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**RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION
THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK
SOSYAL HİZMET LİSANS EĞİTİMİNİ BİLGİ-BECERİ-DEĞER
TEMELLERİ İLE YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK**



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RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK SOSYAL HİZMET LİSANS EĞİTİMİNİ BİLGİ-BECERİ-DEĞER TEMELLERİ İLE YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK

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ABSTRACT

Many of the studies on social work undergraduate education approaches social undergraduate work education as a whole with social work field practice. On the one hand, such kind of approach signifies on which knowledge-skill-value basis social work undergraduate education needs to be structured, on the other hand it describes the process how these bases can be transferred to social work practices. It is the focus of this review work to educate social workers with different pedagogical approaches and social work undergraduate education that can respond to today's individual and community needs and besides to think about how this process can be improved. Therefore, the aim of this study is to discuss how knowledge-skill-value basis of social work can be applied as a pedagogical tool in social work education. Based on this, this study primarily dwells on the general features of social work education. Later, it is emphasised the arguments seeking to apply knowledge-skill-value basis of social work to the learning process. These discussions are dealt within the context of five components of the learning process; the purpose and scope of social work education, the student dimension, the instructive (facilitator) dimension, the student-lecturer interaction in the learning process and learning environment.

Keywords: Social work, social work education, knowledge, skill, value.

ÖZ

Sosyal hizmet lisans eğitimini konu edinen çalışmaların birçoğu sosyal hizmet eğitimini, sosyal hizmet saha uygulaması ile bir bütün olarak ele alır.

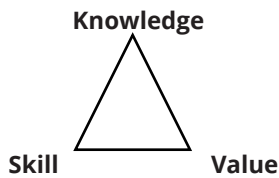
Böyle bir yaklaşım öncelikle sosyal hizmet lisans eğitiminin hangi bilgi-beceri-değer temelleri üzerine yapılandırılması gerektiğini ortaya koyarken, diğer yandan bu temellerin sosyal hizmet uygulamalarına nasıl aktarılacağına ilişkin süreci ifade eder. Farklı pedagojik yaklaşımlarla sosyal hizmet lisans eğitiminin günümüz birey ve toplum ihtiyaçlarına cevap verebilecek nitelikte sosyal hizmet uzmanlarını yetiştirmek ve bunu nasıl gerçekleştirileceği konusu üzerine düşünmek bu derleme çalışmasının odağını oluşturur. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın amacı, sosyal hizmet bilgi-beceri-değer temellerinin pedagojik bir araç olarak sosyal hizmet lisans eğitiminde nasıl uygulanabileceğini tartışmaktır. Bu doğrultuda çalışmada öncelikle sosyal hizmet lisans eğitiminin genel özellikleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Daha sonra sosyal hizmet bilgi-beceri ve değer temellerini öğrenme sürecine uygulamayı amaçlayan tartışmalara yer verilmiştir. Bu tartışmalar öğrenme sürecinin beş bileşeni; sosyal hizmet lisans eğitiminin amacı ve kapsamı, öğrenci boyutu, eğitici (kolaylaştırıcı) boyutu, öğrenme süresinde öğrenci-eğitici etkileşimi ve öğrenme ortamı bağlamında ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal hizmet, sosyal hizmet eğitimi, bilgi, beceri, değer.

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

INTRODUCTION

Social work education is an educational process carried out with a **four-year undergraduate** program aims students to become qualified professionalists in the professional interventions towards the client systems (individual, family, group, society). In other words, social work undergraduate education is a process carried out with effective learning methods and techniques based on the trinomas required in field practice (Aktaş, 2011).



It is seen that social work undergraduate education in literature is contextualised in connection with the working areas such as; approached used in teaching process, the dimensions of the learning process, how the education process is structured (Beverly and Worsley, 2007), how sociopolitical-economic and cultural structure shapes social work undergraduate education, how changes in global, national and local levels affect social work education (Payne and Askeland, 2008).

This multidimensionality of social work undergraduate education is seen in various forms of social work definitions. Some of these definitions focus activities carried out by a social worker, while others focus directly on the knowledge-skills-value base of social work. For example, Thompson (2005) treats social work as a profession based on humanitarian assistance in a broad sense and also emphasizes its shared and distinctive features with other humanitarian work. Duyan (2010) describes social work as a profession, based on the principles of human rights and social justice, which supports social change, aims to solve, strengthen and emancipate problems in human relations for the development of people's well-being, and intervenes in people's interactions with their surroundings by exploiting theories about human behavior and social systems.

