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The Role of Specific University Research in Development of Social Work in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

Based on the current legislation of the Czech Republic, specific university research is research which is carried out by students in doctoral or master's study programmes and is directly connected with their education. In the Czech Republic, this type of research is part of the national strategy for science and research development, it is supported by the state budget and contributes to creation of conditions for increasing and improving the quality of the scientific-research potential of the Czech Republic. Specific research plays an important role in development of social work – it supports the ongoing discussion on the specifics of research in social work and provides opportunities for application of research skills necessary for social work practice. The aim of this paper is to introduce terminological, legislative, social and economic aspects of specific university research in the Czech Republic and to outline possibilities of its use in relation to research and education in social work. Using an example of an implemented research project, selected features of this type of research with a focus on research didactics are illustrated.

Key words

Specific research, social work, education

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to introduce terminological, legislative, social and economic aspects of specific university research in the Czech Republic and to point to possibilities of its use in relation to research and education in social work.

Specific university research (abbreviated as “specific research”) is in the Czech Republic defined by the Act on Support of Research, Experimental Development and Innovations as “*research which is done by students when implementing accredited doctoral or master’s study programmes and which is directly connected with their education.*”¹ Under this Act, investigator of a student project is either a student of a doctoral degree programme or an academic worker, other members of the research team are students of a doctoral or master’s degree programme or academic, scientific, research or development workers. The number of students of a doctoral or master’s degree programme in the research team is at least equal to the number of other members of the research team. (Pravidla, 2013–2014)

The paper rests on propositions by author Gojová: “*To be able to respond to the changing conditions in society, social work needs its own research activity*”. (Gojová, sec. cit. Bajer, 2010: 5) According to the author, in the Czech Republic “*in the field of research on social work, there is still a lot of leeway, there is a lack of qualified social workers-researchers, sufficient discussion on the specifics of research in social work [...] is missing and in practice, there are not enough opportunities to apply research skills.*” (Gojová, sec. cit. Bajer 2010: 5) To a large extent, these are probably consequences of the still low number of graduates of doctoral programmes in social work as a successor generation of the present pedagogues-researchers of middle and older age.² A share in this condition can be presumably attributed to the current level of research education applied in social work, too. Specific university research, as discussed below, includes two key aspects – research and pedagogical, therefore it can be considered as one of the potential means how to increase the number of qualified social workers-researchers and educators-researchers.

Social, Economic and Legislative Contexts of Specific Research in the Czech Republic

The current form of specific research in the Czech Republic has undergone several stages of development. After 1989, science and research in the Czech Republic experienced numerous changes resulting from the transition from a totalitarian political system with state-planned economy to a democratic society with market economy. At the end of the nineties of the last century “*signs of certain stagnation, aversion to changes aimed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of science and research began to appear in the Czech Republic.*” (Národní, 2000) Young researchers and researchers of middle age went abroad where they had significantly better conditions for development of their scientific potential and, as a rule, incomparably better financial conditions. Top scientists from abroad did not come to the Czech Republic for the same reasons. Over time, (not only) due to the outflow of scientists and underperformance of Czech science as such, the position of Czech economy worsened

¹Act No. 130/2002 Coll., on Support of Research, Experimental Development and Innovations from Public Funds and on Amendments to Some Related Acts (the Act on Support of Research, Experimental Development and Innovations), in the wording of Act No. 110/2009 Coll., Sec. 3 Art. 2 letter c)

² This situation is directly related to historical development of social work in the Czech Republic. As for history of social work in the Czech Republic, see e.g. Chytil 2002, Špiláčková, 2014 etc.

within the European area as regards competitiveness of industrial branches.³ This situation prompted the political representation of the Czech Republic to create a national strategy for development of science and research which was non-existent in the Czech Republic until 2000.⁴

