



LUND UNIVERSITY

Graduate School
Master of Science in Development Studies
Major: Social Work

Course: SIMV30
Term: Spring 2015
Supervisor: Jan Magnuson

*How social is current social work: An analysis of the
effect of professionalization on social workers' role as
advocates for social justice*

Master Thesis

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Lund, 11th August, 2015

Abstract

This master thesis is an attempt to approach the issue of the lack of application of cause advocacy in modern social work practice. The research problem is framed in a way that historical roots of the commitment to social justice in the profession are presented with the further argumentation for the lack of this approach in contemporary social work. A qualitative study has been conducted to fulfill three main objectives of this study: to evaluate the current stage of cause advocacy in social work practice; to reveal how social workers perceive their role as advocates for social justice as well as to find out what obstacles prevent them from more active advocacy practices. The theory of functionally differentiated society has been applied during the data analysis process as well as for the further discussion. The final results from the analysis show that the dedication to the idea of social justice and the application of cause advocacy have a minor role in current social work practice. Instead modern social work practice is increasingly focusing on case management and has a more individualized focus on service provision. Moreover, the organizational restrictions together with the application of managerial principles and increased economization of social service provision restrict the possibilities for social workers to approach broader structural issues and to persuade social justice.

Keywords: social work, advocacy, social justice, professionalization of social work

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I. Introduction

The Code of Ethics (1999) of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) states that social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work (IFSW, 2004). This means that social workers also have a responsibility to challenge policies and practices which are oppressive, unfair and harmful (Desai, Solas cited in Lyons, 2012: 85). Moreover, it is an obligation of social workers to confront social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatization or subjugation (IFSW, 2004). These principals embody the intent of the social work profession in achieving social justice. The current challenges to social justice, human rights, and citizenship posed by transnational capital, growing global inequality and social exclusion, multiple forms of violence further strengthens the need for macro level social work practices and call for creative and critical interventions that focus on social justice (Finn and Jackson, 2003: 57).

Advocacy is seen as a key function of social work not only in ensuring that service users develop the ability to advocate for themselves, but also in promoting equality, social justice and social inclusion (Darlymprle and Boylan, 2013: 2). However, the reality of practice is that while social workers focus on social advocacy work with individuals (case advocacy), and the daily priorities and demands of practice, they often have little time to address structural issues (cause advocacy) or they seem out of reach (ibid: 18). It seems that social workers who are keen on conducting micro practice (individual level) find themselves having nothing to do with macro practice (structural level) (Kam, 2014: 733). The focus on the individual level is also visible when analyzing the verbal expressions of social workers. The research carried out by Hawkins et al. (2001) revealed that social workers prefer to use the individually oriented spoken language and seldom use the language of social justice, even when discussing practice scenarios which might clearly suggest issues of social justice.

A similar trend is also present among social work students. According to a study made in Hong Kong, the majority of social work graduates do not favor reformist practices or strategies. A de-politicizing trend of social work practice is more favored, which is characterized by giving primacy to the control and mediation functions of social work and the supremacy of remedial and individualistic social work practice. Individual and group counseling were practices regarded by the social work graduates as the most important scope of social work practice (Chiu and Wong, 1997, cited in Kam, 2014: 727).

Other recent research (O'Brien, 2010: 185) also finds that social workers who do not abandon social justice commitments tend to focus the practice on their daily work to achieve social justice primarily for the specific individuals and families and are less likely to pursue the social justice goal at the macro or social level of change by impacting on and affecting economic, social and cultural structures that create and sustain injustice.

This situation leads to a lack of recognition of the advocacy role in social work practice, claiming it as not a 'proper' advocacy or a passive form of it (Darlymple and Boylan, 2013: 5). The lack of attention to advocacy role in social work neglects profession's commitments to the principles of social justice and social inclusion. As it was strongly stated by Kam (2014: 730): "The social work profession has turned to being a 'failing' and 'quiet' profession".

Various social scientists such as Abramovic (1998), Kam (2014), Loidl and Sagl (2011) criticize in their works these processes and pay a significant attention to the connection between the lack of application of advocacy practices and professionalization of social work. They claim that the focus on professionalization lead to the decreasing attention to professional ethics and values. This connection will be explained in the chapter III in a greater length.

1.1 Purposes of the study and the research question

Based on the mentioned concerns, this master thesis aims to find out:

How does the professionalization of social work affect the social workers' role as advocates for social justice?

In order to answer this question, the concept of advocacy in social work practice is analyzed, highlighting its relation to social work professional values. Later, the theory of social justice is introduced, explaining its main ideas about a just society. Then the theory of functionally differentiated society serves as a ground for understanding the weakening of the role of social workers as advocates for social justice. The operational questions of this study are:

- What role does the cause advocacy have in current nongovernmental social work organizations?
- How social work practitioners in nongovernmental organizations perceive their role as advocates for social justice?
- What aspects affect the social workers' engagement into cause advocacy practices in current social work organizations?

The thesis includes theoretical and empirical parts. The theoretical part covers the analysis of the concept of advocacy, the theory of social justice as well as the introduction to the theory of structurally differentiated society. In the empirical part, qualitative research method, semi-structured interviews, is used to provide the social workers' view on the issue as well as to highlight challenges in implementing cause advocacy practices in current social work practice. Due to time limitations, the empirical part focuses only on the social work practices in Austria. The choice to concentrate on Austrian social work practices was made based on purely practical reasons and there is no intent to present it as a best practice model. However, having in mind the possible similarities between social work organizational structures in different countries, this study aims to highlight

common patterns in current social work practices, which may also be topical outside the Austrian social work perspective.

II. Defining advocacy

Before going to the deeper analysis of the research problem it is important to clarify, what kind of advocacy practices will be discussed throughout this thesis. Advocacy can be defined in many ways and it covers a very broad range of activities which are difficult to describe in a single definition. However, we can identify some key dimensions of advocacy and its potential as a force for change in social services (Willks, 2012: 18). One of the most commonly used definitions is provided by Lee (2007: 7) who describes advocacy as an action promoting equality, social justice and social inclusion, which can empower people to speak up for themselves. Advocacy can help people become more aware of their own rights, to exercise those rights and be involved in and influence decisions that are being made about their future. In this way advocacy has a dual function in social work practice: one related to the empowerment of clients in defending their rights and another related to broader societal change in achieving social justice. These two core elements of advocacy, empowerment and social justice, represent the value base of the concept.

The notion of advocacy as a mechanism to promote social justice is particularly stressed by the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (2010: 1), who state that: “Advocacy is a crucial element in achieving social justice. It is a way to ensure that everyone matters and everyone is heard – including people who are at risk of exclusion and people who have particular difficulties in making their views known“. In an even broader sense advocacy stimulates critical thinking about the reality, which people are facing and in this way it is not only a process for change, but also a process for learning (UCAN independent advocacy project, Darlypre and Boylan, 2013: 4).

In sum, advocacy refers to actions intended to empower people to fight for their rights in individual and societal level, which are based on the idea of social justice and are committed to achieve social change.

2.1 Different forms of advocacy

Advocacy can be applied in social work practice in many different forms. Therefore, to be more precise about the usage of advocacy concept in this thesis the different forms of advocacy are shortly introduced in this section.

Active and passive advocacy

Advocacy activities can be based on different goals and either be concerned with speaking for a service user or enabling them to speak for themselves. Based on this difference the active and passive approaches to advocacy can be distinguished. These approaches refer to service users either as individuals requiring provision or protection or as citizens and active participants (Willks, 2012: 24). Passive advocacy involves the advocate speaking up for someone else, and active advocacy is applied to speaking up for oneself. However, these approaches can also be seen as part of a continuum, since advocacy in practice is likely to combine both approaches (ibid).

Case or cause advocacy

For the analysis of this thesis, the most significant distinction of advocacy practices is the distinction between case and cause advocacy. Case (issue based) advocacy refers to working with an individual on issues germane to their specific circumstances, and cause (or systemic) advocacy, working with a group pursuing wider collective concerns (Willks, 2012: 26). As it is stressed by Willks (2012: 26), one important benefit of the pursuit of collective concerns is that it sets advocacy within a broader social context as exploring and pursuing shared concerns can help raise awareness of issues of social injustice, discrimination and oppression.

The important point in this distinction is that case and cause advocacy are inevitably inter-related (Mickelson, 1995 cited in Darlypre and Boylan, 2013: 3). The figure 1 (see below) demonstrates the necessity of this inter-relationship since individual situations provide the information required to promote changes in systems, policy and legislation (Office of the Child Youth and Family Advocate, 2000, cited in Darlypre and Boylan, 2013: 3).

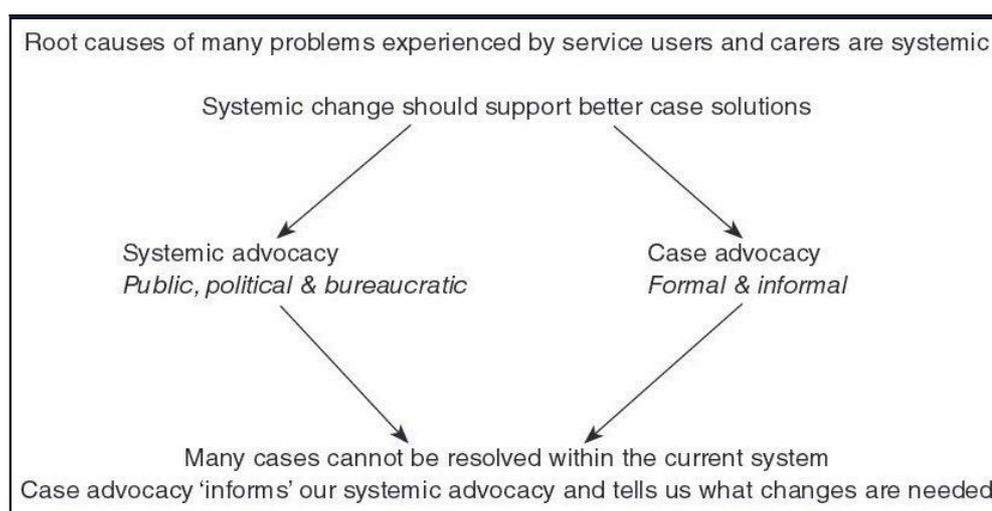


Figure 1. Framework for understanding advocacy

As the Framework indicates, case advocacy supports systemic advocacy and systemic advocacy is essential for making case advocacy easier and helps solving certain complicated cases. Therefore, the empowering potential of advocacy can best be understood in terms of the relationship between case and systemic advocacy, which identifies how advocacy can contribute to changes at both individual (case) and structural (systemic) levels (Darlypre and Boylan, 2013: 3).