Social work is based on a humanistic approach like other humanitarian professions. The presentation of social work in social welfare systems distinguishes social work from other humanitarian professions. The factors distinguishing social work profession from other humanitarian professions are as follows: being problem-oriented, focusing of well-being of the individual and the community, trying to keep the

balance between protective-preventive care and rehabilitation approaches, prioritizing social justice and human rights. Kongar (1972: 4-5) speaks of two fundamental reasons for the emergence of the social work profession. The first one is the effort of countries who adopted the liberal development method to solve the social problems faced in this process and the other is the humanitarian aid willingness which is an abstract conceptualization. According to the International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW, 2014) social work is "an applied profession and academic discipline that supports, strengthens and liberates social change, development and social loyalty. Social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are at the center of social work. Social work theories are supported by social sciences, human sciences and local knowledge; social work is being carried out with institutional structures and people in coping with the difficulties of life and improving the state of well being'.

It is important at this point seeking for the answer to the question of what kind of training process a practitioner of the profession and discipline that aims to achieve the aforementioned goals (empowerment and emancipation), to perceive and intervene in so many different dimensions of human beings and other interrelated facts.

Duyan (2010: 31) defines social work undergraduate education as an active process requiring a series of scientific knowledge and skill. Likewise, Gray and Lovat (2008: 160) assert that social work undergraduate education is based on the education of theory and practice and on the idea of 'praxis' which indicates the integration of theory and practice. On the other hand, that the existence of international definition of social work discipline and profession does not mean that social work undergraduate education and its' practices may not differ in social norms and policy preferences at national, regional, and local levels. For instance, when the standards for social work education in the "International Association of Social Work Schools" (IASSW, 2004) are examined, in the section of objectives and outputs of social work education undergraduate programs it is noticed that it provides a framework for how the training program meets the requirements for professional purposes defined at national and/or regional/international levels and how the program should deal with local, national and / or regional / international developmental needs and priorities. It is indicated in the curriculum section as 'the program is developed in consideration of local, national and international needs and priorities'. Payne (1997) mentions about this situation in three different approaches which formalizing social work practices.

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

These approaches can be summarized in terms of social work education as follows:

1) *Reflexive-Therapeutic Approach*: Reviews and acceptances towards this approach forming social work practice underlie the other two approaches. According to this approach; social work aims at well-being of the individual, self-realization and having power over her/his own life (enabling individuals to do something independently, to control and influence others) and revaling her/his potential. The approach is reflective as it emphasizes the interaction process (Payne, 1997). In terms of social work education, it is crucial with regards to setting the purpose of education on the one hand, and on the other hand, to revealing the potential of the student and the interaction between student and tutor in the educational process. The Reflexive-Therapeutic Approach supports an existential and humanitarian educational program.

2) *Socialist-Collectivist Approach*: This approach points out that strengthening of the disadvantaged individual (that people, organizations or societies have control over their own lives) can be achieved through social solidarity, mutual support and cooperation. Strengthening refers to the process of helping and request for helping individuals, groups, families and society to discover and use sources in their environment. In this process, community involvement is achieved by the bottom up organizational structure (Payne, 1997). The social work education process also promotes student participation, learning environment, and engagement with mutual support, solidarity and cooperation (Beverley and Worsley, 2007). In addition, the emphasis on struggle with inequalities arising from class differences refers to another dimension to be considered in the learning environment in the context of social work education. This approach in social work education supports the radical social work approach, anti-oppressive practices and strengthening-based education program.

3) *Individualist-Reformist approach*: This approach argues that individuals may be able to achieve self-fulfillment individually and socially by developing equitable conditions. However, trying to explain that the meeting of these equitable conditions can be provided mostly with an individual change causes to ignore the emphasis of a fundamental social change. The approach therefore focuses more on the balance between the individual and society (Payne, 1997). This approach in social work undergraduate education refers to the process of how curriculum design, teaching methods and techniques in the learning process, teacher-student interaction, learning environment and institutional structure

should be harmonized and balanced. The emphasis on creating constant change is another important emphasis of the individualist-reformist approach. This approach supports a training program based on task-oriented and system theory.

