't get it, you cannot appeal to anywhere. **(NGO funding)**

M: Are you part of or involved in community planning?

p. R.: Of course. Without it we would not exist. Yes, it is almost a duty today. Because then it is assessed by the regional authority and today the regional authority in fact decides about the flow of money from the ministry. The money arrives at the regional authority, some x millions and the authority has a free hand in its distribution.

(Community planning)

M: Often they talk about competition between non-profit organizations. In the sense of the struggle for money. Do you feel anything like this here?

p. R.: No. I don't feel it. Maybe I am not at the level of management or in an organization where I would feel it. Maybe, our regional director feels it somewhere, maybe at the regional or ministerial level. But I have not encountered this.

M: So there is no competition between organizations?

p. R.: No, no. Well most people doing social work, do it more or less because they enjoy it, they like it and they have some compassion. Yes, we are not businessmen, therefore having to compete hard with each other. It is not about this.

p. R.: Yes. I don't feel competition. Maybe in the community planning sometimes some non-profit organization comes and says "We would like to provide social services". And they get some feedback that the area is covered and that there is no need to fund another organization. Yes, so maybe in this way there is some competition.

M: Hm, hm.

p. R.: But otherwise, otherwise no. We don't envy one another if one gets more or less. Maybe because there would have to be two of the same service facilities in the town. Then the competition would probably exist but here they are totally different services.

(NGO competition)

…

M: You said that you worked at the council as a social worker. Why do you think that many social workers complain about the conditions there. What is the difference between being a social worker at the council department and being in a non-profit organization?

p. R.: The correct question would ask what the difference is between being a social worker at the town council here and ..... So. It is all behind me. It is a lot about the specific attitude of the management. In general, public administration as well as social is very tied and fossilized. The public administration in the Czech Republic, generally speaking, cannot co-operate with other organizations, with non-profit organizations, with schools, with policemen. It is like we are afraid. Maybe in some places they are able to do it, and some places they are not. Yes. We are afraid of sitting at a round table and putting our cards on the table, all of them. Yes and to say "We have here a family who is supervised by the city police because somewhere something, by a school because they have absence hours, by a psychologist, because this and that, and under us, social workers, because... Yes and we are still learning this". (**Municipal authority,** **Co-operation**)

M: Where do you think the fear comes from?

p. R.: Well I think it comes from the past. Basically, if you think about the age of people who are afraid and about everything they experienced. During the communism period there was no co-operation. Yes and there was naivety also ... (**Co-operation**)

M: It does not solve the problem to ...

p. R.: It solves something in your own sandpit. I think it may do, although there is some breakthrough. Like here in this town we try to meet at the round table, all of the participants as I listed them before. So we have managed to get them into one office and they are finding out that it can work, somehow. Slowly. Even a state deputy and judges, for example. (**Co-operation**) Yes, and today I can call the state deputy in her office and she takes the call and tells me some information. Which probably has not happened that much before. (**Personal relationships**) We are a country where we have the highest number of children in children's homes. Because we take poverty as a reason for taking a child into a children's home. (**Cause – residential care**)

M: Well, social reasons, that is already ...

p. R.: Which, which has started to change slowly. They talk about it, fortunately. And I've been at cases when we had to take a child from a family, and in 50 of those cases I was against it. I said that this is not a reason to take a child away but I had to because it was an order from the boss. Always the child returned back home after a year. The reasons were just not there. Yes, but ... (Cause – residential care)

M: It was that serious to ...

p. R.: Yes, and it took a year before the system was able to return a child home. For example. Well, I don't know whether I answered the question?

M: Yes, you did. This links up with my next question. Now a reform of the child protection system is being prepared. There is some national action plan which should have some outcomes in 2013 such as an amendment to the legislation. And these round tables are one of the principles when a child protection social worker acts as a coordinator and manages cases with other professionals involved in the cases. You said that this has worked, the round tables, in serious cases ...

p. R.: We meet regularly.

M: So not for a particular case?

p. R.: No. Well, yes and no. When someone brings a particular case, then he brings it but otherwise it is about informing others about the news. Yes, there is also a probation and mediation service, or we invite some guests and then it is about us understanding each other's work and the system. For example, everything that a child has to go through, who he visits and where and for what reasons. So like this. And we know each other! Face to face. (**Co-operation, Personal relationships**)

M: Personally.

p. R.: Yes and the judges say that "It is much better when we call somewhere because we know who you are". Quite simply we can imagine the person. It is totally different co-operation. Yes, for instance, I get a call from a policeman who asks me "Do you know about this project, do you know about this money, did you apply?" and so on. So we even think about each other. (**Personal relationships, Co-operation**)

M: So you are the main leader.

p. R.: Well, still only partly. Because a person working for the probation and mediation service was involved in the creation of the civil organization. He is my friend, my predecessor, and an antidrug coordinator. So we know each other in this way. And we have been together for psychotherapeutic training and other things. (**Personal relationships, Co-operation**) I think that not everyone can do this, lead strange and professional people. It needs some experience and probably only a few people would like to do it.

M: Social workers should have some training to be able to do this.

p. R.: Well, so social work requires having many skills. Yes, that is also undervalued, the idea of everything one has to be able to do. To communicate with people, lead groups of people, to understand some legislation, and to understand a little bit the soul of a child. Some foundations of psychology in order to know how to behave towards a child.