Social workers' position in this system is unique in a way that due to direct contact with service users they are able to inform the system and at the same time to advocate and to challenge the systems from within (ibid: 3). However, it is important to realize that these possibilities are limited due to various practical and organizational barriers. As it was stressed by Darlypre and Boylan (2013:19), the bringing together case and cause advocacy is especially complex if social workers

find themselves part of an unjust or unresponsive system. This issue will be discussed in the following chapters.

External and internal advocacy

For analyzing advocacy in practical terms there is a need to distinguish also an external and internal advocacy. The first refers to advocates working outside the system, while the second relates to advocacy by social workers and other professionals working within the system (Darlypre and Boylan, 2013:4). However, the research carried out by Mosley (2011), revealed that policy advocacy carried out by human service nonprofits includes both of what political scientists call insider and outsider tactics. Insider tactics are carried out with policy makers directly and include activities such as lobbying, providing testimony, and sitting on policy committees, while outsider tactics are often more confrontational and include social action, protest, and media campaigns (Mosley, 2013: 232).

The distinction between internal and external advocacy plays an important role in analyzing the challenges, which social workers working in governmental sector face, willing to confront unjust systems they work in. Moreover, it is important to understand what level of externality different actors have as even nongovernmental organizations are often working in a close cooperation (organizational and financial) with the state institutions.

III. Problem Formulation

Historically, the social work profession took root having a twofold micro-macro mission. Pioneer social worker Mary Richmond represented service to individuals and families needing aid to alleviate difficulties in social functioning (Rothmann, and Mizrahi, 2014: 91). Her contemporary counterpart, Jane Addams, represented social reform through environmental change to meet broad human needs (ibid) and paid attention to the deficits in social environments, creating structural changes, combating social discriminations, and fighting for social justice (Kam, 2014: 723). These two traditions, the first emphasizing personal needs and individual treatment and the second aspiring for social reform and social justice, have become the major goals of social work which are generally included and explicitly stated in many different definitions of social work (ibid).

The profession's dedication to cause advocacy nowadays is expressed by two major professional social work bodies, CSWE and NASW. These two organizations have consistently professed and mandated adherence to principles that include a decided macro focus (Rothmann and Mizrahi, 2014: 92). The Code of Ethics for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), states that social workers "pursue social change" and "challenge injustice" (NASW, 2008). The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards document of CSWE goes even further claiming that: "Social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty and the advancement of the quality of life for all persons." (CSWE, 2008: 1). To fulfill these professional goals, advocacy aimed at informing the policy process serves as a key method (Edwards and Hoefer, 2010: 220) and in many ways enacts social work values concerning social and economic justice (McNutt, 2011: 397).

The commitment to these values also stimulates profession's intent to achieve social change and is part of transformational social work. Transformational social work is dedicated for bringing people together for mutual help and support to

promote social transformation through changing structures and challenging inequality and injustice (Darlypre and Boylan, 2013: 12). At the same time social work advocacy enables people who use services to understand the oppression and disadvantage they face and to use this knowledge to promote change (ibid). In this way, advocacy is crucial to social work and social change, inasmuch as it creates foundation for social justice and seeks to protect human rights (Goldberg, 2006, cited in Willks: xi).

Professionalism vs. advocacy?

There are different opinions about the way professionalization of social work was/is affecting its commitment to social justice and its application of advocacy practices. Some scientists claim that professionalization processes has influenced the shift from ‘cause’ to ‘function’ that means from advocating for reform to rendering a technical service (provision of social services) efficiently (Abramovitz, 1998: 519). Timm (1995) even claims that ‘the concept of the social worker as expert purveyor and assessor of requisite services is in conflict with the concept of the social worker as advocate’ (Timms, 1995, cited in Darlypre and Boylan, 2013: 19). This conflict is seen as over-emphasis of the use of methods and techniques, thus putting less emphasis on the ‘causes’ of the problems (Abramovitz, 1998). The over-concern with functions or techniques has fostered interest in personal problems and treatment of individuals, thereby foregoing the primary social goals of the profession to effect social change and combat the causes of societal malaise (Haynes, 1998, cited in Kam, 2014: 726).

It is also argued that the focus on function has led to the increasing emphasis on the adoption of evidence-based practice. Adams et al. (2009, cited in Kam, 2014: 727) criticized evidence-based practice for being patterned after the medical model which tends to have a strictly individual focus. Thus, the promotion of evidence-based practice has directed the attention of the social work profession more to clinical practice models or micro-level approaches that involve individuals as a focus of intervention. As a result social work practices which

concern community changes, large-scale social change projects or social justice issues have become less likely to be adopted or advocated (ibid). The general conclusion from the previous research is that social changes and professionalization have moved social work practice away from advancing social justice (Kam, 2014: 723).

Another important concern expressed by social scientists is the decreasing attention to professional ethics and values caused by professionalization processes. According to Loidl and Sagl (2011: 26) organisational professionalism replaces occupational ethics and values with organisational, bureaucratic, hierarchical or managerial concepts of control, the constituent's trust with management objectives, occupational efficiency with cost ratios, and financial rationality as well as occupational self-control with accountability. According to authors, current social work organizations have to legitimize themselves and therefore seek to control and manage funds and the consequent success (Loidl and Sagl, 2011: 25). This leads to the development of quality requirements, target and performance agreements and performance measurement systems (ibid). These challenges are the generally observed sectoral developments and conditions under which social service organizations in Austria – and in most industrialized European countries – work and deliver their services (ibid).

Therefore, there is a critique expressed by social scientists that professionalization of social work actually leads to de-professionalization. The claim of de-professionalization mostly sees the other professions as being responsible for the relevant definitions by characterizing working processes, standards, quality and performance measures; e.g. business administration instead of social work (Loidl, and Sagl, 2011: 26). Evetts (2011 cited in Loidl and Sagl, 2011: 26) has developed two alternative concepts of professionalization within human service organizations: occupational and organizational professionalism. Whereas occupational professionalism refers to traditional professional action, organizational professionalism draws attention to the process of management and control.

Changing role of social workers as advocates

These professional developments inevitably affected the role of social workers. As is it claimed by Darlypre and Boylan (2013: 19), the changes in the delivery of welfare services have had an impact on how far social workers feel able to directly act in the advocacy role. Moreover, the professionalization process also influences the educational priorities for future social work professionals. There is a growing awareness of the relatively small percentage of social work students enrolled in macro methods who will be prepared to actively participate and provide skilled leadership at the grassroots, policy, coalition, and electoral levels (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2012) (Rothman and Mizrabi, 2014). A study of licensed social workers indicated that nearly one-half of respondents felt that they did not get training in their social work programs that would allow them to effectively utilize political interventions (Ritter, 2008, cited in Edwards and Hoefler, 2010: 221). These factors contribute to the critique that social work advocates are ineffective as a result of lack of training and sophistication (Mosley, 2013: 236).

A quite different approach is presented by Willks, (2012:xii), who sees the potential which current professionalization standards offer for macro level practices. He argues that advocacy is a growing area of practice and is seen as a key element of the changing face of social care within the professionalization agenda. However, the success of macro level approaches in the agenda, depends on the way social work academics and practitioners address the current challenges of application of macro level practices in the contemporary social work.

Moreover, the professionalization process is also connected to political and institutional shifts, which came with the *transformations of the welfare state* (Dewe et al., 2006). Evolutionary, the modern welfare state emerged in tandem with the process of functional differentiation, and further developed as a complicated instrument for coordinating the market economy with its societal environment (Beunen, 2014: 57). The transformation of the welfare state refers to

the withdrawal of the state from responsibility for social problems and the social protection of its citizens, the introduction of workfare policies, the shift from unconditioned entitlements to a system of “qualifying for assistance and services”. These changes increased dependence on government funds in the social service sector, reduced administrative capacity in state and local government, and a growth in opportunities to collaborate with government officials (Mosley, 2013: 231).

These changes have major impacts on the working process in social services, on the professional role of social workers and especially on the client/professional-relationship. According to Dewe et al.(2006) due to the changes in the system of social service provision, sanctions and unequally distributed power are dominating the client/professional-relationship in social service provision. The clients’ best interest is no longer a center and a criterion of success to social work and social service workers are being expected to act as executors of sanctions instead of experts of empowerment (ibid). Moreover, authors question the opportunities for advocacy in a context of coercion and sanctions. Therefore, is a strong need for empirical evidence about how advocacy is currently carried out and how the aforementioned changes in the policy environment may influence advocacy practice (Mosley, 2013: 231).

IV. Theoretical Framework

The previous chapters suggest the direct connection between cause advocacy and the idea of social justice. This inevitably requires a better understanding of the theoretical background of the idea of social justice. Therefore the theory of social justice will be an integral part of this study. However, there are concerns about the discrepancy between the idea of social justice and the current social work professional changes, which suggest the need for the use of additional theory to explain this confrontation. Therefore, the theory of functionally differentiated society was chosen. This choice was based on the hypothesis that the professionalization of social work changed the function of the social work profession from being critical force dedicated to the idea of social justice to being only a part of the system of service provision.

4.1 Theory of social justice

The concept of social justice reflects the activism of advocacy and has been explained as ‘an idea that mobilizes people to act in order to bring about change’ (Newman and Yeates, 2008: 2). The pioneer in spreading the idea of social justice was John Rawls, an American moral and political philosopher, who wrote the classic treatise *A Theory of Justice* (1971), in which he described a theoretical foundation for a just society. According to Rawls, social justice is anchored in two basic principles (Rawl, 1971 cited in Romano, 2015: 67). The first principle states that members of society should have equal rights and liberties to participate fully in the structures and institutions of society (political and legal structures). The second principle has two parts. One part states that all members of society have equal opportunities to obtain positions of power and authority in society. The second part refers to the difference principle and states that social and economic inequalities in society should be arranged so that they provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society.