In many countries the approaches mentioned above can be used in conjunction with social work practices but differentiate according to the priorities of countries. In what kind of socio-economic-political and cultural context social education is given can determine the form and content of the education. The fact that social work education is affected by the conditions of countries does not mean that it will be compromised on the bases of knowledge, skills and value of social work, but on the contrary, these factors are instrumental in guiding to reach the international competence of social work education.

There are many aspects that determine the learning process in social work undergraduate education. These aspects include the following points: whether or not the students and lecturer meet the needs in the learning environment, the method and techniques used by the lecturer, the role and function of the lecturer, the student-lecturer relationship and interaction style, and the measurement-assessment criteria (Payne, 1997). These can also include the quality assurance of the institutional structure in which the social work school is located and a sense of continuous improvement approach.

Integrating practice wisdom with theoretical knowledge through certain values requires a significant skills education in social work. This will lead to a never-ending educational process. Thus, improvement of learning opportunities providing lifelong learning except for basic social work undergraduate education (in-service training programs organization level of post-graduate social workers, transferring of current professional and scientific developments to field experts, etc.) are the integral parts of social work undergraduate education (Beverley and Worsley, 2007: 6-8).

These approaches provide a general pedagogical framework for the content and focus of social work undergraduate education and for social work knowledge-skill-value bases. In the following sections of the study, these triple bases (knowledge-skill-value) that constitute the focus of social work are discussed under separate titles taking the other components that influence the learning process into account.

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

INTEGRATING SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE BASE WITH LEARNING PROCESS

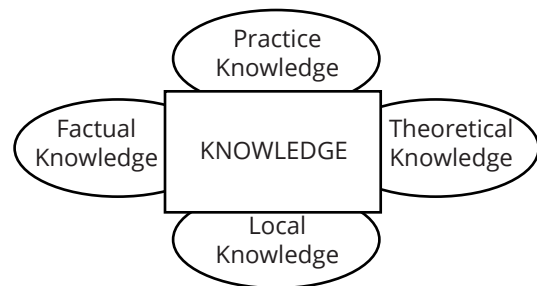
In recent years, the scope of the knowledge base of social work has been tried to be analysed in various frameworks some of which has been put more emphasis on particular field of practice (ed. Trevithick, 2008; Connolly, 2006; Gould, 2006). The knowledge base of social work states the importance and necessity of local knowledge in social work undergraduate education. Taking into consideration the dynamic structure of society, it comes out the need of revising local knowledge in certain periods in social work undergraduate education

Knowledge is defined in Oxford Dictionary as 'facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical and practical understanding of a subject' and theory as 'a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something'. The notion of 'theory as explanation' places theories and theorizing at one end of a spectrum as something accessible—something that we all do. Yet in social work, knowledge needs to incorporate 'both practical and theoretical knowledge' (ed. Trevithick, 2008; Polanyi, 1967: 7). Knowledge and theory are sometimes used interchangeably in social work undergraduate education.

This study describes a knowledge framework that is conceptualized in terms of three interwoven and overlapping features: 1) theoretical knowledge or theories; 2) factual knowledge (including research); and 3) practice knowledge (Trevithick, 2008). It is suggested that the social work undergraduate education should be given with the perspective of local knowledge on the three basis of knowledge base of social work. Local knowledge refers to social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual aspects of local communities. However, in some studies and researches on community practice of social work undergraduate education especially in developing countries show that the local communities have been largely neglected (Pawar, 2014).

It is offered that the local knowledge should be included in the figure developed by Trevithick (2008) classifying knowledge into three groups as practice knowledge, theoretical knowledge and factual knowledge as in below.

Figure 1. The framework of social work's knowledge base in social work undergraduate education



In general terms, the knowledge base of social work is defined as the knowledge that a social worker needs in an effective social work practice (Duyan, 2010: 31). Social work undergraduate education consists of classroom activities and field practice (Beverley and Worsley, 2007, Thompson, 2005, Payne, 1997). The knowledge base is a comprehensive and complex structure. The knowledge base has a dynamic characteristic which is constantly changing and developing depending on socio-economic, cultural and political conditions includes social work theories, social work intervention methods and techniques, scientific research and social work practice knowledge. In addition, it also includes the information on behavioral and social sciences from a social work perspective (CSWE, 2015).