In the government document of the National Research and Development Policy of the Czech Republic from the year 2000, the main objective of science and research policy was declared: *“to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of science and research of the Czech Republic, to ensure flexible recovery of their capacities, including development of human potential acting in them and to involve these resources in solving prospective needs of citizens, the society and economy of the Czech Republic.”* (Národní, 2000) The document highlighted very close and important links of science and research to education: *“University education, especially in masters, doctoral and postgraduate programmes is unthinkable outside the environment of active involvement in science and research.”* (Národní, 2000) Two years later, the so-called specific research at universities with institutional financial support was regulated by legislation.⁵ However, the scientific potential in the Czech Republic did not change much until the half of the first decade of this century. The National Research and Development Policy of the Czech Republic for the years 2004-2008 stated a situation characterized by *“a relatively high average age of workers in research and development, and absence of not only young but particularly high-quality middle generation. [...] In order to develop human resources for the research and development field, it is also necessary to fully utilize the capacity of universities [...] to win more students for research, primarily by increasing financial motivation, and facilitating student mobility.”* (Národní, 2004: 7–8)

The situation of science and research in the Czech Republic continues to develop rather less-than-ideally. The current government document of the National Research, Development and Innovations Policy in the Czech Republic for the years 2009-2015 says in this regard: *“Although the number of university students and graduates, including doctoral studies, in the Czech Republic is growing, as compared to most European countries, it is still low. [...] The skills of graduates often do not meet the expectations of the application sphere, graduates lack independence necessary for problem solving and sufficient flexibility.”* (Národní, 2009: 25) Therefore, key priorities of the current strategy include *“ensuring a sufficient number of quality researcher workers and quality university graduates.”* (Národní, 2009: 24)

A change in funding of research “in which students participate” has become one of the tools for achieving this goal. It consists in a move from institutional support to targeted support and in a newly determined definition of this type of research. While the original act from 2002 defined “specific research at universities” as “part of research at university which is directly related to education and in which students are involved”⁶, the amended Act from 2009 defines “specific university research” as “research which is done by students when

³ A reduced performance of the state economy is subsequently reflected in the social field.

⁴ Although already from 1992, there was legislation for supporting science and research in the form of Act No. 300/1992 Coll., on State Support to Research and Development.

⁵ By Act No. 130/2002 Coll., on Support of Research and Development from Public Funds and on Amendments to Some Related Acts (the Act on Support of Research and Development) of 14.03.2002.

⁶ Sec. 3, Art. 1, letter b) point 2 of the original Act No. 130/2002 Coll., on Support of Research and Development.

implementing accredited doctoral or master's study programmes and which is directly connected with their education.”⁷

Although the above definitions may seem similar and the method of financing not very different, these distinctions are absolutely crucial, aiming, among other things, at higher interconnection of study/research at university with practice, i.e. with the application sphere. The original wording of the Act restricted drawing of financial support exclusively to the (closed) territory of a university. The new wording allows students to engage also in research outside the university through specific research, i.e. in practice of institutions which provide a part of doctoral study programmes for universities.⁸ The position of doctoral students, as well as students of master's disciplines, is further significantly strengthened by a change to the original connotation of the Act, from a student “involved” in research (as a rule by someone else) to a student “doing” research. Moreover, the changed connotation is reflected in the wording of the Rules of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic for providing targeted support for specific research, where this type of research project is denoted as “student project” regardless of the fact whether the principal investigator of the project is a student or an academic worker of the university. The strengthened position of students and targeting of financial support to students is similarly evident from the condition for allocation of financial means, stating that “*the share of personnel costs [...] associated with participation of students of doctoral or master's degree programmes as investigators or other members of the research team when elaborating a student project amounts to more than 60% of the total personnel costs [...].*” (Pravidla, 2013–2014)

Specific Research in the Context of Education

The decisive criteria for specific university research are that (1) it is research carried out by students and (2) it must be directly connected with their education. Thus, it does not mean “any” research, but research where a student is either the main partaker in a specific research project or an equal project participant, where by “learning to do” research, the student “is in reality doing” research at the same time. For this reason, the actual process of learning “how to do research” deserves special attention, because in this case it is not a mere “invitation” to research where students are in many cases “only” assistants to principal investigators of the project and work on minor tasks – even though this position is very important and it is not appropriate to question it.

Implementation scheme of specific research has at least two variants. Students usually deal with research projects related to the topic of their own diploma or doctoral thesis using applied (targeted) research or basic (exploration) research⁹, which should be linked to research projects of the given university workplace. In this case, the role of academic workers in the project can be described as “counselling”. If this is not the case, then students are commonly involved in research projects of academics forming a part of research intentions of the particular university workplace. Especially if the investigator of a student project is an academic worker, the role of “consultant” changes substantially and primary research objectives of the project are expanded by investigator's targeted educational activity. Ideally, both said variants are interconnected.