However, Young (1990, cited in Kam, 2014: 725) suggested that we should not conceive social justice purely in distributive terms but need to bring in the dimension of social relation. Social justice needs to be assessed by examining in what ways the existing social structures and social institutions empower some people and oppress others (ibid). Moreover, different forms of social oppression should be included in the analysis of social justice (ibid). Sen (1999) also opposed the distribution view by claiming that what matters in social justice is not what resources we manage to distribute fairly to people but to what extent we are able to help people develop the ‘capability to function’.

The later literature review suggests that these changes refer to the changing function of social work profession. Therefore, the theory of functionally differentiated society is a useful tool for the further analysis of this phenomenon.

4.2 Luhmann’s theory of functionally differentiated society

The sociologist Niklas Luhmann has concentrated his work on the theory of social systems, which is very complex and consists of several sub-theories (communication theory, theory of society, theory of organization etc.). However in the context of this study I concentrate on the central aspect of Luhmannian theory – the theory of functionally differentiated society.

According to Luhmann, modern society consists of a number of differentiated social systems that each fulfill the function for society (Luhmann, 1982, 1997, cited in Michailakis and Schirmer, 2014). His approach is particularly interested in the notion that modern society is not primarily differentiated along lines of various vertical social strata or classes, but rather along the lines of various systems which are related to specific problems, or fulfill a specific function in society (Ziemann, 2007: 222). Each of these function systems provides a solution to a specific societal reference-problem; they observe society from their own, function-specific perspectives, and communicate whatever falls within their scope in a specific way (Michailakis and Schirmer, 2014).

In order to fully understand the notion of functional differentiation presented by Luhmann, it is important to distinguish that his approach does not question a traditional organizational division of functions, but focus on new forms of differentiation. Seeing differentiated subsystems of society as emergent phenomena implies that they are not the result of a mere dissection of already established forms to communicate about the world, but rather the result of contingent process during which a new way to observe the world is cultivated, repeated and ultimately codified in a highly specified manner (Ziemann, 2014: 22). One good example, given by Ziemann (2014), is an emergence of differentiated systems of sports. Since the late Middle Ages members of the European urban elites have practiced various team sports simply for leisure purposes and as part of their culture of sociability. And also gymnastics movement in various countries since the beginning of the nineteenth century exercised the bodies of individuals as a contribution to their respective larger national body politics. Roughly since the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century beginning in England and rapidly spreading to other European countries, sports was no longer simply a popular pastime and increasingly focused on performance and competitiveness as key aspects of organized sports. In this way, Luhmann's focus is actually based on the transformation of functional organization in modern societies and its influence for different sub-systems.

Luhmann also stressed the limitation of the complex approach of those systems, while according to him, function systems can see only what their unique perspective allows them to see (Michailakis and Schirmer, 2014). For example in the economic system, everything appears as a commodity with a specific price, while in the system of law, everything is observed in terms of legality. Therefore, each of these systems is specialized to fulfill one and only one function for society (Hagen, 2001). They are autonomous systems that operate according to their own logic or binary code, therefore, one system cannot direct or guide the operations of another (ibid). Based on these arguments Luhmann criticizes the lack of unity in modern society: “[...] we live in a society which cannot represent its unity

within itself, because this would contradict the logic of functional differentiation. We live in a society without a top and without a center. The unity of the society no longer appears within this society” (Luhmann, 1990: 16). These issues of the lack of unity within current structure of the society as well as the lack of possibility for different systems to influence each other are for a particular importance in advocating for social justice. This structure of functional differentiation (as explained by Luhmann) restrain the possibilities for one system (social work) from influencing another (politics, legal system, etc.).

Therefore, the application of Luhmann’s theory in the context of social work profession suggests that functional differentiation limits the role of the social workers as advocates for social justice and structural change.

V. Methodological part: Qualitative research

Recent research finds that front-line social work practitioners have been largely missing from the discourse in the empirical and conceptual literature on the integration of clinical social work practice with social justice (Maschi et al., 2011: 248). There are serious knowledge gaps about how rapidly changing political and institutional arrangements may be reshaping its nature and content, for example how policy advocacy is carried out by nonprofit service providers and what is advocated for (Mosley, 2013: 1). These knowledge gaps also suggest the need to analyze how these political and institutional changes affected the social workers' commitment to social justice in current social work organizations as well as the self-perception of social work professionals as advocates for social change. Therefore, the empirical part of this thesis will focus on three main goals of the research:

- To analyze the role of cause advocacy in the current social work practice.
- To find out how social workers perceive themselves as advocates for social change.
- To identify the obstacles for a more active engagement in the cause advocacy practices among current social work professionals

5.1 Methodology

In order to analyze these points of concern the qualitative research approach was chosen, which allows the researcher to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The main focus of this study is to understand the perspective of current social workers: how they see themselves as advocates for social justice as well as how they perceive the conditions which influence (stimulate or restrict) their performance as advocates. The social workers' self-descriptions are an important component of their

practice, even if they are not an exhaustive picture of that practice (O'Brien, 2011: 177). That means that even when each of the interview represents the subjective picture of the reality, each of the personal experience can contribute to making a general picture of the experiences of current social work professionals. Thus, the qualitative research approach is particularly useful, as it 'rests upon participants whose perspectives and behaviors are the focus of the research' (Mikene et al., 2013: 50). Qualitative interviews provide in-depth, contextualised, open-ended responses from research participants about their views, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and experiences (ibid). Interviews can reveal the past; they can uncover how certain events affected people's thoughts and feelings, as well as obtain information about social settings which are otherwise closed or unreachable for researchers (Weiss, 1994, cited in Mikeke et al., 2013: 50).

5.2 Research method

The semi-structured interview was chosen as data collection method. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions (Ayres edited by Given, 2008). The researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews, but in contrast to structured interviews or questionnaires that use closed questions, there is no fixed range of responses to each question (ibid). Therefore, semi-structured interviews help to cover important spheres of interest predefined in interview guide, but at the same time, it allows new topics to emerge, which could provide new insights and new perspectives. However, there is an awareness of possible challenges in applying this research tool. The most relevant limitations of this research tool for this study are the dependence on the interviewer's skills, issues of generalization and reliability.

The interviewer's skills plays a crucial role, because in semi-structured interviews, the development of rich, relevant data rests on the interviewer's ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information provided by the informant (Given, 2008). The issue of generalization rests on the

small sample size and personal nature of the interviews, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings (Bryman, 2008). Finally, reliability concern comes from the lack of possibility to repeat an interview as respondents may be asked different non-standardized questions (ibid).

5.3 Sampling technique

In order to get the perspectives that would help to understand the realities of social work professionals working in the nongovernmental sector the purposive sample technique were chosen. Purposive (or theoretical) sampling involves the selection of cases on the basis of the researcher's own judgment about which will be the most useful (Bloor and Wood, 2006). This sampling technique is often associated with analytic induction, which focuses on systematic examination of similarities between various social phenomena in order to develop concept of ideas (Flick, 2014). The participants of the study therefore, were chosen based on several criteria, which I considered important in gathering useful and comprehensive data. First of all, the participants had to fulfill two criteria: to be a social worker in nongovernmental sector and to have a social work educational degree.

The focus on non-governmental sector is based on the findings from literature analysis, suggesting the higher level of independency and therefore greater commitment to achievement of social justice. A study carried out in northern English city showed that the providers of advocacy services stress the importance to maintain the independence of advocacy practitioners from statutory bodies (Hardwick, 2014: 1711). According to the study's informants, a too close association was seen as potentially leading to an undermining of trust. Moreover, the respondents stressed the importance of the advocacy services not only being independent, but also being seen to be independent, to ensure that confidence and trust were maintained (ibid). Willks (2012: 2) also stresses that an advocate needs to be aware of the potential conflicts of interest in their advocacy role and to be as independent as possible.

The requirement for having educational social work degree was included having in mind that the process of professionalization tends to involve establishing acceptable qualifications, a professional body or association to oversee the conduct of members of the profession. Moreover, professionalization involve some degree of demarcation of the qualified from unqualified amateurs. This demarcation is often termed “occupational closure”, as it means that the profession then becomes closed to entry from outsiders, amateurs and the unqualified (George, 2010:10). As this study analyzes the professional practices of social workers in current social work organizations it also includes a focus on educational preparation of social work professionals. Thus, the inclusion of only those social workers, who have educational degree seemed reasonable.

Later, additional considerations for choosing participants were applied, basically willing to ensure the variety of the data and also to compare different individual experiences. For that reason, I tried to contact social workers working in different NGOs (Caritas, I.K.A, Omega, Vinzi, Frauen Service) with different client groups (homeless man, women in need, refugees, people with drug addictions, youth in need). There have also been different divisions of one NGO (Caritas Haus Elisabeth, Caritas Street Work, Caritas Social Support) included, having in mind that the separate divisions of a big NGO can still have different organizational structures. The bigger spectrum of organizations included in the research as well as the diversity of client groups allowed grasping the systematic rather than organization- or client group-specific issues and tendencies. The choice on specific NGOs was made randomly in order to grasp the variety of social work organizational structures and different experiences of social work professionals.

There was also one selection requirement, which finally was not fully applied in the process: to be active in cause advocacy practices. This aspect seemed important from the perspective that in order to find out what obstacles social workers face while applying advocacy strategies, the intend to undertake advocacy practice should be already present. As the data from the research carried out by O’Brien (2011: 185) demonstrate, there is certainly awareness among

social workers of the significance of the structures which create and sustain injustice, but limited action and engagement with challenging and changing them. There can be many different reasons for lack of engagement in advocacy initiatives and the personal commitment to the ethics and values of social work profession may be one of the aspects influencing this decision. However, in order to avoid predictions and prejudices this criteria was not fully applied and social workers who do not apply cause advocacy practices in their daily practices were also included, hoping that it could help to reveal the reasons this lack of involvement.

5.4 Preparation for interviews

In semi-structured interviews the resulting text is a collaboration of investigator and informant (Given, 2008), which calls for a high proficiency of an interviewer to acquire useful and objective data from this interaction. In order to have some level of control for the interview process an interview guide was created. An interview guide is a script that structures the course of the interview (Kave, 2007). For the semi-structured type of interview the interview guide provide an outline of topics to be covered, with suggested questions (ibid). The interview guide was divided in three main topics: Social workers' involvement in advocacy activities; Aspects influencing the current stage of social work advocacy practices and; the role of advocacy for social justice in social workers' educational program.

