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Historical Research in Social Work – Theory and Practice

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Abstract

Historical research which is applied in social work is one of the methods to describe how and where social work started, how it developed during time and where it stands today. Results of historical studies can form blueprints for contemporary social services programs or models for community developments. The paper deals with two levels of historical research in social work. At first describes it at general, defines the term historiography, shows similarities and differences from other areas and methodological fundamentals. In the second part the paper offers a practical examples of these type of research. It presents a qualified knowledge of the history of social welfare and social work in Czech Republic.

Key words

Historical research, social work, content analysis, historiography, primary sources, secondary sources, Czech republic

Introduction

The past is a source of experience. Ignorance of the past or forgetting it means a loss of an inexpressible value. The folk wisdom say us: *“The nation which forgets its history is forced to repeat the same mistakes.”* Preceding generations have tried a lot of things. Through a historical research we have the chance to learn from their lives. However, we must keep in mind that not everything from preceding past can be used. If we keep historical memory, we can consider each new phenomenon, whether it has existed before and how it was solved. If we do not have this memory, then we are really doomed to repeat history. Following history of anything is informative, interesting as well as important and reasoned. Speaking of social work, it is inspiring for present generations of social workers, important for experts on the studied area and reasoned and to support social work profession.

Studying the history of social work resembles the activity of an explorer. The first stage in historical research is heuristics which more specifically means discovering, gathering and research of both historical sources and literature. It does not study the subject of its research immediately but through historical sources and literature, which is distinctive of the science of history. When selecting the topic and formulating the problem, historians rest upon their experience, present outcomes of their work, study of professional literature and source foundation as to the respective issue. The main role in heuristics belongs to techniques. Selection of techniques also depends on the combination of methods which the historian has decided to use in their work.

An investigator of history – historian – cannot be a direct witness and observer of the social events and processes being studied. There is a temporal and spatial span between the researcher and the subject of their study, and thus immediate observation is impossible, the

phenomenon or process under study cannot be turned into the subject of an experiment. The investigator's specific conditions of cognition are denoted as *mediated cognition*. An intermediary between the historian and the subject of their cognition, social process as an object and subject of cognition is sources providing authentic information about what happened in the past. "In concrete investigation practice, historians always base their cognition of the past on two basic sources – resource-based and non-resource sources." (Hroch et al., 1985: 198) Components of non-resource cognition include: investigator's personal experience, present outcomes of investigation of the science of history and outcomes of other sciences related to the topic under study. (Hroch et al., 1985)

Historical research builds on identification, analysis and interpretation of old texts. Constructing old texts is one of the functions of **hermeneutics**. It is a scientific method which seeks to understand a text and to interpret it to other people. When interpreting, it is important to know historical connections and the context of the text being under study. Only in this way it is possible to understand its parts.

Hermeneutics is distinguished by considerable plurality of conceptions and approaches. From the perspective of history, the most widespread is the **textual hermeneutics** which is closely related to the qualitative content hermeneutics and content analysis of documents.

When working with a text, it is essential to consider the motivation behind our interest exactly in the text being studied and interpreted. Pokorný (2006) for this motivation suggests a term taken over from German *foreknowledge* or *pre-understanding* which is a part of our history. Pre-understanding is rooted in the tradition enabling orientation in the natural world. For instance, if I want to keep bees and get honey, from historical construction I know that I need knowledge and skills which I can only gain through learning. For this purpose, I will buy a handbook on keeping bees. I do not know the content of the handbook; if I knew it, I would not have to buy the book. However, I have some foreknowledge of its importance for my practice, for my idea. Thus, foreknowledge is both motivation and the beginning of the work with a text. (Pokorný, 2006: 106-107)

What Is Generally Historical Research?

Historical research, sometimes referred to as historiography, means according to Berg (2012) investigation of elements from history. It is a specific type of scientific research work. According to Hendl (2005) is one of the basic approaches of qualitative research. Kerlinger (1972: 673) defines historical research as critical investigation of events, development and experiences of the past, careful consideration of past testimonies from the perspective of information sources validity and subsequent interpretation of the concerned testimonies. It differs from other scientific activities only by the subject matter which is hard to capture – the past – and especially by a difficult task of interpretation influenced by the nature of the unique subject matter. The term historiography comprises a description of methods which we need to do historical research. Collecting historical data is only one part of historiography. Historical research finds its use in various areas.