⁷ The amended Act No. 130/2002 Coll., on Support of Research, Experimental Development and Innovations from 2009, Sec. 3 Art. 2, letter c).

⁸ See Act No. 111/1998 Coll., on Universities, in its current version, Sec. 81.

⁹ As for definition of basic and applied research, see e.g. Základní, 2011.

Scientific-research competence of university teachers is according to Bednaříková "generally regarded as the main feature distinguishing a teacher at university from teachers at other types of schools. University teachers are required not only to be well-versed in the scientific discipline which they teach, but also to possess scientific erudition and methodology of research work with respect to knowledge of the scientific discipline which they are engaged in." (Bednaříková, 2009: 13) This contrasts with the fact that "specialized pedagogical education is in the Czech Republic required only for teachers working in pre-school facilities, at primary and secondary schools. But it does not apply to university teachers. (Bednaříková, 2009: 13) Most of them did not previously complete pedagogical preparation and acquired experience only during their actual activity in university education, which is, among other things, reflected in the quality of teaching, too." (Projekt, 2006) In recent years, there have been intensified talks about the need of knowledge of university pedagogy and pedagogical training for university teachers, especially in relation to evaluation of quality of universities.¹⁰ Also a discussion about the relationship of general didactics and subject didactics is underway.¹¹ In this connection, didactics of social work applies general teaching methods and didactic practices in the specific field of social work, and it is necessary to say that in the Czech Republic, it currently belongs to empty spaces in both theory and practice of teaching social work. Systematics of social work university didactics is thus one of the challenges of development in social work education in the Czech Republic.

Importance of Specific Research in Social Work

Research in social work is delimited by topics relevant to social policy and social work which are according to Baum as a rule "confronted mainly with problems which plague people who for various reasons are not able to handle them on their own, let alone to solve them. [...] The subject of empirical investigation has always been social problems of certain social groups, affecting a significant part of society, evoking the need for change, and social policy wants to react to them. (Baum 2014: 42) The need of empirical research in social work is in this sense commonly understood, accepted and required.

Yet discussions regarding the conception and use of theoretical research in social work – or more specifically, what the meaning of theoretical research for practice is, are not so univocal. It seems that certain embarrassment of "practitioners" stems from failing to distinguish the levels of "social work practice". It is usually perceived as traditional "work with clients" or "work in organizations". However, if we build on classification of social work¹² as a (1) practical activity, (2) separate profession with professional standards, (3) scientific discipline with its own theoretical and research base, (4) educational discipline – then each of them will have its own practical level, in the form of field practice and in the form of professional practice or scientific practice and naturally, in the form of educational practice as well. With regard to research, it is important how these different levels of social work practice are defined, which level, whom and what the use of research relates to.¹³ The perfect case is intersection of all the levels when solving social problems, in one way or another.

¹⁰ Cf. Vašutová 2004.

¹¹ For more information see Janík, Stuchlíková, 2010; Janík, 2011; Beneš 2011.

¹² Strieženec, sec. cit Chytil, 2002: 82.

¹³ An interesting contemplation as for connotations of empirical (applied) research and theoretical (academic) research can be found in a paper by author Smutek, 2011.

When assessing the significance of research in social work, in many cases there is a criterion of how the research results are usable in direct work with clients. This view is backed by a fact reflected by Gojová, namely that *“a large part of social work practice falls within the scope of the Act on Social Services, which may lead to an impression that social work is implemented only through provision of social services. This trend is accompanied by a risk of social work being diminished.”* (Gojová, sec. cit. Bajer, 2010: 4) Reduced perception of social work as a “mere” social service then obviously brings along a corresponding view of what research in social work is “valuable”.