Knowledge of social work intervention methods and techniques requires reinterpretation of social work undergraduate education as a pedagogical tool. Social work education is not a process including not only sharing and transfer of knowledge (Thompson, 2005; Payne, 1997). Social work undergraduate education aims to apply knowledge, skills, ethical principles and values to learning process as in professional practices. These goals and objectives can only be achieved with an adequate learning environment. Then it proceeds with a continuous improvement approach, a learning process, planning and evaluation prepared by considering the needs of students and lecturers. Furthermore, knowledge-base in social work education is introduced taking account of the developmental characteristics and diversities of student groups. Students can integrate knowledge of theory and practice in a learning environment that puts emphasis on critical thinking (Skrade, 2004: 3). Such a learning environment can only be achieved by establishing a non-hierarchical horizontal relationship between the student and the educator and by intergrating a student-centered approach in social work undergraduate education.

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work (CSWE, 2015; IFSW, 2014; IASSW, 2001) is a discipline and profession that aims at social change based on the principles of social justice and human rights. In accordance with this purpose social work undergraduate education provides a learning process in which students can take an active role. Thus, students gain experience and knowledge about the methods and techniques of social work interventions and issues such as inequality and social injustice (Higham, 2006: 122-125). Correspondingly, Harvey et al. (2009) emphasize that education has an important role to play in solving inequalities arising from differences such as class, gender, race, ethnicity or belief. This can be solved by fostering a change-oriented student identity in social work undergraduate education. Therefore, knowledge-base in social work education provides an insight into the self-development (bio-psycho-social, economic and cultural) of students. Lay and McGuire (2010: 539-542) indicate that the role of lecturer is to support this process through appropriate learning methods.

According to Gibb (2002: 235), students and lecturers should be critical, reflective and productive in social work education. Additionally, the organizational structure, corporate culture, administrative mentality of the educational institution and laws are expected to support a critical and reflective learning environment. Indeed, many studies show that social work undergraduate education is shaped by countries' social policy and social welfare (Beverley and Worsley, 2007, Thompson, 2005, Guzetta, 1998, Payne, 1997). Just as social work practices are influenced by politics, social work undergraduate education is also directly influenced by a general higher education policy. However, it is expected that strong cooperations among lecturer, student and school administration in social work education should be built on an open and horizontal plane.

General social work education policy affects, the learning environment, the learning process, the educational activities and the relationship between the student and the lecturer. Such an understanding of social work undergraduate education can only be obtained through reflective practice (Thompson, 2005). Reflective practice is an approach that ensures all steps in social work interventions are carried out in a planned, systematic and interactive way (Scrader, 2004: 4-5). In this approach, the client is evaluated at every stage, and at the same time the expert examines himself and the practice environment in a holistic way (Lay and Mc Guire, 2010). Thompson (2005) points out reflective practice approach in social work education in terms of student-lecturer context as follows:

- Assessing the creativity and knowledge together,
- Evaluating the results of pre- and post-implementation process,
- Avoiding answering questions without thinking carefully,
- Taking into account that each problem may have a different solution,
- Accepting that there is not a one solution regarded as "the right answer",
- Combating with complex conditions, being creative and visionary,
- Identifying and assessing the problem with its' dimensions,
- Updating and improving information constantly,
- Being open to different and new ideas and views,
- Being aware of the risks and drawbacks that can arise without professional values and ethical principles.

Reflective practice in social work undergraduate education allows the lecturer and students to remain committed to skills and value bases in self-assessment process. This is stated as a process of learning in a mutual interaction, developing a fair and honest identity in Lay and McGuire's (2010) emphasis on change. Similarly, 'praxis' thought (Gray and Lovat, 2008) in social work undergraduate education, the use of theoretical knowledge in the learning process, is used to mean the integration of the theoretical knowledge students acquire through their own skills and value systems.