Historical Research Objective

The objective of historical research is to ascertain and describe history of any area of human activity, subject or event by means of scientific processes. For us to be able to ascertain history there must be a certain course on a time axis which the research subject has passed, so that we have something to study. The beginnings of the social work profession date back to the turn of the 19th and 20th century. The course of professional social work comprises more than 100 years on this fictional time axis. Thus, it also deserves attention of historical research aimed at giving an account of its history and process of development.

The main task of historical research is to gather all available information and sources as to a particular topic, and subsequently to classify, arrange, clarify, evaluate, elaborate and publish them by means of scientific methods. Upon studying literature about recording findings and thoughts, each investigator creates their own individual system of documenting as best suited to their needs. (Hroch et al., 1985)

A precondition for implementing historical research is verifying the ascertained facts, ensuring credibility of the statement in the text and ensuring the source reliability. For this purpose, M. Robynss (in Danto, 2008) created these general rules:

- Recognizing and determining divergences in different sources of information
- Recognizing and determining divergences at different researchers
- Identifying implicit conjectures
- Finding unclear or ambiguous statements or arguments
- Recognizing logical inconsistencies or ambiguities in argumentation
- Distinguishing between verified and unverified statements
- Determining the argument strength

The objective of historical research is globally to confirm, refute or complement findings stated in secondary sources. Given that primary documents are the necessary source of studies.

Application - Historical Research in Social Work

In historical research applied in social work we can find concordances with as well as differences from other fields of study. As opposed to other historical studies, a researcher searching for history of social work has to follow two lines simultaneously. The first of them observes social work practice on the level of work with clients in the context of social service functioning. The second line observes social work practice within society, putting emphasis on global aspects, culture, language and political context. (Danto, 2008)

The term of historiography in social work includes three basic elements:

1. ascertaining how the history of the academic discipline developed (formed) in various eras and different cultures
2. particular methods, techniques, approaches and instructions which researchers use to collect available materials with the aim of creating “*a defensible historical story*”
3. expert discussions with the aim of describing where social work originated, when it originated and what the situation of the today’s social work is. (Danto, 2008)

Danto (2008) describes the particular elements (parts) of historiography as follows:

The first part of historiography ascertains how the history of the academic discipline developed in various eras and different cultures. For example the term “*historiography of social work in the 60ies*” means (denotes) a summary of methodological approaches and ideas of social work history originated or used in the 60ies.

The second part of historiography consists of particular methods, techniques, approaches and manuals. Researchers use them to collect available archival materials with the aim of creating “*a defensible historical story*”.

The third part of historiography, actually the same way courageous as the other ones, follows principal discussions on when and where social work originated, what its today situation is and where it is heading.

Why Do We Do Historical Research in Social Work?

Historical research serves us for capturing historical facts on a scientific basis. The result of historical research is not an accidental and random summary of facts, data and findings as to

the history of a particular area, but it is a scientific image of actual past reality, its connections and regularities (Hroch et al., 1985).

The importance of history of social work is connected with the basic functions which this discipline fulfils. Kováčiková (2002: 86-87) defines three basic functions of history of social work:

1. ***Theoretical function of history of social work enables*** - mediating the results of its historical investigation to both professional and layman public, which subsequently leads to forming historical awareness of social work, recognizing the essence of social and social-political phenomena and their historical changes. Obtained findings become foundations for elaboration of concepts and theories in the present.
2. ***Educational-schooling function of history of social work is based on*** - the ability to monitor development tendencies of social phenomena, social policy, social care and social theory, the ability of historical thinking and evaluating social phenomena and events, the ability to understand the genesis of individual social phenomena and their solutions, sensitive perception of social phenomena and events in the community life, positive motivation for performing social work.
3. ***Pragmatic function emphasizes*** - that history of social work is a source of knowledge and experience which enable better understanding and comprehension of the current problems and at the same time avoiding mistakes and errors, that recognizing the historical development of social work is a precondition of one's professional self-understanding and identification with the profession, that social work, enriched through the knowledge of its historical roots, strengthens its positions by referring to its history.

Application of historical research in the field of social work is carried out for various reasons. Berg (2012) writes the following reasons:

- serves for revealing the unknown;
- answers questions which have not been answered yet;
- searches for events and relations in the past whose consequences reach up to present;
- it assesses activities by individuals, agencies and institutions in the past which have contributed to their today's success.