The first question group includes guiding questions (which were later adjusted to the interview dynamics) about the current responsibilities/functions of the social workers and their involvement in advocacy activities. The questions were designed to find out how social workers perceive their everyday roles and what importance they give for advocacy in it. It also covers questions analyzing what kind of advocacy is applied, particularly, what is advocated for. That is important aspect in finding out if advocacy initiatives are based on the idea of social justice or some other stimulus. The second question group is dedicated for the analysis of the aspects influencing the application of advocacy practices among social

workers. This theme covers two kinds of questions. Firstly the possible organizational/structural challenges or stimulus for advocacy are questioned and then professional commitment to the idea of social justice is scrutinized. Finally, the third theme tries to highlight how the current educational system for social workers addresses the aspect of social justice and advocacy. The aim here is to find out, if current educational priorities have an effect on the social workers' perception of their role as advocates.

Having in mind that the researcher is the instrument of validity in qualitative research (Mikene et al., 2013: 50), various suggestions for leading the interview (Lavrakas, 2008; Given, 2008) were considered. Those suggestions mainly concerned the avoiding leading questions, giving enough time for providing the answer as well as the right way for using supportive questions. That helped to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation or suggestive questions, while my practical experience in the field could affect the dynamics of the interview process as well as the interpretation of the respondent answers.

5.5 Ethical considerations

The process of the empirical study was based on the ethical research principles discussed by Lichtman (2013). These principles include such commonly known aspects as avoiding harming the research participants, preserving privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. In order to ensure that no harm will be made to the participants all my interviews were completely anonymous and even in the cases, then interviewees accidentally provided their personal information during interviews, this information was not included in the transcript of interviews or in the analysis of the results. In order to ensure anonymity I also did not use any names in the analysis of the data and all the interviewees have been named by different letters from A to G.

Other ethical aspects addressed during research process were ensuring informed consent and avoiding excessive intrusiveness (in the case of this empirical study

intrusiveness meant the risk of excessively intruding the time of research participants). I contacted most of the interviewees per E-mail, which provided me with the possibility to give them main information about my research's goals and research process. This helped to ensure that the participants were informed about the study in which they would take part. Moreover, some of the interviewees I also contacted per phone and gave additional information when it was needed. The concern about time resources required for the interview process was especially important, because most of the interview participants wanted to know the exact duration of the interview. In order to respect the interviewees' time the interview process was adjusted to different interviews, trying to get the most important information and to do not exceed the agreed time.

Finally the ethical principle of avoiding misinterpretation was considered. This issue was particularly important in this study, because the risk of misinterpretation was increased by using a different language (German) during the interviews. The decision to carry out interviews in German was based on the perception of the risk of losing important information, if the interviewees would have faced difficulties explaining themselves in English. However, using German as the communication language raised the concern that I could misunderstand the information provided by the interviewees or miss some aspects which may be used for deeper discussion. To minimize this risk, I used additional questions in different parts of the interviews to find out if my previous perceptions were right.

5.6 Data analysis technique

After the interviews were carried out and all information was gathered thematic analysis was applied. Thematic analysis is one of the approaches to content analysis, where the coding scheme is based on categories designed to capture the dominant themes present in a text (Franzosi, edited by Hardy and Bryman, 2004). The coding process is carried out in order to make links between different parts of the data that are regarded as having common properties (Lokyer, edited by Lewis et al., 2004). In this way coding facilitates the organization, retrieval, and

interpretation of data and leads to conclusions on the basis of that interpretation (ibid). The main stage in coding is to develop a set of categories into which the data are coded (ibid). These categories may be theory driven or data driven, derived from research literature, or based on intuition (ibid).

In this study the coding of the interview data as well as framing interview guide was based on the findings from previous research and literature analysis, which allowed to identify the main points of interest, but still provided space for discovering new aspects and for carrying out deeper analysis of the research problem. During the data analysis process the following themes were created:

1. The use of cause advocacy in current social work practice
2. Perception of the role as advocate for social justice
3. The obstacles for more active cause advocacy in social work practice
4. Formation of the role of current social work professionals

These themes, based on the issues revealed from the previous research and literature analysis, provided not only the possibility to analyze various components of the research problem, but also to find out how those aspects may influence each other or what new aspects could be revealed. Only after the analysis of the categories, the theoretical approaches were applied willing to explain the links between different categories.

VI. Background information

In order to contextualize the findings analyzed later in this study the short history and the current picture of social work situation in Austria is presented in this chapter. The history of social work practices in Austria is traceable back to the times of Austrian-Hungarian Empire, when the development of industries raised the migration flows of people and caused extremely crowded housing situation and very bad living conditions. At this time the socialist party became an important factor in political life and at the same time charity organizations were founded, which were run mostly by Catholic Church organizations. In current times social services in Austria are organized and funded mainly by the social security system and state-funded budgets. Parallel to this there still exists an important network of social services financed by religious institutions and also a growing number of social institutions of civil society and social businesses has been built up in the non-governmental sector (NGOs), mostly funded by public money also (AASW, 2010).

The Austrian Association for Social Workers (AASW) stresses that the current practice of social work in Austria was heavily effected by the changes in the political ideology during the 1990s, when the neoliberal ideas seized the foot in the social field and the social services (AASW, 2010). According to AASW (2010), these changes included budget cuts with priority in social expenditures and the public was called for more control of social welfare money. More and more public social services have been outsourced to private companies or associations, who usually get the money from public budgets. This privatization of social work services caused the lack of general standards for quality, lack of obligation to employ professional educated workers as well as lower wages and working conditions of social workers (ibid). These all aspects will be visible later in the analysis process as an influential force framing the current social work practice in Austria.

VII. Analysis

In this part the findings from the qualitative study will be analyzed highlighting its implications for the research problem. After the analysis part the further discussion will attempt to provide a better understanding of the aspects revealed during the analysis process.

7. 1 The use of cause advocacy in current social work practice

In order to find out what role cause advocacy plays in a current social work practice, the interviewees were asked to describe what activities they carry out as social workers in everyday practices in their organizations. The question was formed in a way, which would allow avoiding direct question about advocacy practices, in order to find out if social workers see advocacy activities as a part of their professional portfolio and if they see it as part of their occupational responsibilities. As the result only one out of seven interviewees mentioned cause advocacy (lobbying) as part of their professional activities. Most of the time interviewees mentioned such activities as counseling, case management, administrative tasks and networking as their main responsibilities.

When the interview directly addressed the structural issues, which could be related to social injustices, participants stressed the importance of networking activities and participation in work-circles. Deeper analysis also revealed that this kind of activities were serving two functions: to raise the awareness of the current issues concerning their client group and to make connections with another professionals working in a field:

In this working group, all social workers who work in the field, directly with people, meet together and there simply discuss what is the situation, what we notice to be wrong, what is missing in the social security system, what do we need more and then we invite the representatives from Government, from Municipality to highlight all these concerns for them. ... For us it is also important to exchange the information with colleagues, to build a network. Then we can try various possibilities,

various ways to solve the problem...we try to fill the missing support, then the government is not able to provide it at this moment. (Interview C, Author's translation)

The awareness raising function of these networking activities were mentioned by all the interviewees, however all of them expressed modest or no hope for possibility to influence changes:

Like position papers, I am not really a fan of it, anymore... Because my experiences with position papers, that they are there and that's it, really that's it. Like you need a strong group and sometimes it's difficult. Sometimes it works and sometimes we are facing a really stressing time in our daily work so it's just not, as I said, our main focus is not to write position papers. We need to deal with the position we are in right now. (Interview E)

From these expressions it can be seen that social workers do not only have a feeling of being unable to influence broad structural injustices, but also are faced with the need to prioritize between cause and case advocacy and the second one seems more important und more effective. At the same time the second function of these meetings was seen more positively, stressing the possibilities to improve the case management through better connections:

It is important to know the people from other divisions, because other social workers, for instance, because I need to contact with them a lot. The things are moving faster when people know each other. (Interview B, Author's translation)

This tendency suggests that even though social workers involve themselves in working groups, which may provide the space for advocating for social change, in practice it is more focused on finding the ways to deal with current structural issues and fix missing service gaps through building networks. At the same time the structural issues remain unchallenged. The only activities which were specifically aiming at challenging structural injustices were advocacy campaigns organized by Caritas Street-work division and were taking place twice per year.

These results confirm the concerns expressed by social scientists that within day-to-day practice social workers continue to focus on micro level interventions while forgetting the meso and macro levels because they seem out of reach (Darlypre and Boylan, 2013:18). Moreover, it seems that the individual (micro) level provides them a sense of personal satisfaction and appreciation from the service users for practical help that ‘eases their lives’ (ibid):

We can exchange information, we can network, we can try to help together our client as good as possible. That is actually motivating us to do this job further, then we get a feedback from our clients, a smile or a thank you. (Interview C, Author’s translation)

For the further analysis of this phenomenon, it is important to mention that, despite the lack of involvement in advocacy activities, all participants expressed the awareness of unjust and discriminatory structures affecting the current social issues faced by their clients. Each interviewee was able to provide concrete examples of the rules or legislations which are unjust or discriminatory. However, there is a feeling of being unable to approach those issues which is also combined with the avoidance of confrontation:

What can we do? First of all we have to accept it, right. Generally every hospital should accept Ophiat addicted people, but some of them just doesn’t... What can we do... we can approach Health Insurance Institution or the Municipality or the Responsible division, but basically it stays unchanged. It is hard to feel those injustices... but sometimes it is our ‘daily bread’. (Interview C, Author’s translation)

These findings suggest that in current social work practice cause advocacy has a minor role and the advocacy activities, which they undertake are more directed to solving individual problems, than approaching broader structural injustices. It seems that there is a lack of trust in the effectiveness of cause advocacy compared with the direct results which they acquire from solving individual cases. Willing to understand the circumstances which affect the current role of cause advocacy in social work practice, two important components need to be analyzed: the

professional's perception of his/her role as advocate for social justice and the obstacles he/she face in implementing this role.

7.2 The perception of the role as advocate for social justice

The social workers' perception of their role as advocates for social justice has a significant importance in this analysis, while it helps to reveal their intent to take part in those activities in the first place. In other words it assists in sizing the problem and finding out if the lack of application of advocacy practices is affected by current educational programs or by restrictions in their professional practice. After these analysis the obstacles preventing the implementation of this intend could be further evaluated.

