

S W D N

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In the context of social work, **institutionalization** refers to the process by which social work becomes a recognized and formalized profession within society.

Institutionalization refers to the process by which social work practices, norms, and structures become established and standardized within organizations and society.

This involves several key elements (structure of final essay SWDn4467):

- **Formal Education and Training**
- **Professional Organizations**
- **Standardization of Practices**

1) Formal Education and Training: Establishing accredited educational programs and professional training standards for social workers.

Social work education in the Czech Republic is based on European values of freedom and solidarity and an emphasis on human and civil rights. It is based on the concept of social work formulated by the International Federation of Social Workers. In the Czech Republic, there is the Association of Social Work Educators - a voluntary association of schools of social work.

The Association guarantees the quality of social work education by means of the Minimum Standard of Social Work Education in the areas: Philosophy and Ethics, Introduction to Sociological Theory, Psychology in Social Work, Theory and Methods of Social Work, Professional Practice, Supervision, Health and Illness, Methods and Techniques of Social Research, Law in Social Work, Social Policy, Social Norms and Risk Phenomena, Minority Groups.

2) Professional Organizations: Professional organizations play a crucial role in various fields by providing support, resources, and networking opportunities for their members. Here are a few key functions and benefits of professional organizations:

2.1) Networking: They offer platforms for professionals to connect, share knowledge, and collaborate on projects. In the Czech Republic, there are "networking" projects, for example in the field of social work with families, which is supposed to connect the state and non-profit sectors and create a community character of social work.

2.2) Professional Development: Many organizations provide training, certifications, and continuing education opportunities to help members stay current in their field. In the Czech Republic, social workers are obliged to participate in training appropriate to their professional focus (24 hours per year).

2.3) Advocacy: They often advocate for the interests of their members at the local, national, or international level. There are a number of organisations in the Czech Republic that try to organise social workers (including trade unions), but none of them is a dominant player, they do not work together.

2.4) Resources: Members typically have access to exclusive resources such as journals, research papers, and industry reports. The Association of Educators publishes the peer-reviewed journal Czech and Slovak Social Work.

2.5) Standards and Ethics: They help establish and maintain professional standards and ethical guidelines within the industry. The Association of Social Work Educators has adopted the international Code of Ethics to which the entire social work community subscribes.

3) Standardization of Practices: Developing standardized methods, procedures, and ethical codes to ensure consistent and effective practice across the field.

Standardization of practices refers to the process of developing and implementing uniform procedures and criteria within a specific field or industry. This ensures consistency, quality, and efficiency across different organizations and professionals. Here are some key aspects of standardization:

3.1) Consistency: Standardized practices ensure that tasks are performed in a consistent manner, reducing variability and improving reliability.

3.2) Quality Control: By adhering to established standards, organizations can maintain high-quality outputs and services.

3.3) Efficiency: Standardization often streamlines processes, reducing time and resources needed to complete tasks.

3.4) Compliance: It helps organizations comply with regulatory requirements and industry norms.

3.5) Training and Development: Standardized practices provide a clear framework for training new employees and developing existing staff.

3.6) Safety: In many industries, standardization is crucial for ensuring the safety of products, services, and procedures.

In the Czech Republic, there is a system of registration of social services, which are subject to a system of controls from the local to the ministerial level.

Social work

The definition of social work is fairly straight forward due to the International Definition of Social Work, it states that "Social work is a practice-based profession and academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and empowerment of people." (IFSW, 2024)

- Authors such as Payne (2020), Musil (2013), Bartlett (1970) and Biestek (1954) state that the primary concern of social work is the interactions between people and their social environment, and social work seeks to achieve a mutually acceptable response from the participants in the interaction.
- According to Payne (2020), a social worker's approach can be discussed from the moment he or she begins to carry out similar types of interaction with his or her clients in practice.
- Moreover, Navrátil (1998) defines a client as a person who enters into an interaction with a social worker. Thus, social workers pay attention to the client's interactions with their environment but also implement interactions with clients.
- Similarly, Payne (2006) and Hennessey (2011) emphasise that the essence of social work is the implementation of assistance in a network of interpersonal relationships, which can take a variety of forms, and the task of social work is to pay attention to those relationships that are (also potentially) problematic.

Social interaction is the process by which an individual or group interacts with another individual or group. This process can be verbal (e.g. conversation) or non-verbal (e.g. gesturing) and involves any form of encounter between people.

Interactions can be defined as the interaction of two or more actors, they are processes whose essence is the action of one actor on another actor, the "acting actor" can include individuals, groups of individuals, and parts of oneself, collectively, social interaction actors (Strmiska, 1996).