Generally, we can say that it serves for better understanding the culture of our forefathers. Likewise Kerlinger (1972: 675) explains why historiography is vitally important for all social sciences and for political formulations:

1. because all data used in social sciences are taken over from records, experiences or evidences from the past;
2. because all policies respecting human issues include interpretation of the past or conjectures as to it;
3. because all those who work in social sciences are people at a time, in a particular place and with particular experience; their thinking is subject to and determined by historical circumstances of their lives.

Findings identified by means of historical research can enlarge and enrich the existing published materials, which is useful for further study and research work. (Danto, 2008) shows, what results of historical research in social work can be useful:

- providing examples for current programmes of social services
- providing models for community development
- they can influence direct work with individuals or families (history provides guidance for the present)
- providing a new evaluation strategy
- offering understanding of social work as a profession from various dimensions

- enhancing respect of social work and social workers

History of social work consists of a system of scientific findings obtained through exploring and clarifying the development of theory and practice of social care, social institutions, social welfare, social work and their development tendencies in particular historical periods. (Kováčiková, 2002)

Data sources in historical research

Historical research rests on identification, analysis and interpretation of old texts. Dividing data sources in historical research found different for different authors. The content, however, overlap. For example Danto (2008) are divided them into four types.

1. primary sources (these are original documents found in archives)
2. secondary sources (works by other authors writing about history)
3. official records (official records from various institutions, case reports)
4. private materials (chronicles, autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, records of oral history)

In general materials of historical content are as a rule divided into *sources of primary character and sources of secondary character*, whereas the dividing factor is the fact whether the document author is a direct witness of the historical event or whether the author merely offers a description of the events so-called “at second hand”. Materials of primary character originate in the times which they deal with. They embrace authentic information and pieces of knowledge about the times, events and facts which are in terms of time closest to them. Secondary sources have a complementary function, they originate with a time span after the described times, events or facts.

Author of primary document according to Hendl (2005) is a direct participant in the event or is in a close relation to it. **Secondary documents** denote sources created using primary documents. (Hendl, 2005) Danto (2008) classes dictionaries, encyclopaedias, biographies, obituaries, bibliographies, articles and books which interpret other research with them.

Flick (2009) mentions **tertiary documents** used to find other documents. Their example can be inventory lists in archives or catalogue lists in libraries. As a rule, these sources are not given in the final list of used literature.

Primary sources are crucial for historical research. Kerlinger (1972) emphasized the rule: **Always use primary sources, if it is possible!** However, it is necessary to realize that basic pieces of knowledge not always obvious within primary sources are often conveyed only through secondary sources.

To find and assess primary materials which are crucial for historical research, researchers need for their detective work the basic skills: logics, persistence, intuition and “the sixth sense”. (Denzin and Lincoln in Danto, 2008)

Danto (2008) in a simplified way says that these three categories are the source of knowledge:

- what has been written
- what has been said
- what is physically tangible.

While facts and artefacts raise the credit (recognition) a historical piece of work. (Danto, 2008)

A part of research must also include ensuring reliability and validity. Kerlinger (1972) states two rules of historiography, denoting them as an external and internal critique. He considers it essential to submit the documents under study to these types critique.

- **Submitting documents to external critique** from the perspective of their validity. Is the document true? Was it really written by Mr. XY?

- **Submitting documents to internal critique** from the perspective of the content and its meaning. Do the conveyed data transmit historical facts accurately?

The terms of external and internal critique, as means of *historical research evaluation*, are also addressed by Fraenkel and Wallen (1993). External critique refers to the authenticity of documents used by the author as the exploration subject in the research. The following examples of questions assessing historical sources are given – Who was the document written by? Did the author live in the time when it was created? What purpose was the document written for? Where, when was the document written? Internal critique concentrates on ascertaining whether the documents under study are original, whether the document content is accurate and apposite, whether it corresponds with the historical events.

Historical Research Methodology

Historical research is a specific type of qualitative research, so the workflow contains the following methodological elements: problem definition, formulation of examinable hypotheses or research questions, variables definition, collecting historical data, analyzing historical data and interpreting findings. Individual elements are made under general phases of historical research.

General stages of historical research:

- Defining the research issue, formulating research questions or hypotheses
- Ascertaining the state of the issue under study in secondary sources
- Identifying and localizing relevant materials of primary character
- Applying a research technique relevant to the topic of historical research
- Evaluating the historical research, interpreting and publishing the findings.