M: I would like to ask you: if you had a wish to change something, in politics or in the legislation, which can improve your services, what would you wish for?

p. R.: In the Social Service Act I would like to have the specifications of our clients changed because basically we are at the level of residential houses for the elderly and other services. (Social Service Act) A 13- or 15-year-old person comes here and we have to make an individual plan with him and search for his personal goal. Yes, very often the goal is just to come here because he has friends here and feels fine here and he can talk with you. But this, the Social Service Act does not know this. Yes, it is not specified there that a child needs to share anything but most importantly to share and have some interests. Because he does not have this at home. Or he is bored or I don't know he comes here and you can see he enjoys it here. But if we don't find some problem in a child, a problem that would be approved by inspectors, then the child is not allowed to come here. (**Inspection**)

M: He is not considered as a client.

p. R.: Yes, yes. And it is very difficult to fit in the legislation. We are somewhere between leisure time activities and social services. Yes, but I always explain to them that the aim of leisure time activities is to learn something. (Social Service Act) For example, to play the guitar or table tennis or I do not know. But our aim is the contact with the person and his interest, so the child who comes here knows that someone cares about him. So something from this perspective. We are a social service but this is not included in the legislation. And it is very difficult to defend this in front of the inspectors. There are inspectors who understand but there are not too many of them. And now they cannot agree with one another. Basically, it is very subjective. It is about subjective feelings of the inspectors. (Social Service Act, **Inspection**)

M: So to define you as social services, do I understand?

p. R.: We are defined as social services but need to be defined as something more.

M: Yes.

p. R.: We are defined in very general way, as I said, at the level of residential homes for seniors.

M: So you mean the individual plan?

p. R.: Yes. We are not, the civil organization has been terminated but we are new members of an association of social services and there ... The office of low-threshold clubs has their own director. And I write some report for her about my experience with this service and give reasons why the legislation should be changed. **(Professional association)** Now I put it together and she will probably be waving it at the ministry. With the ideas. **(Strategy – lobby)**

M: Waving ... What does it mean waving at the ministry?

p. R.: With the opinions. She goes there and will explain. We agreed that I would write down my observations and stories of our people. So we will see what she will do with it. **(Strategy – lobby)**

M: In the social work journal there was a discussion about the public demand for social work. That means what society asks and expects from social work. What do you think this public demand is for you as a director of low-threshold clubs?

p. R.: Public demand, maybe the society, for example, this town defined it, that's right. This town made a public demand, called me and said, "We want to do something about our children messing around on the streets so we ask you to open your facility in our town." That was a public demand, actually.

M: Hm, hm.

p. R.: Clearly formulated. So within a year and a half or two years after the first call we opened a club there and the mayor likes it. He is pleased.

(Municipal authority)

M: And how about the public, the majority of society?

p. R.: That is interesting. As the majority of society, I think, if we take it by percentage, they perceive that little bastards come here who smoke and mess around, and we (citizens) will not give them money. They say "Re-educate them. Yes, you re-educate them, you are even responsible for them smoking." Even like this. Because I sometimes see it from the individual reactions that are emailed to me year after year, or I find out somewhere, don't I? For instance, "The bastards who smoke come to you, isn't that true? And you have not re-educated them until now. That is your work, isn't it." So I always tell them, "The children also have parents and those parents have some responsibility and you when you see them smoking outside, where a public space is, you have the chance as a human being to go to them and say, "Why are you smoking here?" No one does it. Always the responsibility is put on someone else but not on me as a citizen. Yes, or I ask the people, "And when they buy cigarettes, where do you think they buy them?. - From some tobacconist woman. - And have you seen them buying them sometimes? - Yes I have. - And did you do anything? - No, I didn't." So it is this attitude ... I think that the majority of people place unrealistic demands on us. **(Unrealistic expectations)** People who try to understand this work and get some information

about it, are mostly professionals who already have some kind of understanding. Our aim is not to re-educate the person, nor is it as such our goal to make him quit smoking because that is impossible. When one is 13 or 14 years old it is unrealistic. The realistic approach is to explain to him gradually that he is addicted. So he can realise this. And to give him some information and talk with him about it – that he is addicted and what he can do next. I think that maybe after this there is a chance he will quit. There have been a few people here who said, "I want to quit. How shall I do it?" So then we talk about possible ways and consequences. Maybe he will put on weight but does not need to worry about it because he can lose the extra kilos. Maybe he will be anxious and learn how to treat anxiety. Then yes. But otherwise the expectations are quite unrealistic. **(Unrealistic expectations)**

M: I won't take up any more of your time. I've asked all the questions that I need to. And you have an appointment at two ...

Appendix G

Example of Interview Schedule for Child Protection Managers

Interview schedule

For child protection department managers

1) Personal questions:
   – Brief description of the job
   – How long working in the position?
   – In the field?
   – Education?

2) Current topics and events in the field

   - New governmental policy
   – cuts social welfare spending (effects on running the services)
   – in public administration (strike)

   - Reformation of the Child protection legislation and system:

   – introducing multidisciplinary teams, OSPOD as coordinators (efficiency of the current system, possibility of success)
   – involvement in policy-making

   - Financing
   – subsidies for child protection departments (use, effectiveness)

   - Wish to change

3) Social work profession

   - Public order to social workers (your position)