Although it is clear that not every social worker can do research, *“social workers often come into contact with various projects, proposals addressed to foundations, with offers from various firms to carry out surveys [...], they are also members of selection committees which evaluate and select projects.”* (Loučková, 2014: 21) The author also points out that if such a worker is supposed to be competent to assess research projects and to decide on them, *“at least once in their professional practice, they should go through the research environment – from project development up to data analysis”* and she further elaborates on her reflections on the role of research in social work in an individual, personal context: *“through research activities, every participant can learn about a hidden order in their own way of thinking, enabling them to find a hidden order in the social world, too, even though it often seems chaotic.”* (Loučková, 2014: 21)

Gojová characterizes the current situation in the area of social work research in the Czech Republic as follows: *“In the field of research, there is still a lot of leeway. There is a lack of qualified social workers-researchers, sufficient discussion on the specifics of research in social work is missing as well, and in practice, there are not enough opportunities to apply research skills.”* (Gojová, sec. cit. Bajer, 2010: 5) To a large extent, these are effects of the phenomena described in the previous sections of this paper which are mirrored in social work, i.e. a low number of graduates of doctoral programmes in social work as a successor generation of the present pedagogues-researchers of middle and older age. Poor knowledge or lack of knowledge of pedagogical practices (how to teach research) in academics also play a role here, given that they do not teach research methodology directly but they are expected to master it at a level similar to the level of those who specialize in teaching research methodology. This aspect manifests itself significantly with regard to tutoring on theses which often include research applied to the specifically chosen topic of the thesis. In the Czech Republic, systematic training of educators in social work is missing. And this applies to both didactics of social work and methodology of research in social sciences applied to branch-specific topics of social work. Therefore, implementation of specific research in social work can be considered as an important way to increase the number of qualified social workers-researchers as well as educators-researchers.

Reflection of Didactic Procedures at Implementation of Specific Research at the Faculty of Social Studies of the University of Ostrava in Ostrava

First of all, it is necessary to explain what this part of the article does not have in view: to give instructions or recommendations on how to teach research in social work. It is not realistic and practically even not possible within the scope of this paper. The aim is to share subjective experience of implementation of a particular project within specific university research at the

Faculty of Social Studies of the University of Ostrava¹⁴ from the perspective of pedagogical approach.

Project-based Teaching

Project-based teaching, also utilized in courses on research, belongs to the most demanding teaching methods. While preparation and implementation of university lectures or seminars can be structured relatively well, preparation for implementation of a research project, optimally involving knowledge of general teaching procedures¹⁵, usually requires more time and makes higher demands on the pedagogue, as it should cover both the methodological and pedagogical part.

Project-based teaching can take place in an informal environment but in itself, it is a highly formal targeted and controlled process combining a large amount of pedagogical practices. From the point of view of general didactics, project-based teaching falls within the family of so-called complex teaching methods. Project-based teaching (1) allows to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge and detachment of learning from the reality of life, (2) interconnects knowledge of various subjects, helping to see things in connections, (3) develops study habits of students-researchers, (4) creates situations in which students have to show their own initiative, (5) allows students to work in teams and groups etc. In project-based learning, heuristic approach in the form of problem-related questions is applied more than in other teaching methods as students are guided and encouraged to learn independently, to deduce, to discover new knowledge. Project-based teaching includes regular reflection and evaluation of continuous project outcomes and proposals of further progress goals.

Research Project of Autonomy in the Context of Disability

The choice of the research topic was primarily derived from research projects of the Faculty and Department which set a basis for research activities of academic workers of the Department in relation to the subject of their study. Inspiration and an impetus for creation of this project was a research study “Autonomy in the Old Age” by author Dana Sýkorová. (Sýkorová, 2007) In the first stage of the project preparation, I compiled a research project with standard methodological, time, financial and formal parameters. Then I invited students of master’s and doctoral studies to participate in the project.¹⁶ Following the successful outcome of the section procedure of an internal grant competition at the University of Ostrava we – already as a team – prepared a detailed technical plan of the research and relevant methodological characteristics of the research. Concurrently with the preparation, I was elaborating educational objectives of the project.

Project Objectives

¹⁴ In 2010, the author of this paper led the research team of the student project “*Social Services in Postindustrial Society – Elaborated Using the Example of Ostrava*” (11 researchers), in 2011 she led the research team of the student project “*Autonomy in the Context of Disability*” (5 researchers).

¹⁵ See e.g. Průcha, 2009; Skalková, 2007; Mužík, 2004; Bertrand, 1998 etc.

¹⁶ The invitation was accepted by two doctoral students Eva Nedomová and Irena Kopciuchová (Buršová) and two students of master’s studies Lenka Lazarová (Řehánková) and Aneta Kozáková (Hašková).