Based on the selected research objectives select an appropriate research strategy. In historical research, qualitative research strategy, quantitative research strategy or their combination can be applied.

The most prominent methods to be used by historians at work are induction and deduction. **Induction** is a method of empirical study of phenomena, proceeding gradually from individual facts to more general data as to the issue under study. **Deduction** is a way of creating scientific generalization where the final assertion is deduced from one assertion or more assertions using rules of formal logics. Both methods are often interconnected.

The next step is the selection of appropriate research techniques. Content analysis belongs to the most frequently applied research techniques in historical research. According to the objective of the scientific research work, content analysis can be then applied within either quantitative or qualitative research strategy. The first condition of applying content analysis is gathering relevant documents to be analyzed.

According to Plichtová (1996), content analysis includes a very wide range of partial methods and procedures used to analyze any text document.

Plichtová (1996) states two possible approaches to content analysis – **a theoretical and a descriptive approach**, while considering a combination of both approaches as ideal. The theoretical approach is based on theoretical thinking and the descriptive approach rests upon the analyzed data.

The theoretical approach by Plichtová (1996), characterized by an a priori selection of theoretical categories, enables us to form the basic structure of the work. The investigator deduces theoretical categories through analytical deduction based on theoretical conceptions. Theoretically deduced construed categories of content analysis ensure theoretical relevance of the analysis. Verifying theoretical categories by means of concrete data enhances their

empirical relevance. Theoretical approach is more suitable to verify presently existing theories and thus it resembles the methodology of quantitative research strategy.

Through the descriptive approach by Plichtová (1996) subcategories (to the theoretical categories) as notes to the text are inductively created, which allows us to follow the text under study at the maximum. The subcategories correspond with the most significant topics which appear in each theoretical category identified within the theoretical approach. Qualitative findings serve for understanding the phenomena being explored. Descriptive approach does not exclude ex post theoretical conclusion, as Plichtová (1996) notes. Descriptive approach is more suitable to create new theories and thus it resembles the methodology of qualitative research strategy.

Plichtová (1996) and Miovský (2006) divides the general approach at applying content analysis into several stages.

1. **Defining, identifying and localizing suitable documents** in relation to the topic of the intended content analysis
2. **Data gathering** (transcription into written form), their classification
3. Defining the basic units, **creating a system of categories** (the system of categories is different for theoretical and descriptive approach). The categories must be formed so that they are in line with the research objective and the analyzed texts, i.e. they must be appropriate.
4. Allocating specific parts of text to codes, so-called **coding**. Coding is a process of identifying and systematic designation of semantic units according to criteria determined beforehand. Codes most often in the form of category abbreviations (initial letters or symbols), facilitate the investigator's orientation in the coding system.
5. **Archiving coded data** – maintaining a homogenous database (in paper or electronic form)
6. **Data analysis**, data interconnecting and complementing – extending the existing data and setting them into contextual relations, which makes the analysis more precise. It is possible to interconnect data either chronologically or by topics.
7. **Interpretation of results, verification, final report, publishing.**

A necessary part of the historical research is planting the findings in the wider context of the period in which they were published. Reflect the level of understanding of the studied phenomenon or problem at a certain time, peculiarities in the territory, in a particular area, we take into account the status of described problem or phenomenon in the context of social order, looking for the context, interaction and developmental influences. We talk about **contextualization**. For example, if we describe the methods of social work in the specified time, we must not forget to take into account the level of knowledge in the field of social work methods, which was achieved in the period under review.

The final stage of historical research is dedicated to validation. The researcher uses **triangulation** – verification of the research conclusions deduced from multiple data obtained by different methods. In case of applying qualitative research strategy, it is possible to confront the research conclusions with the respondents themselves. Hendl (2005) understands **triangulation** as a combination of various methods, various researchers, various groups or people, various spatio-temporal and theoretical perspectives.

Denzin (in Hendl, 2005) distinguishes three basic types of triangulation:

1. **Data triangulation** – combining various data sources
2. **Researchers' triangulation** – deploying more interviewers and observers
3. **Methodology triangulation** – combining within a single method or combining among more methods

More often is used form of methodological triangulation (compare Bednářková, 2006 and Špiláčková, 2011).

