**NATIONAL REPORTS FOR OUTPUT 1.**

**Czech Republic (Zuzana Havrdová, Dana Hradcová, Pavla Povolná)**

1. **Introduction**

Socio-economic background

The political and socio-economic context of social work development in the Czech Republic is mainly a result of the country's transformation from the communist regime in 1989 into a liberal democracy. Nevertheless, many undemocratic residuals are remaining in the attitudes and expectations of the population. Details about the impact of these influences on social workers' motivation regarding participation and reflexivity are mentioned, for example, by Matoušek, Havrdová (2020) or Lejsal, Havrdová (2020). There were identified three obstacles to adopting and applying participatory approaches regarding reflexivity in the Czech Republic mentioned in these and also other publications (e. g. Bjelončíková et al., 2016). The tree obstacles are a still persistent closed, authoritative, stigmatizing approach to socially disadvantaged people in many segments of society, the experience of abuse or direct expropriation of "local knowledge" and participative initiatives for those in power (lack of empowerment due to participation) and lack of time, patience and openness for successful participatory projects.

Social work education

Social work has developed as an independent, minimum three-year post-secondary program, regulated by the minimal standards of education in social work developed by ASVSP. The ethos of empowerment and participation of social work clients, together with the emphasis on reflection, self-reflection, and reflexivity, began soon after the Velvet Revolution. They were implemented in the social workers' Code of Ethics, in their education, and by introducing supervision in social work. However, their application in practice faces several obstacles. At the academic level, the concept of reflexivity was associated primarily with the individual social worker, with the topics of his competencies in social work, professional development, self-reflection and supervision (Havrdová, 1997, Havrdová et al., 2008), as well as with the professional assessment of clients' social situation (Navrátil, 2014). The connection between reflexivity and participation in the literature emerges rarely.

Legal conditions

The minimum condition for participation is the level at which the participants are informed, which is generally related to the right to information. In some countries, participation in the decision-making regarding specific groups, such as community planning or decisions about care, is imposed by law. Unfortunately, in the Czech Republic, it is included in the law as a mere recommendation. The document, which can be relied on in the same way as in other countries, is the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. In the Charter, Article 17 affirms the State authority and local autonomous government bodies' obligation to appropriately provide information on their activities. Providing information to citizens is regulated by Act No. 106/1999 Coll. on Free Access to Information and Act No. 298/1992 Coll. about the local referendum. Act No. 128/2000 Coll. ensures citizens' legal participation concerning communities at the municipal level.

The Act on Social Services No. 108/2006 Coll. became crucial for participation. It resulted from empowerment and strengthening of the service users` rights, resulting from the long-term effort based on a broad participation of new graduates of social schools, non-profit sector's experts, social services users, pilot projects, and consultation activities in the late 1990s. Social services represent the environment of social work, which are the focus of this project. For this reason, the specified law is of particular importance to us. It has become the foundation of an achievable but far from the consistently accomplished quality of provided services and guarantee of good practice, especially concerning the individual and group social work (e. g. Štegmannová, Havrdová, 2010). Although it does not explicitly involve community work, it regulates some essential organizational management principles, recruits and trains new employees, and communicates with social services` applicants and their families. It also comprises the interdisciplinary development of individual user advancement plans. It has enacted the obligation to process medium-term plans to develop social services at the regional level and the possibility of their elaboration at the municipal level, including community planning principles. Specially community planning belongs to one of the principal opportunities for the participation of disadvantaged groups in the planning services, transport services and other aspects of life in the municipality. Unfortunately, in reality the community planning process is often distant from the principles emphasizing participation (e.g. Kubalčíková, Krchňavá, 2010).

For the health sector, the critical parts of legislation include the participation of health care services users through information transmission. Most legal norms of the Czech Republic reflect the wording of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being in connection with the application of biology and medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine - Act No. 96/2001 Coll., The so-called "convention". The "materialization" of the patient's right to information, and thus participation in health care, is reflected in particular in the provisions of Act No. 372/2011 Coll. on health services: in § 28 Informed consent and § 36 Pre-expressed wishes. Within health care, these two establishments are fundamental (perhaps the only) possibilities for patients` participation in their treatment from the legal perspective. Another expression of the will to actively participate in therapy, influence legislation and ensure the quality of services are represented by the existing patient organisations. Some of them are supported by grants from the Ministry of Health (https://pacientskeorganizace.mzcr.cz/index.php?pg=pacientske-organizace).