The information gathered during the interviews showed that, despite passive involvement in cause advocacy, social workers have a significantly high awareness about the importance of cause advocacy in their professional practice. The interviewees expressed an understanding of the resources they have and their unique place in the system of social services:

I think that social workers are unbelievable source of information, they have a very good idea what is needed, what is not working, what is missing and I think it is very good to connect them and to organize them.
(Interviewee A, Author's translation)

Moreover, there was an awareness of the social workers' commitments to their clients for 'giving the voice'/representing their interests in the current system:

For our clients we are simply, at least I have such feeling, that we have the responsibility for our clients to represent their voice and that motivates already. We are exactly between clients and the government and municipality, we know, we can represent the voice from up and from down. (Interview C, Author's translation)

This perception of their representational commitments was also perceived in a broader sense, seeing it as a responsibility to raise the awareness in the society about the social issues and injustices, which are affecting their clients:

I cannot be sad about the situation and do not do anything about it. You have to show society, because if you are 45 you do not even have children, you have your job you have your house and its all well, you just cross this square, get on the bus and you do not see it, you do not know. (Interview E)

These expressions exemplify that social workers feel the responsibility to represent the interest of their clients, 'to give them a voice' in the system. It is also important to note, that the interviewees were able to identify the lack of the advocacy activities for their client group:

The poor people, the people with minimal financial resources, retired people or single mothers, I notice, that they have no one behind them. They have no advocate behind them. No one stands out and says: "Hey, it is not right, with how few money people need to live", or something like that. (Interview G, Author's translation)

However, these perceptions were also mixed with the perceived limitations of their role as advocates for structural change:

But it is also not my job and I also can't do that to change it. But I am aware of that and I try to support those people, to consult them, to motivate them to try to make their situation better. (Interview G, Author's translation)

It seems that despite the clear perception of the need for cause advocacy and their professional commitment for representing the clients' interests, social workers do not see cause advocacy as part of their professional function and have a rather modest vision of their role as advocates (concentrated on small scale issues).

These findings also support the results from previous studies, which showed that many social workers have the misconception that advocacy work is not part of their official duties, and that it should only be taken up by those whose work focuses on policy advocacy and social activism (Kam, 2014: 736). This perception may be due to the social workers' misunderstanding that the aim of advocacy is to only bring about legislative changes and the effective means of

advocacy is by collective social action (ibid). However, according to Ezell (2001: 23), advocacy should consist of ‘those purposive efforts to change specific existing or proposed policies or practices on behalf of or with a specific client or group of clients’. Therefore, advocacy work should not be confined to macro legislation matters, because it is also related to daily unreasonable treatments and unjust practices and policies imposed on clients. This misinterpretation also raises the concern about lack of attention to advocacy practices in the social workers’ education programs. This issue will be broader discussed later in the analysis.

These findings further strengthen the idea that social workers prefer to focus on the individual level social work. Furthermore, it stress the need to analyze the missing link between the perception of the need for advocacy, the understanding of their unique position in the system as well as the commitment for representing the interests of their clients, and still lacking the strong involvement in the advocacy activities.

7.3 Obstacles for more active cause advocacy

During the interviews social workers expressed various circumstances preventing or restricting their involvement in cause advocacy practices, which may be related to their negative perception of the effectiveness of such activities as well as with their perception of the limited ability to approach broader structural issues. In order to better understand how various aspects influence the current stage of cause advocacy in social work practice, the theory of functionally differentiated society will be applied. This theory will be used as a tool for a deeper analysis of the current system of social care provision as well as for a better understanding of the interrelation between different obstacles for cause advocacy practices.

7.3.1 Organizational restrictions

One aspect of policy advocacy that has historically been under-recognized in the literature is that advocacy choices are largely organizationally driven (Mosley, 2013: 233). Advocacy almost always happens in an organizational context, which

means that the constraints and incentives an organization experiences with regard to advocacy are crucial in determining the likelihood of any individual within it being able to participate in advocacy (Hasenfeld, 2009, cited in Mosley, 2013). This issue was also visible during the interviews with research participants:

You can not, as representator, make big political statements, because we are all very hierarchically structured and where it usually requires a consultation with organisation's management, if you as representator can support this statement. (Interviewee A, Author's translation)

The organizational structure has also framed the way how social workers see their place in the system and how they perceive their possibilities to act as advocates for broader structural change. Those perceptions were usually representing their understanding of the limitations of their professional position:

We social workers working in the field, we do not have so many possibilities for going to the public, for doing advocacy activities, while we always have a supporting association or bigger division above us. That we can make is to talk to the citizens, to invite politicians, who are also working directly with people, to explain them to write a letter, a position paper and to deliver it further and to hope that it goes further to the district government [...] For everything else is the bigger association above us. And for that they are responsible. We have simply limits, we have limits. (Interview C, Author's translation)

The perceptions of the organizational limitations were also supported by the negative experience when some broader advocacy campaigns were confronted by the managing division of the organization:

When we want to address some kind of big problem in our work circle and to make a position statement, sometimes we get a feedback from bigger divisions: 'no, you can't do it. It represents a bad image of our division.' That means: be not too laud, do not too much! (Interview C, Author's translation)

From these statements we can notice that the organizational loyalties not only restrict social workers' perception as an advocate, but also have a direct restricting

effect on their advocacy activities, which may be causing some negative effect (financial or prestige) for their organization.

From the first view one could see these organizational restrictions as the consequence of the hierarchical structure of social service organizations. However, the perspective of Lumann's functional differentiation theory, provides the broader view on this issue.

Even though Luhmann in his theory of functional differentiation claims, that the pattern of differentiation of the modern society is a functional and not a stratificational one, the Luhmann's analysis is almost exclusively limited to the macro level, namely to the society as a whole and its functional sub-systems. Therefore, when one moves to the mezzo and micro levels complexity decreases and systems become more likely or even inevitably differentiated in a much more stratified way (Makarovic, 2001:63). However, Makarovic (2001:61) claim, that the understanding of role divisions as mostly or even necessary leading to hierarchies is an oversimplified view, unable to present a valid picture of a modern society. He stresses the issue of relation between different subsystems. For instance the (post)modern political divisions, may reveal that they have moved from the traditional class (stratificational) issues to the new ones, which are more and more often connected to the relations between various functional subsystems: economy vs. political public (e.g. ecological issues), science vs. economy (e. g. financing and application of research).

This would mean that in the context of social care provision the problem lies not on the hierarchical division per se, but on the relation between functional sub-system of social care and political sub-system. This interrelation of the sub-systems leads to the wish to save 'the good image' of the organization which was mentioned by one of interviewee and stimulates social care providers to focus on their functions of social care provision excluding broader policy concerns. These hypotheses are also supported by findings from previous researches which showed that external stakeholders may pressure nonprofit organizations to refrain

from engaging in political activities and act as a barrier to policy advocacy (Ruggiano et al., 2014: 91).

7.3.2 Functional differentiation in an organizational context

The analysis of functional differentiation is important not only in a macro level of different sub-systems but also in the organizational level of current social work organizations. It is important to understand how the processes in the macro level influence the more specific organizational choices as well as every day social work practices. Here again I would like to stress that the phenomenon of functional differentiation in this study is seen not as a traditional division of responsibilities, but as a new way of organizing work. As previously explained in the theoretical background, Luhmann's approach of functional differentiation concentrates on the narrow focus of each functional sub-system. Looking back to the history of social work organizations one could see the change in the division of responsibilities, which leads to the decrease in the holistic approach and more focus on individual functions in current social work organizations:

We have one division, educational division is in the house, where one colleague is, who is mainly responsible for Public Relations and Education, but there are not the topics, which we face in our social consultations. (Interview B, Author's translation)

This quote exemplifies the communication issues of the current system of work division, when the focus on the individual functions limit the possibilities for broader interventions and a more sustainable, long term solutions. Instead of that, each individual, division or sub-system focuses on the narrow spectrum of functions, excluding the broader context of the concerning issue. As it will be discussed in later chapters, this issue of communication is also related to the general organizational goals. As later analysis shows the divisions which are responsible for various advocacy campaigns are not always addressing the issues faces by the clients, but are more focused on image framing and attracting of financial resources.

The research material shows that the issue of functional differentiation is especially relevant in current social care organizations, as they are usually highly stratified and complex. From the seven interviews, four participants were coming from highly structured organizations, with lack of space for individual initiatives and three interviewees expressed more freedom for the activities which they chose to undertake. As a result the social workers coming from more flexible organizational structures reported greater involvement in advocacy activities:

It depends on how the organization is structured. I have a possibility to do a lot in both levels, but some of my colleagues are focused only on case management [...] I find it important that both levels (micro and macro) are integrated, because it gives a comprehensive picture. But some work profiles are simply not seen this way. (Interview A, Author's translation)

However, despite the greater possibilities for implementing advocacy initiatives, most of these respondents were also concentrated on case advocacy or small awareness raising initiatives and rarely aimed for a broader structural change. This situation could be explained in a way that all of the social workers, who expressed more flexible division of functions, were coming from smaller social work organizations or divisions, which were responsible for a small scale of social care provision. In this way, these social workers had a limited possibility to address broader structural injustices, while they were restricted by bigger divisions of their own organization or their organizations had less influence compared to the big social care providers. In this way social workers working for a big social care provider has limited possibility for advocacy initiatives due to the narrow functional profile while social workers working in a smaller organization is restricted to the limited capacities in a broader organizational structure of social care sector:

Then it is about the bigger advocacy activities, as newspaper or conference, than we have in any case no 'free hands'. Caritas needs to represent one common position. (Interview D, Author's translation)

These findings are also related to the previously discussed issue of the lack of the perception of the social worker's role as advocate, which may be stimulated by the narrow functional responsibilities in their organization. This means that on the one hand functional differentiation frame the functions which social workers overtake in their organization, which may include also cause advocacy practices. But, on the other hand the interviews showed that in current social work organizations it rather restrict than enable social workers from undertaking broader advocacy campaigns, through narrowing the functions of social work position.

All in all the analysis of the affect of functional differentiation both on macro and mezzo levels shows that the broader functional responsibilities of the social care system determine the functions and goals of the social care sector, which later frames the functions and goals of social work organizations as well as social work professionals. Unfortunately, these processes seem to have a negative effect on the application on cause advocacy practices among social workers. However, the deeper analysis to explain this negative effect is needed. The previously discussed findings from the empirical study shows the lack of communication between different functional divisions as well as the narrowing profile of social worker's occupation. However, the data gathered during the interviews shows that these are not the only factors influencing the lack of attention to cause advocacy in current social work practice. There is also a tendency that in the context of functional differentiation there is an increasing focus on management of social services concentrating more on economic considerations than the idea of social justice.