Limits of Historical Research in Social Work

According to Kerlinger (1972) the biggest mistake in historiography is using a secondary source if it is possible for the researcher to use a primary source.

In the study of history is necessary to take into account circumstances that are crucial for understanding the past. These are questions about the context of other cultures, other communities, issues of knowledge structure influenced by the researcher, taking into account issues of location and timing for the study area and, finally, the research questions Individual and group competencies. These circumstances affect the construction of findings depending on the extent to which we allow for them in the research. (Danto, 2008)

Limits in the practical sense:

- More difficult identification of primary sources – the material title does not correspond with its content
- Unavailability of primary sources – it is impossible to localise the source, the document is still hidden, has not been registered, has been filed into a wrong cardboard, has not been stated in the inventory list
- Impossibility to put the findings through triangulation (methodological, of data) – the contemporary witnesses are not alive, there is no other source of information as to the given issue
- Primary documents do not contain the declared content – the content is in divergence form the document title

If often happens that during their work researchers come across documents which have no connection with the issue under study at all, which, however, are very unique and have not been published yet. An output can a take shape of keeping the new information for further processing, recording the document title and the exact place of its location.

Examples of Historical Research in Social Work in the Czech Republic

Finding out if what extent is currently in the Czech Republic used historical research in social work is not yet qualified documented. Thus, as examples already made researches include academic theses successfully defended at the Medico-Social Faculty, today the Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Ostrava. Findings of these pieces of work are stones of a very large mosaic of the social work history. It will still take a long time before we are able to see its whole picture.

The first master thesis with historical character of the then Health and Social Care University of Ostrava is the work of Eva Matúšů (2000) entitled *Social policy of the company Baťa in 20th-40th 20th century*. The author describes with basis of the original material from the archive Svit system of social policy of the company Baťa in Zlin. The author concludes that social policy of the company Baťa at that time significantly complement the general socio-political measures of our republic and flexibly respond to the current needs of the population. By this contributed to a change in lifestyles and the development of the whole region.

The following work is a description of life and work of Marie Krakešová with name *Marie Krakešová and her importance for contemporary conception of social work* (Číhalová, 2005). It provides a complex view of Marie Krakešová's theoretical approach - her psychological educational social therapy. The emphasis is put to aspects in conception of Marie Krakešová comparable with contemporary conception of social work.

In historical work called *History of Social Planning in Ostrava* its author (Bednářková, 2006) dealt with the topic of social planning in Ostrava focusing on the 70ies and 80ies of the 20th century. It describes the historical development of social care and methods of social work

used in Ostrava. The work is mainly based on studies of primary sources from the Ostrava City Archive, applying the method of data collection in socio-scientific research. Methodological triangulation is ensured by interviews with contemporary witnesses and direct participants of care for the given target group. The work deals with five selected target groups resting on the structure of the Concept of Social Policy of the National Committee of the Town of Ostrava from 1973. They are social care for elderly citizens, care for people with changed work abilities, further social care for family, children and young people, social care for socially maladjusted citizens and social care for citizens of Gipsy origin. The outcome of the historical research is a comprehensive description of social care in Ostrava. Whole new systems of care were formed, such as care for socially maladjusted citizens or care for Romany citizens, new methods of social work were applied, new establishments, at that time absolutely unique within the country, were founded.

Dissertation by Špiláčková (2011) deals with the topic of *Social Planning in Czechoslovakia in the 70ies and 80ies of the 20th Century*. It describes the historical development of social care including social services and identifies applied methods of social work based on scientific procedures and using relevant research strategies. Methodologically, the work is based on historical research, which is a specific type of scientific research dealing with history. Primary and secondary sources of written character deposited in the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs in Prague are the subject of this research, which the author studied applying the technique of content analysis. For the purpose of triangulation the text is supplemented by answers to questions prepared beforehand, provided by direct participants of social care and employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic in the 70ies and 80ies of the 20th century. It keeps the original terminology to illustrate the historical background and to trace the used materials. The outcome of the historical work is an all-embracing description of social care in Czechoslovakia in the monitored period, including identification of the applied methods of social work.

Diploma thesis by Hrubá (2012) called *History of Social Care for People Released from Serving Prison Sentence Focusing on the Region of Ostrava and the Surroundings* globally surveys the development of social care for adults released from serving prison sentence, identifies the subjects which in the past provided this care and which participated in this care. Historical development of social care and methods of social care are described on the national level, with regard to the development in the region of Ostrava and the surroundings. To meet the objective, the method of historical research was applied. Primary sources were drawn from the Regional Archive in Opava and subordinate district archives.