Impact of International academic perspective

The development and application of principles regarding the concepts of participation and reflexivity in the Czech Republic have been inspired by publications from abroad since the early 1990s. The texts have been translated, cited and summarised in social work textbooks, in the Journal of Czech Social Work and other academic publications, and on websites and publications issued by some non-profit organizations (eg. Social Housing Platform). Among the most cited authors regarding the topic of participation are Arnstein (1969, 2004), Wilcox (1994), White (1996), Anderson (1999), Croft and Beresford (2000), Beresdorf (2002), Löffler et al. (2008) and others. The resulting translations have many times inspired the methodological instructions and handbooks, and their ideas of participation were gradually transmitted into the practice of social work and distributed according to the interest of specific experts- particular areas of the community work, work with homeless people, people with mental illness. Only later they were brought in the somewhat sporadic research projects, to which we refer in the following paragraphs. Referring to the notions of reflection and reflexivity, the most cited authors are Schön (1983), Fook (2002), D'Cruz et al. (2007), and some others. However, the connection between the two concepts, reflexivity and participation, is rarely mentioned. Bjelončíková et al. (2016, p. 51) refer to reflexivity as the 5th dimension of participatory research, citing the following authors, Kindon, Pain & Kesby (2007) and Reasen & Bradbury (2013).

Hence, we can summarise that there is a gap between the understanding of concepts and methods of reflexivity and participation as well as their implementation in the context of the service users` involvement in the practice of social work and eventually its application in education participative research.

1. **The goal of the review**

The scoping review of professional literature in the Czech Republic aims to describe the current research regarding the approaches to participation and reflexivity in social work. The main emphasis is on the service users` involvement and the situation on the borderline of social work and health professions. We are inquiring if the current research and current knowledge of the field create specific tools for teaching the participatory approaches and supporting service users' reflexivity and involvement. The analysis will serve as the basis for a comparison with other countries involved in the project.

1. **Methodology**

A light variant of the scoping review described by Hilary Arksey & Lisa O'MalleyO'Malley (2005) was chosen. This method is suggesting proceeding in 5 stages. We worked according to the review guidelines sent by Christian Kroll. In the following paragraphs, we describe our decisions starting from stage 2 - How to identify the relevant studies and 3 How to select the relevant studies.

Our main intention was to create an overview of the academically relevant publications over the last five years, using participatory research and reflexivity on the cross-section of social work and other areas, such as community, health care and education. The manual analysis was performed on two critical professional journals, The Social Work / Sociálna práca and Forum sociální práce, for the period extending from 2015 till now. This step was primarily intended to capture research as well as authors who deal with the topic. It was followed by analysis via electronic search engines:

1. Search engine UKAŽ in the UK database, keywords "participation", "reflexivity", "participation and reflexivity", "user participation", "client participation AND social work participation"

2. Google search engine, keyword "participation", "reflexivity", "service users` participation", "client participation", "participation in social work"

3. The Google scholar search engine by entering the names of academics who had an article on participation or reflexivity in one previous step.

We approached the decision based on the specific, relevant publications based on the previous step's findings, after a manual analysis of the leading Czech professional journals of social work. Only two articles met the above criteria. Therefore, the search criteria were extended to all articles, studies, monographs and/or project reports. Principally, the names of authors involved in the researched area appeared on the university portals or found in the Google search engine. We selected and read all abstracts, often the entire articles or part of the text related to the participatory research in social work or social services and contributed to understanding the conditions of the participation or the method of participation indications and contraindications.

The summary included articles and diploma theses that provided an overview of the concepts of participation or reflexivity in an outline and that were examining the degree of involvement of social work's target groups and their decision-making concerning their lives (e. g. people with mental illness, children and youth in courts, children homes, etc.). The articles dealing with solely civic or political participation or community planning were not included. In the next step, we excluded those who did not have the character of participatory research in social work. All titles of the articles and annotations related to the topic of participation or reflexivity were read as well as the titles and contents of chapters of the books, methodological materials, manuals, and discussion papers that may have been related regardless of the date of issue. All relevant sources were copied and thoroughly studied. Due to their low number, we present them with their brief starting points, methodology and the most interesting findings.

1. **Results**

As we expected, while there is an interest in participation and its practical use that appeal to the experts in various fields of social work, few participatory research studies were found. Since 2016, we have identified five reports on research studies from academically relevant sources, which will be briefly described. Although we extended the analysis before the pre-set five-year span (2016-2020), we did not identify any research study that would meet our selection criteria prior to this period. Some of the research studies presented below were started before the observed period when they were published. We divided the reviews into three subgroups, according to the area in which the participatory research was primarily active, namely the ​​community work, the ​​work with homeless people, and ​​social work education.

We would like to stress that presented studies were conducted by teachers from two universities teaching social work, the University of Ostrava and Masaryk University in Brno. In the CR, there are currently 26 regular members of the Association of social work educators and seven non-regular members.