The research objective of the project was shaped by two propositions: (1) A significant proportion of people with disabilities are natural users of health services, social work services and other public services. In connection with demographic outlooks of population ageing which is associated with a change in health condition, it is increasingly necessary in social work to possess knowledge of topics of disability and skills of distinguishing between (a) general topics of health and disease (b) specific topics of disability. (2) In this sense, current questions of social work can be situated on the level of: what social work means or may (or may not) mean for specific individuals and groups of people with disabilities? What models of approaches do social workers use in practice in relation to people with disabilities? How is autonomy perceived by people with disabilities? How is it reflected in social work interventions? The topic of personal autonomy was viewed within the research through real people with disabilities – *the aim of the research was to understand the importance which people with disabilities attribute to personal autonomy.*¹⁷

The educational objectives of the project were primarily aimed at the field of didactics and at further use in educational practice. In line with the objectives of specific university research, students' individual educational goals were pursued – *improvement of students' knowledge and skills for research work.* Secondarily, the research results were incorporated into *the curriculum of study courses with topics of disability* at our Faculty,¹⁸ while publication outputs of the project are used as *study texts* for students of disciplines of social work, physiotherapy, ergotherapy, community development etc.

Didactic Means

In the next stage of the project, in addition to (1) *educational objectives*, it was necessary to define other didactic means, in particular (2) *teaching methods*, (3) the use of *didactic technology*, (4) *communication environment*.

Educational Objectives

As with any systematic activity, each time when planning teaching if it is to be a targeted educational process, it is necessary to set a realistically graspable and measurable objective of education. It is not always easy to set educational objectives and to describe them as specifically as possible. We can commonly encounter inappropriately defined learning objectives.¹⁹ In the case of this particular project, the formulation of the main educational objective was derived from the fact that involvement of students in the project was subject to preceding training for research within methodological courses of their regular studies. Therefore, the main educational objective was to *deepen the students' skills of considering, implementing and critically reflecting on research procedures.*

¹⁷ The research results are published in a monograph by Krhutová, 2013.

¹⁸ Specifically in teaching of the subjects of Social Work and People with Disabilities, Introduction to Disability Studies, Communication in Case of Disabilities, Introduction to Special Education for Health and Social Disciplines.

¹⁹ For instance: "Objective: to explain the eco-social theory of social work to students" – is not a goal, but an activity of the teacher. "Objective: general characteristics of the client's social situation" – is not a goal, but a topic. "Objective: to develop critical thinking" – is a goal which is difficult to define, with difficult concretization of partial processes to achieve the goal, the goal here has a nature of intention.

When determining partial educational objectives in this project so as to ensure their feasibility and “measurability”, a well-known Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives²⁰, i.e. what the learner has to or should gradually acquire, proved useful. In this particular research project, the objectives were as follows: (a) *To remember* (know) specific information such as facts, classification, categorization of both general and specific knowledge regarding the topics of disability and topics of autonomy. (b) *To understand translation* from one language into another (from natural language in which we speak into scientific language), i.e. especially to master scientific terminology, to understand theoretical concepts related to the subject of our research. (c) *To apply*, i.e. use abstractions and generalizations such as theories, laws, principles, methods – in concrete situations. (d) *To analyze*, to be able to conduct an analysis of complex information as for its elements, to determine a hierarchy of elements, principles of their organization, interactions between the elements, i.e. to analyze records of interviews, to identify subcategories and categories as part of qualitative analysis. (e) *To synthesize*, to put elements and their parts together into a new whole, i.e. to create a matrix and a graphic schema of the research data, to interpret data, to summarize the research results. (f) *To evaluate* (perform assessment), i.e. to be able to justify, argue for the choice of the research objectives, research methods, to defend the research results.

Teaching Methods

To meet the main and partial educational objectives, I opted for appropriate teaching methods²¹ which we reflected on systematically, discussed and evaluated in our team in the course of the project and at its end. The following teaching methods were chosen as a basis (a) project-based teaching, (b) from the family of classical methods – the word method, method of lecture, (c) from the family of activation methods – the discussion method (conversation, dialogue, argumentation) and further (d) the method of work with text – a prepared text (study materials), (e) the method of work with text – creative writing (preparation of papers, research reports), (f) presentation – technical preparation of a presentation, personal presentation (conferences, professional workshops, public defence of the project results/opposition procedure), (g) all the teaching procedures included the method of work with error.