Diploma thesis by Krejčová (2012) called *History of Social Care for Mentally Ill People in Czechoslovakia in the 20th Century* deals with the development of social care in Czech lands from the beginning of the 20th century and that is particularly in relation to mentally ill people. In the introduction of the work the specific features of this target group are defined, followed by the contemporary view of people affected by a mental illness in different eras from the ancient times and the “care” granted to them. Care on the part of the state, the local self-government is described, and primarily the care traditionally provided in institutional facilities, initially in so-called Regional Insane Asylums, later called Psychiatric Hospitals. It tries to capture the functioning and extent of social-health care on the part of the local self-government and voluntary organizations active in care for this target group. Methodologically, the work applies methods of historical research. Primary sources were mainly drawn from the Ostrava City Archive and the District State Archive of Frýdek-Místek. Secondary sources were found in the resources of the Moravia-Silesian Research Library in Ostrava.

Diploma thesis by Kalvarová (2012) deals with the topic of *History of Social Care for Children, Young People and Family in the Region of Opava*. The author depicts the development of social care for children, young people and family in the region of Opava in the years 1918-1954, giving an account of the used methods of social work, analyzing establishments providing social care for the target group of children, young people and family, based on studies of primary sources relevant to this topic from the District State Archive of Opava. To obtain the information, the method of historical research was applied.

Historical development of social care for Romany citizens in the period from the end of the World War II until the first half of the 80ies of the 20th century in the then Czechoslovakia, specifically in the territory of the city of Ostrava is to be found in work by Blahutová (2012), called *History of Social Care for Citizens of Romany Ethnicity in the Territory of the City of Ostrava*. Also here the author used the method of historical research and the research object was primary documents located in the Ostrava City Archive.

Bachelor thesis by Zapletalová (2012) *Historical View on the Development of Social Care for Seniors in Frýdek-Místek in the 20th Century* deals with a description of historical development of social care for seniors in the course of the 20th century, specifically in the town of Frýdek-Místek. It rests on studies of archival documents from the District State Archive of Frýdek-Místek. The outcome is a description of social care and social services for seniors in the town in the 20th century, capturing the direction and development trends in care for this target group and describing particular institutions which were founded during the years.

This is a brief overview of the work with historical character. Sad news is, that above mentioned work has not been throughout your content published. Which I consider as a great harm. A further challenge is focused at students and academics to be more interested in the history of his field and by a realized research was to contribute to increasing knowledge about the development of social work. The above text may be used as basic guideline for the realization of historical research.

Conclusion

Findings ascertained by historical research can confirm, refute or enrich information from secondary sources. And this can be a springboard for further studies and scientific work. History of social work is a source of experience and knowledge which enable the present generation to get to know historical successes or to understand occurring problems. At the same time, based on published findings from the past, we can avoid mistakes at present, as “*history repeats itself*”.

A specific type of scientific research work dealing with history is historiography. General stages of historical research consist in defining and formulating the research issue or research questions, subsequently ascertaining the state of the issue under study in secondary sources, identifying and localizing relevant materials, applying a research technique and finally evaluating the historical research, interpreting and publishing the ascertained findings. A necessary part of interpretation is planting the findings in the context of the period in which they were published. Historical awareness of social work of both professional and layman public is formed by mediating the results of historical research through publishing them. A unique research object is historical materials of primary and secondary character. The dividing factor is the fact whether the document author is a direct witness of the historical event or whether the author merely offers a description of the events so-called “at second hand”. Materials of primary character originate in the time which they deal with. They embrace authentic information and pieces of knowledge about the time, events and facts which are in terms of time closest to them. Secondary sources have a complementary function, they originate with a time span after the described event, phenomenon or fact. The

method used most frequently to obtain them is content analysis. According to the objective of the scientific research work, content analysis can be applied within either quantitative or qualitative research strategy. Research focusing on the genesis of social work is well-founded. It is a way of obtaining necessary knowledge to understand the development and progress of historical facts and processes. It concentrates on “blank spots” in the history of social work which have been described insufficiently or have not been described at all. Through the knowledge of its history and historical roots, social work consolidates its position.

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