Historically, medical model, social welfare approaches, radical social work practices, social self-study, group work, community work and generalist approach in social work education have been applied from the beginning of 2000's (Duyan, 2010). Furthermore, problem-focused learning developed to adapt to changing global world conditions, or a competency-based approach which has been developed based on this approach, has begun to be discussed more frequently in the social work education (Gregory and Hallaway, 2005: 618-621). Competency-based education in social work education has been carried into practice in the United States and Europe in the mid-2000s and in Turkey from the beginning of 2011 with the effect of Bologna process on the higher education system of Turkey (Yigit, 2017; Alptekin, 2016).

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

The Council of Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015) in the United States adopted a 'competence-based training' framework for Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) in 2008. A model focusing on the impact of learning outcomes on students within the content of education policy (which should be taught to students) and curriculum design (creation and organization of educational components) of the profession related with health and humanitarian aid is adopted. Competence-based training is based on a student-centered education model which takes into account the performance and performance of the student in practice. This approach provides a model for social work education that measures and evaluates performance of the student both in-class and field practice.

Competence-based education supports a conscious, professional and holistic approach towards the purpose of raising social well-being of human and society through knowledge, skills and values. Curriculum design of competence-based education involves an output-oriented approach. In an output-oriented approach, the goal is to make sure that students are able to transfer their competencies into field of practice. Pedagogical approaches and educational activities in social work education are carried out in compliance with a curriculum designed for educational outputs. Being able to evaluate learning outcomes of students is an integral part of a competence-based education (CSWE, 2015). However, the evaluation methods used and collected data may vary according to fields of practice.

INTEGRATING SKILL BASE OF SOCIAL WORK WITH LEARNING PROCESS

A mind that is constructed with knowledge-base of social work requires certain skills for an effective social work practice. Knowledge-base in social work practice is not solely enough to create a change. Johnson (1998) states this situation as follows: 'identifying and applying a specific method and technique by blending information and values will be inadequate without skill.' The trilogy of method, technique and skill is defined as "intervention repertoire" in social work field (Duyan, 2010: 67). Skill refers to the required personal capacities for achieving results in a research or professional practice. It gives a sort of answer to the question of "How". Social work practice undergoes a process starting from selecting the appropriate information, going through it considering professional values and completing with the implementation of the most effective intervention. In other words, skill-base can be expressed as having the ability to accomplish necessary work and procedures related to the

method and technique used in the social work intervention process. Every social work practice requires a set of competences and skills along with integrity of knowledge and values. Social work undergraduate education aims to develop these competences and skills. According to Pippard and Bjorklund (2004), method and technical teaching should be included in the curriculum of social work undergraduate education, or else social work education may become unrealistic. This also means that social work students have to graduate with very low technical skills. When considering expectations, problems and needs of today's modern societies, this problem may lead to confrontation with such problems where occupation can not respond to these needs.

Competency and skill-base in social work education are often regarded as a field where students need to gain exclusively with their own efforts (Pippard and Bjorklund, 2004). However, CCETSW (1996) states the skills that social work students need to have in order to be competent as follows:

- The ability to integrate social work values with theoretical and practical knowledge,
- The ability to assess practices reflectively and critically,
- The ability to put into practice the knowledge-skill and value bases.

Thompson (2005) states that being competent in a social work requires some certain skills. Skills include much more limited activities than competences. Skills are learned through experience, repetition and education. In addition, being competent is a more general expression; skills may differentiate while working with individual, group, family or society. Skill-base in social work education refers to the skills that students need to be competent. It is also expected that the lecturer has the necessary competence and skill repertoire in social work education.

CCETSW (1996) identified some skills that students should possess according to their areas of competence. These skill classifications are presented below by taking into account the areas of competence expected from students:

- *To communicate and engage:* For effective social work practice, social workers must be able to communicate and communicate effectively with clients, policy makers, all members of society, institutions, and other professional members of the community (CCETSW, 1996). It is therefore expected that lecturers and students in social work undergraduate education will improve communication and interaction skills. Lecturers are responsible for informing students about various forms of communication and

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

arranging a learning environment enabling to experience the acquired knowledge (Beverley and Worsley, 2007). At the same time, Beverley and Worsley (2007) emphasize the importance of associating and interaction of students with various resources and institutions as well as planning of learning process which lead them to access the information they need.