7.4 More managerialism, less problem solving

The continuous expansion of welfare state services, public health care, educational institutions and social work made the welfare state itself one of the most important employers and created a wide range of new and highly organized groups of employees dependent on government-financed or market financed

welfare expansion (Beunen, 2014: 67). In this process welfare state also integrates social work into common organizational structure, common quality and accountability standards. As a result, the dependence on government funds increases and stimulates the social work profession to fight for recognition and to present its services and performances as unique, which cannot be substituted for or performed by other professions or actors (Honneth, 2003). These processes led to the adaptation of various standards in order to follow expectations about the management, quality and performance issues (ibid: 7).

The analysis of the previous research also suggests that the social work profession is heavily affected by the managerial approach to the provision of social services which has a direct effect on social workers' application of advocacy practices. As it was claimed by Kam (2014: 729), the increasing emphasis on the practice of new managerialism in the social welfare sector, the state's control, particularly limiting resource allocation and tightening the rules and criteria for services, has created powerlessness-inducing structures or environments in which social workers are discouraged to fulfill social justice ideals, and social work practice thus needs to be more concerned with rationing resources than with social reform activities. These issues were also constantly mentioned during the interviews particularly stressing the difficulties caused by increased accountability and efficiency requirements, which leave no space for advocacy initiatives.

7.4.1 Accountability and time restrictions

As interviews revealed the issue of increased accountability standards is related to the financial mechanisms of social service organizations, particularly to the increased cooperation between the state and nongovernmental organizations. Despite the fact that all research participants were employed by nongovernmental organizations, all, except one, were party or fully funded by the state or municipality:

Its streetwork for young people and responsible organization is Caritas, but we get paid by the city.[...] The city actually wanted us to do this job,

but they didn't want to do the organization, so Caritas does the organization. It should be 100 percent financed by the city, but its not enough so we have some additional sources. (Interview E)

As later analysis showed the financial commitment to state institutions requires the adjustment to their accountability standards:

I had seven clients today and I need to document, who were here, with what kind of problems, what did I make. I need to do it, my working time is over, when can I do it? [...] It is important, then the control is coming, they look at statistics, for instance in Annual report. [...] A lot of time goes for documentation and it is a bureaucracy thing. It is important for the government, for ... I don't know for what... but it is important. It is a proof that we have worked well. (Interview F, Author's translation)

Moreover, the increased accountability standards also come with an intent to control the functions of social workers in a particular organization. In this way accountability requirements also frame the role of social workers, defining its functions and its daily activities:

I have to provide a certain number of consultations per year. There is a defined time, which I need to spend for consultations, there is a time defined how much I need to spend for administrative tasks and for instance networking. It is precisely written how much time I can spend. (Interview B, Author's translation)

According the interviewees their job descriptions are also mainly or mostly focused on individual counseling and do not include the activities related to broader interventions. The lack of attention to macro level social work in the current social work descriptions also means that those activities are not seen as part of the job and are not financed by the funding institutions or private donors:

And also these activities are not financed. There is no possibility to finance it while from common donations is too few money. It is very precisely defined, what someone has to do. There should be performances of many divisions defined so that they could get money. (Interview B, Author's translation)

The lack of financial resources for advocacy activities is a two sided issue. First of all it creates practical barriers for undertaking active advocacy initiatives and secondly it frames the perception that those activities are not part of the professional portfolio of current social work professionals.

Moreover, the high accountability requires a lot of time recourses, and as a result 'the lack of time' was one of the most often mentioned obstacle for approaching structural issues:

Here in our job the time for general activities is also limited and for something additional... And it is definitely a pressure and the reason why some activities which were also important, for instance advocacy activities, why it is often too limited. (Interview B, Author's translation)

During the interviews, the interviewees expressed the unease in finding time for both micro and macro social work activities, which finally lead to prioritizing individual work instead of approaching broader issues:

Its never enough then you take it this way [...] But at some times, just like now, it's a lot of things going on, during opening hours and on the street. We also during our last two meetings had to say to ourselves: 'Okay our focus is just working together with our young people, support them and we have to focus on that'. So we don't want to lose our focus and we are not politicians! Its good if we do some work and we know our job is, we can have influence and do more political work, but we may never lose our focus... (Interview E)

Then I would have 100 percent of management, really no inner activities in the house [...], then I would have enough time for lobbying for networking and so on... and also somehow it doesn't suit me, because I don't want to lose the contact with the client group. (Interview D, Author's translation)

These expressions stress once again the issue of prioritization and limited capacities to approach broader issues, which may lead to a more sustainable solution of individual cases. In this way social workers face a situation, were they can only complete their functions as service providers, while the focus on

efficiency and accountability leave few or no space for approaching broader structural injustices (carrying cause advocacy).

7.4.2 Economization of social services

The continuous adaptation of managerial standards in social care sector have also influenced different other processes such as increased emphasis on economic side of service provision. As it is explained by Beunen (2014: 67), in recent years, organizations of the political subsystem, especially of its bureaucratic subsystem, have undergone profound changes due to their adaptation of the economic semantics of efficiency, market orientation and customization. These changes profoundly undermine the illusion of the state as a unity because public institutions more and more operate within a competitive context as they increasingly compete with other public institutions as well as with private organizations (ibid: 68). The issue of increased competition among social care providers was also mentioned by the research participants, seeing it as a one of the reasons for the lack of attention to broader structural issues:

What I also see, is the concurrence between organizations. And it is also a goal to get clients, because everyone of course wants to keep their place (occupation). (Interview D, Author's translation)

Further analysis of this phenomenon suggests that it may be leading to new economics of care (Hasenfeld and Garrow, 2012: 302), when increased focus on management also influences the focus on finances, which can confront the basic values of social work profession:

Then specialized divisions are not responsible for broad range of cases, because they also do not get money for that. Why then Women Shelter do not accept the women who comes from violent environment, but is not from Styria (a district in Austria)? (Interview D, Author's translation)

This example shows how managerial principles lead to high level conditionality in social care provision and can cause the situations then a person face unjust treatment in the social care system itself. At the same time, the issues of increased

competition and conditionality, which are both connected to the financial mechanisms and the managerial principles continue to weaken social workers' commitment to social justice.

Moreover, the interviews revealed that the emphasis on the economic factor of service provision may lead to the decrease of the focus on problem solutions. Some interviewees expressed the concern that the financial gains which comes which each client and each case, can reduce the motivation to look for a long lasting solutions:

It is not solution-oriented. I have an impression that clients are made dependent (on the social services system). It is not viewed how to make the person independent, but, like, through over-support, which is in the current service system, to hold her long in the service system. It was one case, support conference for one woman, and there were 12 people around the table, 12 social workers were there. (Interview D, Author's translation)

This example not only shows the short-sighted practices but also raise the concern about the possible negative effects for the client in concern. As it was stressed by Willks (2012: 92), the strong individual focus can pathologize the client, while clients only develop their own skills in a limited way by learning about accessing a solicitor and how to seek help, but less likely the skills and knowledge to manage their problem more effectively in the future. These practices also do not make links between the difficulties faced by an individual and the wider collective interests of groups and communities (ibid). In this way the economical focus not only further limits the social workers' engagement in the broader advocacy campaigns but also restrict them from empowering the clients to advocate for themselves.

These findings report a serious confrontation between the current trends of social work professional practices and the values and principles of social work profession.

7.4.3 What is advocated for?

As already discussed in previous chapters, even though social workers in non-governmental organisations can find it easier to challenge state decision making, they may also be dependent on either local or national government structures for their funding (Mosley, 2013: 236). Moreover, the growth in government contracting and collaborative governance may be changing both the opportunities for, and potentially the nature of policy advocacy (ibid: 232). In the previous chapters I have already discussed various ways how these changes have affected the opportunities for social workers to be active advocates for social change. Concerning the changes in the nature of policy advocacy scientists see two major tendencies: more collaborative than confrontational advocacy and self-serving advocacy practices.

The issue of ‘too soft’ or too collaborative advocacy is related to the new organization of social care provision. According to Mosley (2012), the new institutional arrangements have increased reciprocity and collaboration between private human service providers and government, and, as a result, may lead advocacy that is increasingly collaborative rather than conflictual advocacy. The tendency of avoiding confrontation was also visible in the majority of interviews, when research participants were either trying to excuse the unjust practices or were stressing the wish to keep good relations with the responsible institution.

The financial dependence on various funding sources is seen as a major cause of another issue of current advocacy practices, self-serving advocacy. As it is claimed by McNutt (2011: 398), nowadays probably more of the profession’s advocacy efforts aim at profession’s building and protecting existing funding streams. Therefore, social work advocates may be seen as self-serving, willing to protect their jobs and industry (Mosley, 2013: 236). The findings from this qualitative study show that the current practice indeed have a focus on the advocacy, which is more often aiming for increasing the funding than to approaching structural issues:

We are always stimulated to support the management, because there are requests from the media for Interviews or presenting some cases. [...]Quite often it is to write down the stories of the people who are in need. Why they need help. The goal there is to show our job or with what problems we are confronted and what solution do we offer. The goal is also that Caritas, through that can get also more donations. Sometimes it is also sociopolitical interventions, but rather rare and more complicated. (Interview G, Author's translation)

Therefore, then approaching the issue of the application of advocacy practices in social work, it is important to look not only of the intensity but as well the content and goals of such practices.

However, it is important to avoid generalization and to keep in mind the complexity among social service providers. What is actually significant from these statements is that the adaptation of management principles and increased financial focus on service provision is negatively affecting the commitment to social justice, while economic concerns reduce the focus on social injustices and do not stimulate holistic, long lasting solutions.

7.5 Formation of the current role of social work professionals in educational programs

It is argued that the role of the advocate is not one that can be learned out of a textbook and if it was formalized by bringing it into the mainstream, it would be compromised (Hardwick, 2014: 1712). However, the lack of professional standing and knowledge base is likely to affect the ability of advocacy services to challenge injustices (ibid: 1713). The lack of knowledge base first of all reflects the awareness of current challenges to social justice and then the professional skills in carrying out advocacy practices (Mallincrodt et al. 2014: 305). Many of the activities that advocates engage in require substantial knowledge (such as issue knowledge and knowledge of lobbying rules and regulations) and a broad set of skills (such as drafting legislation, organizing constituents, public education methods, and so forth) to successfully complete (McNutt, 2011: 399).

