Social work intervention against poverty in a relational perspective

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The social work commitment

ALICE SALOMON 1872-1948

JANE ADDAMS 1860 - 1935

Social Work in Italy
- 1946 - Tremezzo conference – the foundation years
- Gli anni ’60 e ’70 – politic commitment
- Gli anni ’80 – consolidation period

POVERTY

PRODUCT OF STRUCTURAL FACTORS AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL AND INTERSUBJECTIVES CONJUNCTURES

POVERTY

the needs arising from it can find little satisfaction in universalistic social interventions or in only monetary measures

POVERTY

- traditional poverty measurable in quantitative terms (lack of income, lack of housing, illiteracy, unemployment ...)


POVERTY
- growing impoverishment of the relational condition, a loss of sense that strongly call into question the connective tissue of civil society

POVERTY
- slipping into poverty of an increasingly large segments of the population (Families on descent Charitas Zancan report 2009) due to the economic crisis effects

CHALLENGES
- globalization
- neo-liberism
- managerialistic vision
- ..... but also
- rights claiming social movements

Systemic thinking
- address the poverty issue at several levels:
  - Macro: engagement in policy practice (national, regional, local)
  - Meso: interventions targeted at community activation
  - Micro: casework

Need to ....
retrieves a clear politically-oriented position and the professional realization of the social mandate:
* Presence in national debates,
* Claim a role in the poverty commission

At the meso level rediscover community work
engage, empower, enable and connect individuals and social actors, so they also will take charge of community problems, making experiences and managing projects involving formal services and informal networks
At the meso level rediscover community work

- a thorough understanding of the community in its critical issues and resources
  * an attentive and knowledgeable participation within the spaces formally defined (eg zone plans)

At the meso level rediscover community work

- creativity, innovation, support for alternative experiences (co-operation, micro-credit, self employment, solidarity purchase groups, food bank, development of “money” alternative circuit based on the exchange of performance ....)

But at the same time....

Need to work on individual situations with a professional and non-bureaucratic charitable approach

Poverty is often accompanied

With numerous other problems of different nature, so we're talking about multiproblematic families

Multiproblematic Families

Besides, living into a deprived and economically and culturally marginal area, the multi-problematic family presents some specific characteristics

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Besides living into a deprived and economically and culturally marginal area, the multi-problematic family presents some specific characteristics: bad working condition, underemployment, job not legally protected, income derived from illegal activities or social security benefits.
Multiproblematic Families
The adults are likely to have little education, poor professional skills and working instability.
The relationship the children have with the school is characterized by little motivation, misbehaviour and learning difficulties, together with a lack of interest of the parents in the problems experienced by their children;

Multiproblematic Families
The family experiences a strong social exclusion accompanied by a lack of cohesion into the familial system.
Each single member is inclined to find points of reference in people or groups that share their same organisation, language, and ways to attribute meanings and that refer frequently to values deviating from the norms of the social context;

Multiproblematic Families
The familial system seems to stand on foundations that are weak and basically unable to face new issues: every stage during the life cycle can generate a serious crisis needing of support from the outside;
The structure of the family is disorganized or under-organised due to the weakness and the difficulty in identifying precise functional roles (chaos);

Multiproblematic Families
The inner communicative styles are characterized by a poor propensity to listen with an inclination to react automatically and instinctively.
The relationship parents-children takes place within a situation where roles are confused and the intergenerational boundaries are blurred.
The children’s growth happens against a background of lack of care, poor stimuli and incoherent and confusing attitudes.

Multiproblematic Families
The handling of the familial ménage, in fact, is discontinuous and therefore there is not regularity in the familial life (meals, sleep etc.), nor guarantee of having the primary needs fulfilled with continuity.

Impoverishment
complex process that is not only linked to the lack of resources, in terms of income and employment, but also to
- Circumstances (illness, stressful events that produce disorientation and crisis)
- Permanent conditions (such as a disability)
Impoverishment

- Pay attention to the fact that material poverty often sits alongside relational poverty
- Receive and decode the deeper meaning of the request in relation to the context in which it is formed
- Avoid labeling, marginalization and produce chronic situations

Need to work with strategies that interrupt the chronicity

The intervention that respond to economic or material needs (home, work) should always be inserted into a larger project facing those aspects that help develop a more comprehensive change.

Relational poverties

Should be paid particular attention to these situations, even when not accompanied with material poverty, as they can be the first step toward lowering in difficult conditions than the total

Relational poverties

- Interventions aimed to provide support and clarification with respect to individual situations
- Planning of individualised projects

Relational poverties

- Socialization of needs by facilitating the emergence of self-help groups, accompanying them on their way (e.g. groups of women divorced, families with drug addiction or alcoholism, parents of handicapped people...)
Poverty arising from the current economic crisis
- The attention to situations of poverty arising from the current economic crisis is also crucial in a preventive logic. Often, despite the lack of resources, there is a break down of a person’s identity, his self-esteem, which as we have seen can lead to extreme acting out like the suicide.

Poverty arising from the current economic crisis
- The crisis intervention acquires a crucial importance for social work, as an opportunity to use the moment of destabilization and difficulties as a context where individuals are more receptive and willing to be helped.

Objectives:
- Alleviation of symptoms (confusion, helplessness) and the recovery of pre-crisis level of functioning,
- Understanding of the causes that led to the state of disequilibrium
- Identification of means that can improve the situation of the person and his family

Le nuove povertà e la crisi economica attuale
Necessità di attivarsi, anche in carenza di risorse economiche per accogliere ed accompagnare situazioni in difficoltà.