• *To promote and enable:* This area of competence points out focusing on the strengths of the client's individual experiences, developing responsibility and refers to a change making it accessible to rights (Thompson, 2005). This competence requires inclusion of students at every stage of the education process, focusing on the strengths of the students in social work education. At this point, the ability to control emotions, creativity, sensitivity and observation skills are at the forefront from the point of the lecturer, besides students are expected to develop and experience these skills as well. Being aware of each person's behavioral responsibility by using creative learning techniques that will enable them to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of students is considered as the outset for the development of such skills (Beverley and Worsley, 2007). For example; it is significant to think about the effects of emotions on practice outputs such as anger or sympathy that may arise in the process of social work practice. In social work undergraduate education, students are provided with the opportunity to think and touch on their own perceptions firstly. This gives students the opportunities to evaluate various communication languages and how to develop other areas of competence. Such a learning environment will primarily lead to a student-centered approach.

• *To assess and plan:* This area of competence includes the collection, analysis, development, implementation of information needed and monitoring of change and development without violating fundamental rights and freedoms (Thompson, 2005). This competency refers to the lecturer's learning process in social work undergraduate education, the planning, implementing and monitoring of the following process by taking into account the needs and problems of the student. According to Gregory and Hallway (2005: 618-621), it is vital to develop alternative solutions for the needs and problems of students in this process and also to include them in this process. The ability to think analytically and reflectively is of importance in this process. In this respect, it is necessary to develop a lecturer-student interaction respecting student participation, student rights and freedoms. Establishing a non-hierarchical relationship between the lecturer and the student, experiencing by

students an example of a non-hierarchical expert-client relationship in a learning environment are of great importance for the development of this competence.

• *To intervene and provide services:* In social work intervention, it is ensured that the applicants are strengthened and protected from risks by performing the necessary activities to solve the problems related to their own lives. Thus, it is important to provide, develop and evaluate supportive services (Thompson, 2005). Social work undergraduate education aims to improve the skills of students by passing the information they receive through certain professional values. In this process, it is expected from the lecturer to activate social, cognitive and sensual systems that can support the students' learning process. Gregory and Hallway (2005: 618-621) indicate that this process will help improving the skills of controlling emotions, detecting and evaluating sensual signals and being aware of emotions. Beverley and Worsley (2007) state that these skills can be achieved through the supervisory (professional management) process in social work practice. Also self-management skills such as presentation skills, actuality, stress and time management as well as creativity, analytical thinking and teamwork skills are leading skills in this area of competence. For the sustainability of this competency it is considered essential to support different educational programs for postgraduate students to improve themselves.

• *To work in organisation:* This competence encompasses taking part in planning, monitoring and controlling of resources, actively participating in institutional processes, evaluating policies and practices (Thompson, 2005). The development of this competency requires active participation and taking responsibility in the institutional processes. In social work undergraduate education, students are informed about social work education policy, principles and procedures. It is also ensured that the students participate and take an active role in the determination and management of the education / training processes. In this process, the lecturers are expected to fulfill the advocacy role.

• *To develop professional competence:* This competence means to use information sources appropriately in the field practice, to improve a critical point of view, to be supportive in meeting the needs, and to develop professional dilemma issues with the supervision approach (Thompson, 2005). Within the improvement of this competency, the student is not only the informed one but also has an active role in sharing and development of information (Beverley and Worsley, 2007). It is expected that the lecturer will be in an attitude and behavior that supports the active participation

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

of the student in learning environments.

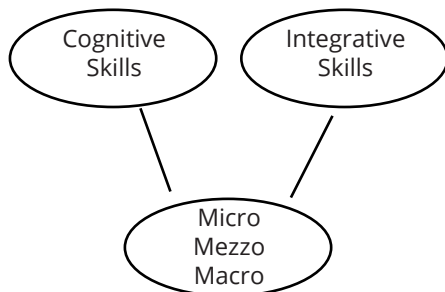
The skill repertoire that a social worker needs to possess is also wide, depending on the focus and scope of the social work practice.

The knowledge base of social work is the ability to perform the work and processes related to methods and technics used in social work intervention process. It can be analyzed in two groups in terms of type although it is hard to categorize it with certain lines. These are 1) cognitive skills and 2) integrative skills.

Cognitive skills are rather related with mental processes such as evaluating the client in its situation, understanding the change and improvement in the client and in his environment in which he is interaction with, determining and analyzing the problems and needs, planning and evaluating an effective interference. For this reason, it is used in activities requiring mental process.