The research data showed that the respondents have a high awareness about current social injustices, but rather low level of the knowledge about different ways of applying advocacy practices (most of the respondents mentioned only work circles as a way to influence changes). It may be at least partly related to the lack of attention to cause advocacy in the educational programs, which was mentioned by the majority of the interviewees:

It was not a big issue. Let me say 90/10, 90 like individual or group, but advocacy activities, yes it was always coming in wherever you do yes, you are supposed to do advocacy work. But in my case we didn't have like a main focus. (Interview E)

These findings go in hand with the critique expressed by Jacobson (2001: 52), that 'today's social work students are trained more often as clinical practitioners than advocates for social change'. Moreover, it seems that social work has become synonymous with counseling work, individual treatments, and clinical therapies, losing its dedication to social change and social justice (Kam, 2014: 727):

If you do the education, and the focus is more on the management part, then you don't know the other part and you just don't know and you don't work against the system, because you learned it this way and are kind of in the system. (Interview E)

In this way the educational priorities plays a significant role in preparing social work professionals who have a strong commitments to the idea of social justice as well as the knowledge and skills needed for the effective advocacy efforts. However, from the analysis of the interviews we can see that the current educational priorities further contribute to the misconception that advocacy work is not part of social workers' professional portfolio. Even the respondents who claimed that during their education they had courses related to macro level social work, commented that it was mainly focused on the management of social services and the development of social work organizations:

We did a lot in my education about social justice, but I think what we have lost through the years now is that we do more management and less

justice. [...] I think most of the social workers now, they don't have time for this kind of things. It's like numbers, management, case management, this management, that management, time management... [...] Social work now, it's very economic. It's about numbers, and money and time and that's it. And then there comes the individual and then it comes social justice. That's my opinion. (Interview E)

These findings show the growing focus on the managerialism in social work education programs and raise the concern about the educational priorities of the contemporary schools of social work. In the connection to previous findings we can make a conclusion that preparation of social work professionals and practical models in social work organizations are moving from social justice orientated social work to social management orientated social work.

7.6 Perception of the commitment to social justice

The final point I would like to address in my analysis is the way social workers see social work's commitment to social justice. This aspect is important in the analysis, while it shows how the previously discussed aspects affected the social workers' perception of their professional commitment to achieving social justice. The analysis revealed that social workers have partly preserved a feeling of having the profession dedicated to the idea of social justice:

I think that we, social workers, are quite special people. And the engagement for a better world also comes together [...] we are human rights profession and we need to work on the basis of ethics and values.” (Interview G, Author's translation)

I want to be romantic because that keeps me going. And just to sit here and say: 'well I'm social worker, there is nothing I can do, let's face it'. I don't know if I have the right job. (Interview E)

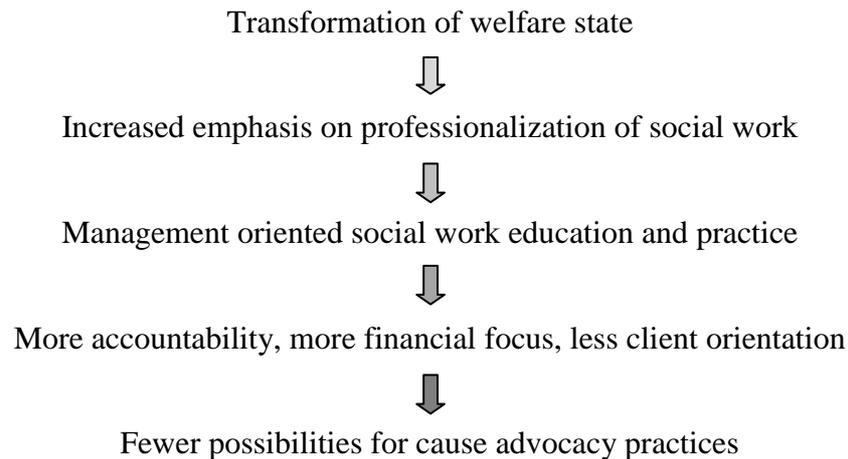
However, the combination of previously discussed obstacles and the complexity of the current societal injustices cause the feeling of being unable to achieve these ideological professional principles:

When you are trying to play with the idea of social justice, you very soon come back to the reality and it is frustrating. And then you give it up again. Because in everyday life it doesn't bring anything. And also in job brings few. [...] (It is) Social romanticism. It is probably way too far away. Everything should change, that it would be achieved. (Interview B, Author's translation)

These findings suggest that despite the low level of involvement in cause advocacy practices, the lack of trust for their possibilities to influence structural injustices, social workers still carry the idea of social justice in their professional identity. The question to be raised after these findings is, how the commitment to social justice remain to be just an ideology of social work profession and are increasingly abandoned in the educational programs as well as in the social work practice?

VIII. Discussion

From the previously discussed findings we could make the map of connections between different aspects influencing the application of cause advocacy in current social work practice:



This simplified map of the processes affecting the current stage of cause advocacy practices can help to look deeper into the issue and try to understand, why certain structural changes had a negative effect on the application of cause advocacy in social work.

Social service organizations are part of the organizational community in the institutional field of non-profit organizations and they have a particular status and role in society (Loidl and Sagl, 2015: 5). Therefore, the transformation of the welfare state plays a significant role in a way that it frames the role/function of social work profession in welfare societies. As it was stressed by Blindenbacher, (1997: 34), organizations in the field of social work and social services have two tasks: social control and public oriented tasks (system aspect) and individual and client-oriented tasks (life-world aspect) (Loidl and Sagl, 2015: 26).

Social control and public oriented task is also connected to the perception of control, which was addressed by Pollack (2010: 1264). He states that the profession of social work occupies an intermediary space, charged with

‘translating’ state power to individuals, families, groups and communities. Increasingly, social workers across a wide range of spheres are required to engage in regulatory practices that reinforce and perpetuate the goals of neo-liberal policy and ideologies (ibid). Even though, the results from the qualitative study show the different involvement of cause advocacy practices in different social work organization, the general trend still show the dominance of focus on rules and regulations for service provision instead of challenging unjust practices. As it was stressed by Willks (2012: 137), social work operates at a pivotal position within networks of care and support which help to sustain ‘ordinary people in their natural settings’. Even though it may be too strongly stated and too generalized conclusion, the results from qualitative interviews suggest that the current organization structure of social care provision, with an abandoned focus on empowerment, creates situations when social work clients become dependent on social care services and are unable to recognize or approach broader structural injustices causing their current social position.

The perception of the influence of state’s policy priorities for the social work practices is one of the aspects, which I have found missing in the Luhmann’s theory. Even though functional sub-systems are operationally closed by their specific operations based on their specific media, but on the other hand they “need” each other, since they are functionally interdependent (Makarovic, 2001:64). In the context of this study, social work organizations are dependent from the state and the state needs social work organizations to carry out specific functions for the state. However, Luhmann’s concept of society is no longer defined as being organized around a particular community but as an all-encompassing (world) system of communication (Makarovic, 2001:64). The issue of the power of politics in Luhmann’s argumentation is explained in a way that different sub-systems are not only self-referential, but also opened for references from their environments (i. e. other subsystems) and can form certain long-term links based on interdependence or structural coupling. According to Luhmann it is also possible to “translate” communication of one subsystem to the

communication of another, for instance by translating money to power and vice versa, power to law and vice versa etc.

However, as argued by Makarovic (2001:65), these arguments cannot fully explain the persisting segmental differentiation of the world political subsystem into regional organisations, national, regional and local governments. A general answer may be that territorial divisions produce relatively smaller units with smaller complexity which makes it easier for the units of the political subsystem to formulate and achieve certain collective goals (ibid). The existence of segmentary communities may help the political subsystem to intervene in co-ordination problems between parts of various functional subsystems (ibid). Therefore, the findings of this study suggest the need be aware of the existence of not only functional but also segmentary communities and their role in framing current goals of social care sector and social work practice in particular.

The analysis of this qualitative study suggests that in the current social care organizations the goals and organizational strategy are strongly influenced by managerial principles and economic considerations. Therefore, it is reasonable to talk about the economization of social care sector as a general trend. Schimank and Volkmann (2012: 43) mention economizing pressures as the stimulus for this process. They claim that economizing pressures are not just annoyances which have to be endured like so many others – these pressures are special in the sense that they deny intrinsic values associated with modernity and fundamental rights based on them. According to modern society's self-understanding, economic considerations should not dictate what is possible or impossible when serious concerns of health care, scientific knowledge production, artistic creativity, or education are at stake (ibid). However, the interviews showed that even social services, which are meant to serve most vulnerable members of the society are applying conditionality standards for their services.

The issue economization of modern society is also one of the points which have been strongly criticized in the Luhmann's theory of functionally differentiated

society. According to Luhmann, all sub-systems are equal and each of them is indispensable (Schimank and Volkmann, 2012: 43). Therefore, modern society is unthinkable without its legal system, or political system, or educational system, or science system, and none can be substituted by others (ibid). However, according to Schimank and Volkmann (2012: 43) it does not imply that none of them can dominate modern society. From their point of view, the economy sub-system, which emerged in the functional differentiation of modern society, has inherent dynamics, which bring about a permanent irresistible pressure on all other sub-systems to subordinate their performance to its functional needs and, as a consequence, to its massive negative externalities as well. The overview of the previous research and the results of this study show the increasing focus on service provision based on economic principles, which lead to a high accountability, work descriptions with the focus on service provision and with the lack or no focus on advocacy practices.

After the analysis of all these aspects and processes which are framing current social work practice it remains to mention that the development of the functionally differentiated modern society also caused the lack of unity in the current system, which makes it even more complicated for looking for holistic solutions for complex structural issues and social injustices. As it is stated by Beunen (2014: 67) problems of steering are simply unavoidable in a functionally differentiated society as each function system develops its own specific codes for making sense of itself and its environment. In this way they can only read signals from their environments, including signals from the political system or the legal system concerning regulation, in their own terms (ibid). Because of the incommensurability of system codes, there is a problem of 'communication', emanating from both regulating and regulated systems (ibid), which was especially visible when discussing current accountability mechanisms. Even though social workers expressed lack of understanding of the usefulness of current accountability standards or the regulations which they need to follow, they also felt unable to question the current system, in which they are working.