Institutionalization of Social Work and Self-awareness of Social Workers

In my experience, social workers at all stages of their careers repeatedly struggle to explain what social work is. It is not entirely obvious to social workers, what social work is, what it means to be a social worker, they are not clear about the subject matter interest (intervention), the boundaries with other helping professions. They have no problems talking about partial activities that they carry out; they have difficulty describing their objectives and meaning. This fact leads to ambiguity in the definition of social work both inside and outside the field.

I see it as problematic that **social work education is not helping social workers** to change this situation. It does not put enough emphasis on finding boundaries, addressing the questions "who am I", "what am I working towards", being aware of different aspects of oneself and one's (future) work. I believe that the consequence can be a difficult awareness of oneself, and therefore talking about oneself (also) as a "social worker". As a consequence, social workers then find it difficult to define their position in the system of helping professions, they do not sufficiently advocate for their interests, and they find it difficult to clearly define the nature and goals of their work and then pursue them.

Musil (2008, 2010, 2013) repeatedly draws attention to the **unclear, undefined, and undefined nature of social work** in the Czech Republic and thematizes these phenomena as a manifestation of the lack of "institutionalization of social work". The problem, according to Musil (2008), is that social work is something indistinct in the eyes of the lay and professional public, a set of routine administrative tasks or daily self-serving activities rather than a specific helping field whose workers know something better than other helpers.

These topics are also discussed abroad, where **the situation is not always clearly profiled**, as is evident, for example, in research on the roles of social workers in serious cases of child maltreatment (e.g. Turney, Platt, Selwyn & Farmer, 2011), where social workers found it difficult to define their roles in the life situations of their clients, and society's expectations of their role were also inconsistent. This is to point out that the discussion led by Musil and followers can be useful in a broader context, pointing out the specificities in the Czech Republic. Since my interest is in the field of social work education in the Czech Republic, I will draw on Musil's findings in this paper and focus on the context of social work in the Czech Republic.

Institutionalization refers to the process by which certain practices, norms, or behaviors become established and accepted as standard within an organization, social system, or society as a whole. This process involves the development and embedding of rules, procedures, and structures that guide and regulate human interactions and social roles.

According to Keller (1995), the consensus across disciplines and definitions is that institutions are considered the axis of any culture, as the basis of a specifically human way of dealing with survival problems, as an alternative to instincts. It is any generally practiced mode of action serving to fulfill of a real or fictitious need, i.e. established ways of acting, standardized ways of dealing problems of members of a particular culture or society (Keller, 1995).

According to Musil (2013), the institution of social work did not emerge in the Czech Republic during modernity and thus remains unclear. The process of recognising social work as a specialised profession, which took place in Czech society until the mid-20th century, was interrupted in the early 1950s by the abolition of vocational education in social work, jobs for social workers and the decline of the civic sector (Musil, 2010). Musil proposes that the formulation of social work as an institutional model in Czech society is derived from the idea of social work as helping to manage problematic interactions between people and their social environment. Establishing this model would enable people with interaction problems in different places and situations to routinely use the support of autonomously organised social workers - specialists in helping to manage problem interactions (Musil, 2013).

The process by which institutions are established is called **institutionalisation**. In the literature, it is conceptualized as the crystallization and reproduction of patterns of interaction (Jacobs, Hanrahan, 2005), the typification of habitualized activities (Berger, Luckmann, 1999), and the sedimentation of (selective) cultural patterns in the social environment (Sciortino, 2009). It is thus a process that directs patterns of interaction towards an established notion of them among members of society. In the case of this paper, patterns of helping social workers in the eyes of the lay and professional public.

On the **institutional grounding** of social work, Healy (2005) argues that it is important to pay attention to mutual expectations across different contexts, contexts that social work itself is part of and of which it is part. According to the author, for social work to be successful, there must be an evident understanding of how we, as social workers, work. Musil (2008) points to the need for social work protagonists to collaborate in order to create a unified, if perhaps differentiated, image of social work.

The literature suggests (Hall, Sarangi Slembrouck, 1999; Healy, 2005; Vlácil, 1996) that the establishment of institutions can be understood as a process consisting of the following elements: **identity - role - institution**. These elements do not simply proceed in a linear fashion, as I have suggested, but there is a reciprocal relationship between them interaction and influence. In the course of this interaction and influence, there is a generalisation and thus anticipation and reciprocity of individual characteristics and actions. Generalization takes place 'arbitrarily', but it can be organised and controlled, resulting in an institution.