* 1. **The field of community work in socially excluded locality**

**Monograph in Czech: Monika Bjelončíková, Kateřina Glumbíková, Alice Gojová, Vendula Gojová (2016) published online at the University of Ostrava**

The participatory research design has been developed during the project SGS02/FSS/2015 (referred to in Bjelončíková et al., 2016). It has been developed gradually between February and August (2015) with the initial intention to analyze the needs of inhabitants in an excluded locality. The researchers, two academic teachers of the University of Ostrava from the Department of Social Work, took part in a preparatory phase of the community work project as initiators of social change. Soon, their project design had to modify because, besides the segregated group of mostly Roma inhabitants, another group of their neighbours voiced their interest to participate in discussion, negotiation and research in the neighbourhood. The academic researchers, along with the local people, identified several sources of their common frustration. The research team involved three parties, 1) the academic researchers, 2) Roma residents from the excluded locality and the neighbours of the excluded locality. It has had a changing number of members, three academic researchers and 3-6 locality members.

During the first stage of cooperation, the original goal ("analysis of the needs in the sphere of housing" has changed, and a new research question was formulated more broadly "How the inhabitants perceive their life in this neighbourhood". Four methods collected data -participatory observations, documents analysis, focus groups and questionnaires. The roles of academic researchers, summarized by the authors, were as facilitators, consultants and collaborators in a social change process where the research is only one part. (Participatory Action Research & Organizational Change) The combination of local and academic knowledge was found very useful. In this way, a process started in which academic participants' roles changed gradually and had many different shapes. It has sometimes become challenging to make discretion between them. **As the academic researchers were leaving their work in the community project, the main issue was establishing a more formal organization to get higher status and recognition in negotiations with other institutions and organizations, which was a sign of empowerment**. (Bjelončíková et al., 2016)

**The field of homeless people**

**The Scientific article in Czech - Eliška Černá, Lenka Polánková (2018) published in Czech in the *Journal Sociální práce/Sociálna práca* (Journal of Social Work)**

The authors describe processes and outcomes of emancipatory action research as a qualitative research strategy, whose aim was to find out what knowledge about "social housing "co-produce people with this experience and what action they initiate based on such knowledge. The study was realized from October 2016 to Mai 2017. As stated by the authors, the conceptual framework was established on concepts of housing exclusion and the theatre of the oppressed method. The authors also refer to the concept of critical thinking by Fook (2002) and Payne (2005), social critics by Finlay, Gough (2003) and critical awareness by D'Cruz et al. (2007). Critical reflexivity is understood by authors as an essential base of practice, leading from personal empowerment to collective empowerment and social change. The research question is: In what way does the theatre of the oppressed contribute to critical reflexivity as a way of epistemological approach to reality and critical practice development in social work? The participatory research design enabled people experiencing housing exclusion to act or engage as active spectators in a theatre performance.

Screenplays of theatre performance "Having a home means being housed!", realized in chosen three neighbourhoods by nine self-elected actors (people experiencing housing exclusion), four lecturers, one social worker and 20-30 participating spectators with the similar experience (targeted selection) were analyzed using grounded theory (Strauss, Corbin, 1999) with the central topic "Business with poverty". The discussions were also analyzed using discursive analysis. The analysis showed that within performances, several action strategies against business with poverty in flats were co-produced. The decision not to give up, solidarity and going public emerged as key topics of those strategies. The authors summarise that the theatre of the oppressed leads to **the development of critical awareness of oppressed people, the strengthening of voice of oppressed and new collective or political strategies in their life, and critical practice in social work.**

**The Scientific article in Czech – Kateřina Glumbiková, Barbora Gřundělová, Alice Gójova (2018)**

***Journal Gender a výzkum/Gender and Research***

The participative research goal was to analyze the intersectionality of oppression on single mothers living in an asylum house. The participative paradigm was chosen as particularly suitable for the issues of domination, oppression and alienation (citing Creswell at al, 2007), supporting trust between the researcher and people from the researched territory and bringing real insight, not only information about it. Another reason was that participatory research could bring empowerment to endangered groups and give them a voice. The researcher used cooperation with "communication partners" and two peer-researchers from the studied community. The peer-researchers were involved as team members in the role of consultants, participating in formulating the research questions, the strategy and the involvement of people from the target group. They also implemented some research techniques, such as interviews and data analysis (coding, field notes, reflection). A qualitative research design was used. It represented 33 interviews and six focus groups with three different groups of "communication partners", as the authors called the participants. One group involved mothers who stayed in diverse and ever-changing asylum houses (N=18); eight mothers left the asylum house. The third group was formed by five mothers who were already reintegrated into permanent housing within a maximum last 18 months. For data analysis, the authors used grounded theory by Kathy Charmaz (2003).

The authors point to **the amount of time, which must be devoted to developing such cooperation and appreciate that thanks to the peer researchers, they got a deep insight into the insiders' viewpoints** and a depth of contact that they would not be able to reach otherwise. The peer-researchers reflected on gaining **more profound** **awareness** of their situation and factors that influence their lives (in Bjelončíková et al.2016). The results, as formulated by the authors, show that "oppression is ever-present in the narratives of homeless mothers" and that “intersecting of various forms of oppression leads to disabled identities" ( Glumbikova et al., 2018, p.1).