Finally, after the analysis of this quantitative study it can be claimed that social work commitment to social justice is facing major challenges in the current system. As it is stated by Romano (2015: 72), the idea of social justice requires adjustments to the prevailing social order, which in turn are difficult to change due to powerful forces in society that benefit from the status quo. At this point social work professionals have to choose either their work is dedicated to prevail social order or to persuade social change (ibid). The first option would mean the focus on clinical social work practices and the second the integration of the idea of social justice as an integral part of daily social work practices (ibid). However, the structural arrangements of the current social care system based on high collaboration with and dependence from the state as well as the application of management principles can be seen as major players in influencing the decision between focusing on clinical or critical social work.

IX. Research limitations

This qualitative study revealed various concerns about the current social care system in which social workers are working. All the findings and analysis were based on the information provided by the interview participants, educated social workers. In this way, the study can only provide the perspective of social work professionals and their point of view is a ground for understanding the processes in the current social care system. However, willing to have a broader picture about how the social work organizations are managed, what goals and priorities they have, the continuous research with managers or directors of social work organizations would be useful. As it was stressed by Mosley (2013: 232), in order to strengthen advocacy involvement, more needs to be known about the organizational context of advocacy, rather than just individual involvement. This includes constraints and motivations for nonprofit service providers, as well as issues such as recourse limitations and the role of government funding (ibid). Therefore, the further research with the managers of the social work organizations would contribute to further analyze what role the collaboration with state institutions plays in framing organizational strategy and inner politics. Having in mind that the previous literature and the findings from this qualitative study revealed that organizational priorities has a significant influence on the application of advocacy practices, the deeper analysis of these aspects could be especially useful.

Another aspect which was bringing me concerns from the beginning of the research preparation process, was the lack of possibility to include in the research social workers, who are actively involved in cause advocacy practices. Despite my continuous efforts to find such research participants, I have only found social workers who were partially involved in such activities. For a future research it would be a valuable information source, as it would give an insight about the ways to actively apply cause advocacy practices in current social work organizations. That means, it would help to analyze how the previously discussed challenges in a current social care system, could be overcome or new ways of

organizing social work could be developed. That could contribute for developing ways to integrate cause advocacy in a current social work practice.

X. Future perspectives

The awareness about current challenges in applying cause advocacy practices raise a question on how can the modern social work profession develop a ‘culture of advocacy’? (Willks, 2012:xi). There are different suggestions in the literature about the ways how to emphasize the focus on cause advocacy practices. Those suggestions cover both educational and practical levels of social work.

In the educational system Kam (2014: 733) suggests reframing the priorities of social work educational programs by giving greater emphasis on the history of social work, particularly the dual tradition of meeting individual needs and promoting social justice, in the course syllabus. According to him, the historical review of social work’s relationship to activism is helpful in strengthening social work students’ commitment to social reform. Moreover, educational programs should give a greater focus on developing the skills necessary for successfully carrying out advocacy initiatives. As research findings suggest current social work students have first of all lack of recognition of their role as advocate and then lack of knowledge base for such practices.

Concerning the practical application of advocacy practices, Kam (2014: 734) suggests that it is necessary to de-emphasize the needs or problems orientation and adopt a rights-based approach, which puts the clients’ rights at the centre of interest to help address issues of social inequality, discrimination, oppression and social injustice. He believes that this can lead to a sensitization of both social workers and clients for the problems present within the social environment as well as the policy implementation and political processes involved. Moreover, Kiselica and Robinson (2001) proposed ‘advocacy counselling’ as a new approach or new direction for counselling practice which requires counsellors to provide direct services to clients, complemented by indirect forms of help to confront social injustice and inequality, and helps to enrich the counsellors’ professional passion by re-discovering a personal imperative of initiating social activism and serving as an agent for social change. Finally, in order to improve political equality and

ultimately achieve meaningful social change we need to make sure that advocacy is focused firmly on the needs of clients and promoting political inclusion (Mosley, 2013: 232).

However, the application of these and other possible ideas is a major challenge, which needs to be addressed. In the current system of social care provision, with the emphasis on management and close collaboration with the state, there is a lack of proper settings for such initiatives. As it is expressed by AASW (2010:1): “Today’s struggles for sufficient services and quality on international standards is like Don Quichote fighting against the windmills of neoliberal developments and profit oriented approaches instead of improving standards of quality and human and social rights”. Therefore, it is important to have a holistic approach to this issue and to understand that policy intervention into or ‘reform’ of welfare issues is a complex process as it typically cuts across formally distinct but functionally interdependent policy areas or governance domains, each involving a multiplicity of public and private actors (Beunen, 2014: 67). As previously discussed the lack of holistic approach is particularly visible in current social work practice, which needs to be realized and approached by social work academics and professionals.

XI. Conclusion

The importance of advocacy practices is firmly stated in the ethical code of social work profession seeing it as a key instrument in implementing profession's fundamental principles of human rights and social justice as well as promoting empowerment of its clients. Advocacy is also seen as an important mechanism 'to allow social workers to address issues of rights and social justice and to support efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community' (IFSW 2000). However, despite the high appreciation of cause advocacy in social work profession, there is a growing awareness about the lack of actual adaptation of this approach in practice.

The analysis of this qualitative study has showed that the cause advocacy in a current social work practice is having a minor role, while case advocacy is more broadly applied among the professionals. Cause advocacy in a current practice do not have a ground of effective practice models and the social workers, even though being aware of structural injustices and the need for cause advocacy, are rather skeptical about the effectiveness of these activities and some of the interviewees do not even see it as a part of their professional activities.

Despite a passive involvement in cause advocacy practices, social workers have a significantly high awareness about the importance of cause advocacy in their professional practice as well as their commitment to representing the interests of their clients. These perceptions, however, are mixed with perceived limitations of their position and the perceived inability to approach broad structural issues.

The research analysis has showed that these perceptions as well as the lack of involvement in cause advocacy practices is related to the various organizational restrictions influenced by the professionalization of social work profession. The transformation of the welfare state and increased collaboration between the state and non-governmental social work organizations stimulated the emphasis on the professionalization of social work, which resulted in higher accountability,

narrowing profile of social workers as well as the application of the management principles. All these changes had a negative effect on application of cause advocacy practices. Higher accountability resulted to the higher bureaucracy and the lack of time for carrying out advocacy activities. At the same time the narrowing profile of social workers increased the focus on individual cases instead of collective interests and broader structural injustices. Moreover, the close collaboration and financial dependence from the state restrict social work organizations from making a strong stand in discussing structural injustices.

There is also a tendency that the continuous adaptation of managerial standards in social care sector has influenced economization of social care sector with the focus on efficiency, market orientation and customization. In relation to these processes, interviewees expressed the concerns about the increase in competitiveness among social care providers as well as higher conditionality for customers. There is also a risk that increased emphasis on economic factor of the provision of social services is reframing the nature of advocacy initiatives, which focus more on fundraising than social change. In these circumstances it is difficult to have a holistic approach to social issues as well as to look for sustainable solutions.

The application of Luhmann's theory of functionally differentiated society in this study provided a possibility to look deeper to the possible causes of these processes affecting social work practice. Luhmann's critique of the current system of the society, based on different functional subsystems the lack of unity in itself, was used to explain the existing issues in social work organizations. The research findings showed that current organizational arrangements stimulate social workers to concentrate on their function as social service providers and restrict the possibilities to have a holistic approach and to influence other sub-systems. Moreover, the idea about the dominance of the economic sub-system in a modern society, helps also to explain the increased focus on financial aspects in social service provision, which all in all lead to abandonment of the idea of social justice in every day social work practices.

The awareness about these macro level processes force to reconsider the goals and ideologies of current social work educational programs and social work organizations, which are the base for developing successful cause advocacy practices in social work organizations. Social workers' associations may be a driving force for approaching these issues of contemporary social work and influencing the change in educational programs as wells as social work practice, that the idea of social justice would not remain only ideology, but would become an integral part of modern social work practice.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

Interview guide

1. Could you tell shortly about yourself, in which organization you work, what occupation you have? What kind of organization it is (Financial sources)? What education you have?
2. how long are you working here?

Do they carry out advocacy and what kind of?

3. What are your responsibilities as a social worker in your organization? What social problems you usually face in your daily work?
4. Do you face situations in your job when you notice that structural issues (unjust or discriminatory legislation, inefficient institutions) are part of a client's problem?
5. How do you deal with those situations?
6. Do you have in your job description activities related to macro level social work?
7. Are there some activities, which you would like to include in your daily work or undertake it more often?
8. What prevents you from including/implementing those activities?
9. Are you occupied only with individual case work or also community work/ lobbying/ public campaigns?
10. If you carry out macro social work practices, what kind of practices it is? (Discussion rounds, working groups, media campaigns)?
11. What were the main goals of those actions? What did you try to achieve?
12. Do you feel the support from your organization for undertaking those activities?

Aspects influencing the current stage of social work advocacy practices

13. What challenges do you face in practicing these macro social work practices?
14. Does the fact that you are financed by the state influence your advocacy possibilities?
15. What stimulates/prevents you to be active in macro level social work?
16. What changes would help you to implement your advocacy activities more active/more effective?
17. How would you describe the term 'Social Justice'?
18. Do you think that the idea of social justice has a role in your everyday social work practices? If yes, what kind of role does it play?

The role of advocacy for social justice in social workers' educational program

19. Did you have the courses related to the idea of social justice during your degree studies?
20. Did you have courses related to the advocacy in social work practice?
21. Maybe you would have some additional comments or insights about this topic?

Appendix 2

The list of research participants

The participant	Organization	Target group	Occupation	Education
Interviewee A	Vinzi Haus Society, NGO	Homeless men	Social worker/ Team leader	MA in Social Work
Interviewee B	Frauen Service, NGO	Women in need	Social worker	BA in Social Work
Interviewee C	I.K.A, NGO	Drug addicted	Social worker	MA in Social Work
Interviewee D	Caritas, Haus Elisabeth, NGO	Homeless women with children	Social worker/ manager	BA in Social Work
Interviewee E	Caritas, Streetwork Division, NGO	Youth in Need	Social worker	MA in Social Work
Interviewee F	OMEGA, NGO	Asylum seekers and refugees	Social worker	Various social work educational programs
Interviewee G	Caritas, Social Support Division, NGO	People in extreme poverty	Social worker	BA in Social Work