For Musil (2013:64), in this sense, it is about "**clarification and acceptance of an abstract pattern**". In this context, he argues that it is crucial to focus on the 'cultivation' of the themes of 'social work identity' (see also Pertulla et al., 2009) and 'negotiating one's role as a social worker' in social work education. Institutionalization commonly takes place during the everyday activities, interactions of social workers within their practice, and identity and role are an essential part of this interaction (Healy, 2005), I suggest also in the interaction during self-experience.

The work on the identity and role of social work can be considered as **partial processes** of institutionalization of social work in view of the above.

The work on identity and the role of social work can be considered as **sub-processes** of the institutionalization of social work in view of what has been stated so far. If in the **self-experience**, attention is paid to the topics, sub-characteristics of the phenomena of the identity of social workers and the role of social workers are discussed, then the process of generalization of individual characteristics and expected actions is supported in the self-experience and thus the institution of social work is supported.

Institutionalization of Social Work and Supervision of Social Workers

According to Hennessey (2011), the task of **supervision** in social work is to enable social workers to recognise and work with a strong relationship between the intrapersonal and interpersonal factors of their work in the context of the social, legal, economic, political and cultural aspects of human lives, improving the quality of the individual's interaction with their environment.

- Havrdová (2008) states that the basis of supervision should be **dialogue**. Dialogue is supervision if its subject is the work situation, context and procedures, or the worker's relationship to the profession, clients or co-workers, and if its purpose is to surmount obstacles that hinder creativity, cooperation and high-quality performance (Havrdová, 2008).
- Hawkins and Shoet (2006) describe supervision through its main **three functions** as being developmental, resourcing and qualitative. The developmental function is about growing the skills, understanding and capacities of the supervisee. The resourcing function responds to the fact that workers are affected by the client's problems—workers react to them, and resourcing is a way to deal with these reactions. The qualitative part of supervision focuses on the quality of work with people. At the same time, the authors emphasise that in supervisions all three functions are combined.

- For Hawkins and Shoheit, supervision can also be divided **into individual, group and team** forms. In its individual form, the supervisor's attention is fully directed towards one person, the supervision process is clearer, more focused, easier to follow and sufficiently dynamic. In its group form, there is a wider range of responses to individual members of the group, the group can correct the supervisor and other members. During team supervision, relationships between individual team members, their position, their formal and informal roles, etc., come to the fore, and there is more focus on the work of the team as a whole (Hawkins and Shoheit, 2006).

Institutionalization of Social Work and Difficult Decisions of Social Workers

A natural part of social workers' work with clients are **difficult decisions** (Lipsky, 1980; Musil, 2004). As mentioned, for example, by Evans and Harris (2006) Papadaki and Papadaki (2008), Lemon et al. (2016), and Otava (2017), although dilemma theory has the potential to be relevant to social workers, it suffers from conceptual shortcomings. For the field of social work, for example, Payne (2020), Cheetham et al. (1992), or Kjørstad (2019) point out that there is still a noticeable lack of knowledge and models on the impact of social workers' interventions on clients' life situations. At the same time, there is a noticeable concern about the impossibility of their generalisation and transferability since social workers' approaches seem to be highly individualised with respect to the uniqueness of clients, the complexity of the problems of target groups, services, organisations, etc. (Kjørstad, 2019).

Cooper and Bowden (2006) also point out that social workers and clients must live with the consequences of difficult decision making. Acknowledging this is not a negative indicator of failure to meet expected outcomes, but it is a sign of professional maturity that indicates social workers have uncovered a superficial level of practice. Resolving such difficulties can only begin when social workers can define and name the tensions and dilemmas in practice, one of the most difficult parts of problem solving. I can therefore agree with the claims from Ash (2022) and Dohnalová & Trbola (2020) that dilemma analysis is complicated.

Musil (2004), drawing on Lipsky (1980), argues that social workers belong to a group of public service social workers who (i) come into regular and direct contact with citizens as part of their work, (ii) have a relatively high degree of autonomy, erudition, and responsibility in decision-making, and (iii) must cope with the uncertainty of the conditions of their work when providing services to clients.

At the same time, Musil and Nečasová (2008) formulated a hypothetical model of dilemma formation in which (1) incongruent working conditions and the ideal of social workers are at the beginning, on the basis of which (2) a conflict of expectations is subsequently constructed, and (3) by interpreting it, a difficult decision is made, (4) by accepting responsibility for the difficult decision, a dilemma is created, which social workers (5) try to manage in certain ways. Social workers find themselves on a balance beam when making decisions – the more they try to lean towards one, the more the elimination of the other increases, while the tension of ambiguity increases (Laan, 1998; Musil, 2004).