Integrative skills are used in working with individuals, family groups, organisations, communities and society, in getting acquainted with client system, establishing a professional relationship, planning with together, putting plans into practice and ending the interference. Social workers should be competent in both skills. Skills can be classified according to the levels of intervention; Individual- and family-focused (micro), group-focused (mezzo), and society-focused (macro). Various skills for each level of intervention (micro, mezzo and macro) come into front besides the basic (common) skills concerning the whole process of social work intervention.

Figure 2. The framework of social work's skill base in social work undergraduate education



INTEGRATING VALUE-BASE OF SOCIAL WORK WITH LEARNING PROCESS

The social work profession is the profession which is known as stressing value-base most among other professions. In terms of social work, values determine the purpose, direction and intention of the profession (Karabekir, 2010: 4). In the literature, social work values are classified and handled in various forms. Although the core values that affect social work do not change much, the rapid change in the world leads to different values being taken into consideration in social work education and practice (Payne and Askeland, 2008).

In 2004, international social work organizations, IFSW and IASSW, published the social work value bases and professional ethics principles in a study entitled "Ethics in Social Work: Statement and Principles". It is stated in the "Ethics in Social Work: Statement and Principles" introduced by IFSW and IASSW (2004) that 1) social work primarily respects the values inherent in all human beings, human dignity and human rights, and social workers also support and defend physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being of each individual; 2) social workers are responsible for promoting Social justice throughout the community and for their clients.

The knowledge and skill bases of social work can not be thought without value base. It is known that the ethical problems encountered as professional dilemmas stem from the conflict between the values of the majority society and the individual (Thompson, 2005). It is expected that social work education will enable a critical thinking environment questioning individual and social values. Social work education treats the individual and social values of the students and the values that constitute the basis of the profession in a reflective and critical way (Beverly and Worsley, 2007). In social work undergraduate education, students are expected to gain an insight into professional values. Therefore, it is important how the social work value bases should be transferred to the learning process for an effective social work education (Higham, 2006: 129). Among the many classifications of social work values, the values accepted by IFSW and IASSW (2004) are considered in the context of social work undergraduate education as follows:

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

• *Respect for human rights and human dignity:* According to IFSW and IASSW (2004), this value comprises 1) respect for the right of self-determination, 2) improving the right to participate, 3) treating the individual as a whole, and 4) discovering and improving strengths. In social work education, it is aimed to respect the decisions and thoughts of the students at every stage of the learning process and to develop mechanisms to incorporate their own thoughts and evaluations into the learning process. The relationship among the student, the lecturer, student-lecturer and the learning environment are also dealt in this process. In effective learning, it is expected that the relationship between the student and the lecturer is presented in a framework that supports nonjudgmental and autonomy, accepting individual differences and ideas. It is necessary to build a safe learning environment where students can express their feelings and problems faced in their learning process without hesitation. This also allows improving harmony and respect for diversity and development of empathy. In this way, it facilitates to improve the beneficial aspects of the students and to integrate their strengths as individuals and groups with professional values.

Thompson (2005) contributes to these values published by IFSW and IASSW (2004) by addressing liberating values in the social context. Thompson (2005) who introduces equity, solidarity, citizenship rights, social justice, empowerment and autonomy/distinctness to social work values argues that active participation of students in learning processes should be ensured for the adaptation of basic human and civic rights to social work education. According to Higham (2006: 128), student participation is at the highest level in a learning process that evaluates structural inequalities with individual differences as a whole and deals with the problems faced by students individually. Social workers who are experiencing these processes in the learning environment are expected to have an insight into issues such as respect for human rights and differences and social inequality.