**The field of social work education**

**The Scientific article in Czech – Frišaufová, Geregová (2018), published in the Journal *Sociální práce/Sociálna práca* and scientific article in English – Geregová, Frišaufová (2019), published in the *Journal of Social Work Education.***

Two published research studies focus on the participation of service users in the university social work education (Frišaufová, Geregová, 2018, Geregová, Frišaufov,2019). The first study, published in the Czech language in 2018, is part of the second study, published in English in 2019. Therefore, we shall mainly briefly refer to the second publication, which is available in English. Both studies were realized in the framework of a student's research scheme by a teacher and a research student at the social work department, Masaryk University. The authors explain their motivation to challenge the thesis, that "the users are experts on their problems "and that "the social worker must take their experience seriously", which may reflect dogma in education in social work in CR since the 90s. However, it is doubtful if it is also respected in reality. They wanted to see what happens if they take this thesis seriously and invite service users as experts into the classroom. The theoretical background forms the concept of "crisis of knowing "in the postmodern time, formulated, for example, by Rossiter (2000). Questions like "which authority decide what is the source of professional knowledge" or "what is a professional in social work and questions related to power and crisis of professional identity" are informing their research (Frišaufová & Geregová, 2018, p.85). The authors also mention the so-called meaningful involvement (Webber, Robinson, 2012) of service users in social work education. These ideas are followed in two volumes of the journal Social Work Education, dedicated to this topic, published in November 2016 and March 2017 by authors from the UK and Northern Ireland. The articles also discuss accreditation, which requires the users' participation in the social work programme (Fox, 2016; Haton, 2017; McLaughlin et al., 16). Lastly, the Special Interest Group at the European Social Work Research Association is mentioned, focusing on this topic.

The goal was formulated in the research question: "What are the limits and the benefits of expert by experience involvement in social work education in the particular course as perceived by all participants?" The research was based on the participatory research design. It was a two-year-long project on service users' participation in a Critical Social Work course at the Faculty of Social Studies, where both authors work. In 2016, three previous service users who have had a long-term experience of using illegal drugs and long-term experience of being clients of social work and other helping professions participated in three seminars attended by 24 social work students. In 2017, 22 students participated in the course, where four users with experience in various forms of homelessness also participated. In both cases, the teachers decided to call the users "experts".

The first two seminars were always devoted mainly to contacting "experts", who talked about their experiences and interacted with students. At the third seminar, groups of students presented recommendations for system changes or projects to help solve some of the experts' problems in the previous lessons. A discussion followed by immediate feedback on students` proposals from the experts, teachers, and each other. Afterwards, several focus groups attended by all the experts and most of the students focused on the research question. Those were recorded and analyzed as thematic analysis and interpretation of topics to answer the research question. Based on the research, conclusions for their education practice were drawn. The authors describe both limits and benefits in the involvement of "experts". The students stated that **the most novel findings had been gained thanks to the equal interaction with the "experts" because it challenged their stereotypes and prejudices. They learned participation by doing**. The risks were seen by authors, particularly in **unrecognized privileges on the part of students**, which may become a sort of difficulties in mutual communication among people with often very diverse social group. Good preparation of the classroom is needed to prevent similar problems.

1. **Collating the findings**

There is a great interest in the concept of participation. However, it is not usually associated with the notion of reflexivity, and there are no publications that would address it in the field of health and social services. In particular, healthcare work is strongly subjected to compliance with legislation, various regulations and methodologies. Simultaneously, the possibilities of participation do not explicitly appear in them, except for informed consent. In the development after 1990, the topic of participation began emerging from the end of the 1990s. The scholars' interest was primarily conceptual, and of practitioners, there was an interest in the principles of participation and know-how. Only in the past five years have the participatory research studies emerged. Most of their authors were from the University of Ostrava, some younger authors also from the Masaryk University. It is a tiny part given the number of social work schools in the Czech Republic.

According to the research findings, the benefits of participatory projects include expanding awareness and critical knowledge of the oppressed and disadvantaged people's social situation, giving a voice to them, and embodying a deeper empathy for people with different social experiences. The CR's chief barrier is a lower personal trust and openness, manifested by the low confidence of service users, who seem to be lacking respect for their knowledge and abilities to participate. The risk of misusing participation by those in power (disown local expertise and credibility of people) is high. The political, social and legal support of participatory approaches is missing, and the individual casework predominates in social work. There is also a barrier in personal policy and social services planning as participative projects require time and long-lasting relationship within communities. With less experience in participation in this territory, social workers are also missing the education and experience in participation themselves. Therefore, there is less readiness to apply it in their practice.