The dilemma is thus characterised by ambivalence in decision-making and corresponds to the social worker's inability to decide between two undesirable options (Banks & Williams, 2005; Musil, 2004). A typology associated with difficult decision-making was presented also by Ng et al. (2020), following the work of Paull et al. (2012) and even earlier by Darley and Latané (1968). They paid attention to the 'bystander's dilemma' and its social context. Attention was drawn to the question of how to explain the actions of employees who intervene after encountering workplace bullying and those who do not intervene or even join in with the perpetrator. Conceived in this way, the research topic corresponds to what Musil (2004) calls the 'dilemma of intervening or not intervening'.

3(+1) ways of dealing with dilemmas

Musil and Nečasová (2008) and Otava (2020) state that social workers try to manage dilemmas in three ways (= three mechanisms, as a realist evaluation would say), three ways of institutionalization of social worker's and organization's attitude.

The first is '**staying with the dilemma**', which is characterised by maintaining tension in the decision-making process and thus the apparent form of the dilemma.

The second is '**bypassing the dilemma**', which is characterised by displacing the tension in decision-making and hence the latent form of the dilemma.

The third is '**dilemma disturbance**', which is characterised by the removal of the dilemma and hence the absent form of the dilemma.

Staying with the dilemma

The mechanism of "staying with the dilemma" is characterized by maintaining ad hoc behavior with clients in accordance with the internal working condition (professional ideal) of the social worker, maintaining the discrepancy between the internal ideal and the external working conditions, and maintaining the experience of uncertain decision-making in manifest form.

Persistence can be distinguished in **two forms**.

- First, from what the authors Musil and Nečasová (2008), and Otava (2020) state, persistence can be established by idealizing the conflict associated with a difficult decision, where a negative experience is accepted as valuable with the absence of a tendency to change it.
- Second, according to the findings of Kjørstad (2005), persistence can be formulated by controlling the conflict associated with a difficult decision, where the negative experience is accepted as controllable and there is a tendency to control it. Kjørstad (2005) comments that social workers can make difficult decisions and react ad hoc spontaneously and intuitively to different people and situations. Their ideal is the art of combining normative and conventional morality, which provides a wide repertoire of situational solutions.

Getting around the dilemma

The mechanism of 'dilemma bypassing' is characterized by a change in dealing with clients in accordance with the change in the social worker's working conditions, maintaining the mismatch between the internal working condition and the external working condition, and pushing the experience of uncertain decision-making into a latent form (Musil and Nečasová, 2008; Otava, 2020).

Bypassing can be distinguished in two forms:

- Bypassing **modifications of the worker's internal ideal** is characterized by displacing the conflicting internal ideal by creating a modification of it compatible with the external working conditions, changing the treatment of clients in accordance with the modified ideal, maintaining the external working conditions and their conflict with the ideal, and pushing the experience of uncertain decision-making into a latent form.
- The circumvention of **modifications of the external working condition** is characterized by displacing the conflicting working condition by creating a modification of it compatible with the internal ideal, preserving the treatment of clients in accordance with the internal ideal, preserving the internal ideal and its conflict with the external working condition, displacing the experience of uncertain decision-making into a latent form.

Disturbing the dilemma

The "dilemma interruption" mechanism is characterized by acting with clients in a way that is consistent with the change in the social worker's working conditions, removing the mismatch between the internal working condition and the external working condition, and thus removing the experience of uncertain decision-making (Musil and Nečasová, 2008; Otava, 2020).

Disturbance can be distinguished in three forms:

- Disruption by **changing the internal ideal** is characterized by a change in dealing with clients according to the new ideal, removing the mismatch between the professional ideal and the working conditions by changing the original professional ideal and removing the experience of uncertain decision-making. Disruption by changing the ideal is a mechanism in which workers recognize the rules with which their beliefs conflict and make changes at their individual level.
- Disturbance by **changing external conditions** is characterized by maintaining client treatment, removing the incongruence of the professional ideal with external working conditions by changing the conditions, and removing the experience of uncertain decision making. Disruption by changing conflicting working conditions is a mechanism where social workers focus on the broader circumstances of clients' life situations and promote change at a non-individual level. Laan (1998) suggests that to change working conditions, social workers may need to change their ideal in order to maintain a more general ideal.
- Disruption by **changing the internal ideal and external conditions** is characterized by a change in dealing with clients according to the new ideal and new conditions, removing the mismatch between the professional internal ideal and external working conditions, changing the original ideal and original conditions, and removing the experience of uncertain decision-making. Disruption by changing external conditions and internal ideal is the mechanism by which social workers change their existing ideas and promote change at a non-individual level.