• *Social Justice:* IFSW and IASSW (2004) defines this value as pointing out 1) combating negative discrimination, 2) recognition of diversity, 3) equal distribution of resources, 4) struggle with unfair policies and practices, and 5) union and solidarity. The recognition of the diversity and the fight against discrimination are regarded as core values in the learning environment of social work undergraduate education. It is expected that the values related to social justice acquired during the learning process will be a guide in the life learning process and students will take an active role in the social policy field. In social work undergraduate education, the

value of social justice is handled not only in the economic and social-cultural context, but also in the political dimension (Banerjee, 2005: 38). Social justice value is gained through experiencing the intervention process by students at macro level in field practice (Johansson, Sewpaul et al., 2008: 262). Similarly, Johansson, Sewpaul et al. (2008: 262-265) assert that they need to participate in advocacy and organizational work which enables lecturers and students take part in social policy development and implementation. In addition, recognition of differences, internalization of values in struggling with discrimination or unfair policies and practices only provided in a learning environment where differentiation and diversity of students are respected. The values system of Thompson (2005) which emphasizes liberalization, empowerment and institutionalization and is designed not for the student but together with the student, developed by the student and involving close cooperation, determining educational needs, goals and steps together and making the student active at every stage of it. This process is driven by the interaction between the student and the lecturer. It also determines not only the relationship between the student and the lecturer, but also the relations in the education system, institutional connections and even relations in social life.

The value base of social work undergraduate education refers to which knowledge and skills are to be selected, used and developed in social work practices. The value base reminds us that every stage of any social work education process is valuable.

Value is one of the concepts which has a series of different meanings and also subjects to be used in an ambiguous form. It is generally used in daily usage in referring to the one or all the religious, moral, politic and ideological principles, beliefs and attitudes. It is widely used in social work discipline as the meaning of a series of basic moral principles that a social worker is supposed to carry out (Banks, 1995).

It can be classified as traditional and liberating values in social work (Thompson, 2005).

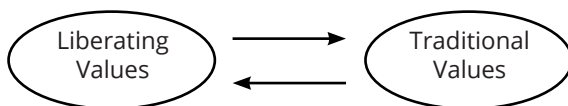
RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

Table 1: The examples of traditional and liberating values.

Traditional Values	Liberating Values
Individualisation, Outpouring of emotions, Effective - Commitment Acceptance, Non judgemental attitudes, Self determination, Confidentiality, Respectful, Conformity, Empathy Unconditional favouring acceptance,	Deindividualization Equality, Social Justice Working together Citizenship, Strengthening, Authenticity,

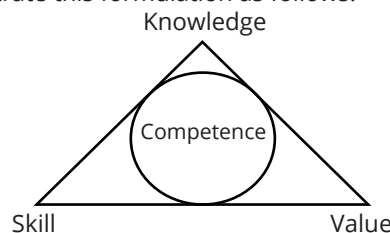
Therefore, values should be taught in a framework which is based on traditional and liberating values in social work undergraduate education. Both values form should be presented to students in a holistic and an interrelated way.

Figure 3. The framework of social work's values basis in social work undergraduate education



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social work undergraduate education refers to the process of how a planned and systematic change and improvement should a social work student has to undergo during four years in order to be proficient enough in social work practice. This process is based on social work knowledge, skills and values. To be competent in a field for a social worker means knowledge + skill + value = competence. We can illustrate this formulation as follows:



The value base of social work includes information about value and skill base of social work. The value and skill base of it form the basis of knowledge. This trilogy using social work undergraduate education as a base is given in a meronymy relation not independently. Social work undergraduate education is built on this approach. This approach also provides a framework for the basic components of the learning process, such as the purpose and scope of social work undergraduate education, the lecturer, the student, the learning environment, and the student-lecturer relationship. The content of this work is determined by the social work curriculum. Today it is expected that the curriculum of social work schools will be formulated in a similar way with equal distribution of knowledge, skills and value bases. However, it is observed that most of the social work curricula are concentrated on knowledge base, whereas ignoring skill and value bases. This also signifies that social work practices have been attempted to be carried out incompletely without skill and value bases, which is not possible. Therefore, it reveals the necessity of revising in certain period (min. 7 years) of social work undergraduate education curricula considering the bases of knowledge, skill and values. This allows social work undergraduate programs to use traditional and emerging models and methods of curricula design by balancing requirements that promote comparable outcomes across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate. In addition to this, the purpose and scope of social work education, the student-lecturer interaction in the learning process and learning environment should be evaluated as a whole for a qualified undergraduate social work program and these learning process components are essential requirements in the training of a competent social worker who are able to answer the needs of society.

RETHINKING SOCIAL WORK UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE-SKILL-VALUE-BASIS OF SOCIAL WORK

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