Didactic Technology and Communication Environment

With a view to the planned use of didactic technology, it was necessary to ensure audio devices and video equipment for data recording, technology for transcription of interviews and presentation technology to share the research results. To communicate effectively in our team and as a complement to direct physical communication, a closed e-mail discussion group was established, and to discuss and share data in our team, we also took advantage of the possibilities of electronic virtual learning environment of eLearning – Moodle.

Expected Use of the Project

On the theoretical level, outputs of the research part of the project are intended for use in development of social work theory, particularly as part of concepts to support independence

²⁰ Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives (sometimes referred to as cognitive goals) is based on a hierarchy of six target categories (levels of mastery) corresponding to the increasing complexity of mental operations in acquiring knowledge of the study subject matter. Each level of mastery is assigned so-called active verbs, i.e. typical verbs to define goals. (cf. Skalková, 2007)

²¹ Cf. e.g. Průcha, 2009; Skalková, 2007; Rohlíková, Vejvodová, 2012; Slavík et al. 2012, Podlahová et al. 2012.

and empowerment. On the empirical level, outputs of the research part of the project are aimed at use in (1) *field practice of social work* with clients – to deepen the understanding of self-determination of clients with disabilities on the part of social workers or workers in other professions participating in solving the quality of living conditions for people with disabilities. From the perspective of people with disabilities – at reflecting on their attitudes to personal autonomy. (2) In terms of *research practice of social work*, outputs of the research part of the project are meant to contribute to development of research methodology in the field of disability, with an emphasis on the issues of determining the basic and research sample, and further to methodology of qualitative interviews with communication partners with difficulties in verbal communication (prelingually deaf people, people with impaired mental functions). (3) In terms of *professional social work practice*, research outputs of the project are directed at development of professional standards of social work and quality standards of social services, especially in the area of procedural and personnel standards. (4) In terms of *educational practice in social work*, the research results are aimed at integration of their content into curricula of courses within study and educational disciplines of social work, or as the case may be, medical disciplines, potentially in a broader sense special education, disability studies, sociology of disability and in other fields. Didactic outputs of the project are intended to enhance skills of students of social work disciplines within tertiary education²² as for preparation and implementation of research, public presentation and publication of its results.

Conclusion

The main benefits of specific university research in the Czech Republic are represented by intentional and systematic interconnection of two core themes of this type of research – actual research work and training in research. Apart from financial motivation, students involved in specific research can grasp a further opportunity to deepen their already acquired theoretical knowledge *of research*, skills to *think over real research* and *to do research in reality* beyond the framework of obligatory study courses on research methodology in their field of study. Implementation of a research project is usually long-term and exceeds the regular semester classes (from 1-3 years). Thus, students-researchers can individually, in detail and thoroughly experience research procedures from beginning to end, try public presentation of research results, including various types of publishing the results for different target groups. In case that the project content coincides with the topic of their dissertation or thesis, in the course or at the end of the project, their work may be basically “finished” and as a rule, they could already try a “dry run” of simulated public thesis defence during presentation of research results at conferences, seminars, workshops. If it is not the case, they can utilize the experience gained from this project in their actual thesis.

An added value for students-researchers in this type of research is usually also personal encounter with research participants – respondents /communication partners, (learning to) work in a research team, feedback among team members. Last but not least, it is about reflection on teaching research – a discussion not only on what “we want to ascertain” in a particular phase of the research process, but also a discussion on “what we need to learn for this purpose”. An added value for academics-researchers in this type of project is usually continuous feedback by students regarding their pedagogical activity – informal, as part of

²² Fields of study of social work at colleges, bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programmes in social work at universities.

talks and discussions and formal in the form of factual quality of outputs by both individuals and the team as a whole.

Collaboration on a project consolidates the ability and skills of teamwork with a view to a joint goal – implementing quality research. From a macro-perspective, (quality) outputs of student projects are an important indicator of meeting the basic objective of specific research, i.e. enlarging the capacity of qualified (well-trained) social workers-researchers so that social work could – at all levels of its practice – respond flexibly to changing conditions in society.

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