Escape from the dilemma

- Specific type of disturbing the dilemma.
- Using Morris's (1971) review of role conflict and Levinson's (1959) characterization of ways of handling role conflict, it can be said that there is also dilemma escape.
- According to Getzels and Gupta (1954), self-role conflict arises because there is never an absolute match between the expectations and conditions of the organization on the one hand and the personal values and needs of the worker in the organization on the other. The worker experiences a contradiction that Levinson (1959) calls the "role dilemma" and the worker's strategy may be to escape, typically behavior that leads to delegating responsibility to someone else or leaving the organization.

Indikátory zvládnání dilemat sociálními pracovníky ≡ Indikátory přístupu sociálních pracovníků ke klientům

pracovní podmínky	způsoby zvládnání dilemat		interakce v životní situaci	
nesourodost ideálu s dalšími podmínkami → obtížné rozhodnutí mezi dvěma možnostmi → prožitek nejistého rozhodování → dilema	Setrvání u dilematu	Idealizací obtíží	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě: a) zachování ideálu, b) zachování dalších podmínek, c) zachování nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) zachování a přijetím prožitku nejistého rozhodování zachování ≡ manifestní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku: a) zachovaného ideálu, b) zachovaných dalších podmínek, c) zachované nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) zachovaného prožitku nejistého rozhodování
		Kontrolou obtíží	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě: a) zachování ideálu, b) zachování dalších podmínek, c) zachování nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) ovládnání prožitku nejistého rozhodování zachování ≡ manifestní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku: a) zachovaného ideálu, b) zachovaných dalších podmínek, c) zachované nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) ovládnání prožitku nejistého rozhodování
	Obejití dilematu	Přehlížením vnitřní podmínky obtíží	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě: a) zachování ideálu jeho vytěsněním a vytvořením jeho modifikace, b) zachování dalších podmínek, c) vytěsnění nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) vytěsnění prožitku nejistého rozhodování vytěsnění ≡ latentní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku a) modifikovaného ideálu, b) zachovaných dalších podmínek, c) vytěsněné nesourodosti ideálu a dalších podmínek, d) vytěsněného prožitku nejistého rozhodování
		Přehlížením vnějších podmínky obtíží	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě: a) zachování ideálu, b) zachování další podmínky, jejich vytěsněním a vytvořením její modifikace c) vytěsnění nesourodosti ideálu s další podmínkou, d) vytěsnění prožitku nejistého rozhodování vytěsnění ≡ latentní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku a) zachovaného ideálu, b) modifikované další podmínky, c) vytěsněné nesourodosti ideálu a další podmínky, d) vytěsněného prožitku nejistého rozhodování
	Vyrušení dilematu	Transformace ideálu	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě: a) změna ideálu, b) zachování dalších podmínek, c) odstranění nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) odstranění prožitku nejistého rozhodování odstranění ≡ absentní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku a) zachovaného ideálu, b) změněných dalších podmínkách, c) odstraněné nesourodosti mezi ideálem a dalšími podmínkami, d) odstraněného prožitku nejistého rozhodování
		Transformace podmínek	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě: a) zachování ideálu, b) změna dalších podmínek, c) odstranění nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) odstranění prožitku nejistého rozhodování odstranění ≡ absentní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku: a) nového ideálu, b) zachovaných dalších podmínkách, c) odstraněné nesourodosti mezi ideálem a dalšími podmínkami, d) odstraněného prožitku nejistého rozhodování
		Transformace ideálu a transformace podmínek	jednání a jeho výsledek v podobě a) změna ideálu, b) změna dalších podmínek, c) odstranění nesourodosti ideálu s dalšími podmínkami, d) odstranění prožitku nejistého rozhodování odstranění ≡ absentní dilema	jednání s klienty a jeho výsledky v důsledku: a) nového ideálu, b) nových dalších podmínkách, c) odstraněné nesourodosti mezi ideálem a dalšími podmínkami, d) odstraněného prožitku nejistého rozhodování
		Únik od dilematu	únik ≡ delegování zodpovědnosti na jiného, odchod z organizace	bez jednání s klienty, změny v životní situaci vlivem absence interakce s odejvším / delegujícím sociálním pracovníkem