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SOME REMARKS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF SOCIAL WORKER

Social work is an occupation, in which, one helps other people for free. The main purpose of this help is to improve the social function of the individual, who because of difficult situation, is unable to improve his/her status on his/her own. Future of the individual depends (partly or completely) on the help offered by the social worker. The goal of social work is to stop the process of social exclusion (marginalization) by deleting its causes. This way of understanding the term of social work should be distinguished from the term of social help, which helps citizens mainly financially. Sometimes, in practice, it is quite hard to distinguish social work from social help because one of the goals of social help is social, and professional stimulation of people who are socially excluded from the society due to poverty, what in fact, covers with social work.

Ethical rules of social work may be divided into three groups: rules regulating relations of the social worker and the people who are under his/her charge, rules regulating terms with other workers, and rules regulating terms with employer. This distribution differs from the categorization of standards obliging in those professional ethics, in which direct contact with people occurs, and the essence of this contact is the fact of presence of certain dysfunction (medical ethics, psychological ethics, psychotherapeutical ethics etc.) In this work, rules belonging to the first group will be explained more accurately, as rules belonging to other two groups do cover with analogical rules of other professional ethics.

Two basic attitudes toward social work can be distinguished: attitude focused on an individual, and attitude focused on a group. In the first case, the goal of social work is to introduce the individual to the society, where the right rules obey, in the second-«reparation» of the obeying rules in the society, which cause the social dysfunction of its members. It is also important to remember that, as well as in the first, and in the second case, the term of dysfunction is indulgently, its understanding depends on the standards met in certain countries, but also subjectively feelings of the individuals. As a result, by the term of social dysfunction, it can be also understood as low quality of life, what it is impossible for the individual or the society to improve without anyones help.

Generally speaking, the basic rule of social work is the respect of one's dignity. One's dignity demands to treat the individual subjectively, perceiving in him/her basic values, and working for his/her good, not for the society's profit, to which the individual belongs, and to which he/she may cause trouble. The rule of respecting individual's dignity means also that social worker treats individuals in the same way, not taking the circumstances, personality of the individual, will of cooperation under consideration (the rule of equal treatment). Social worker is also obliged to respect the rule of self-determination, he/she cannot decide against his/her will. Social worker should also respect the rule of privacy, and keep the professional secret.

Recognition this subjectivity in conditions of social dysfunction requires few explanations. Firstly, as it was mentioned, a social worker cannot serve his/her help against somebody's will, this rule has a restricted use when the matter concerns a group of people (eg. family), in this kind of situations few members of the group may deny help offered to them. Furthermore, ability to self-determination is often limited (unemployment, homelessness, poverty, alcoholism), and the goal of the social worker is to restore individual's autonomy and full subjectivity.

Social dysfunction often displays so called "hard shell", which may be caused by not seeing the

problem or psychological problems of the individual. It seems that in that case, social workers has the right to enter this closed, inaccessible world perhaps not against the will of the individual, but without his/hers conscious permission. Social worker is even allowed for actions seemingly contradictory with individual's interest eg. strengthening unwanted behaviors or setting goals which are impossible to reach.

Social worker takes responsibility mainly for good of his/her charges in the ethical aspects (it is hard to imagine a legal responsibility for a professional failure). Difference between moral responsibility for work with a charge, and responsibility as a feature characterized for social worker, that is his/her ability to suffer pangs of remorse (feels guilty) because of the failures caused by him/her. Sensibility to someone's hurt, kindness, protectiveness, ability to keep one's promise, perseverance, determination, empathy are the features which are conditional when talking about responsibility.

The essence of social work is deletion of various kinds of social dysfunctions (antisocial behaviors), that is why social worker should constrain his/her personal judgments about his/her charges. Holding off one's judgments is really difficult, sometimes even impossible, but if we want the help to be effective, social worker needs to remember not to treat his/her charges as "worse" than "normal" people. Sometimes it is even harder to hold off judging seeing that people who are in a difficult situation, are the ones to be blamed for their actual state. The avoidance of formulating judgments can be called as a rule of tolerance. We can talk about judging also when people who are helped, are called as inept, helpless, and even retarded. There is a hidden tendency of seeking causes of the problem in certain features of the individuals, in this kind of occurrences. In fact, it results in a worse treatment comparing to the rest of the society, mainly due to owning those specific features. In order to eliminate evaluative descriptions from the discourse concerning social work, neutral opinions are used or causing positive associations (eg. "social sensitive groups" in order to describe homeless, orphans etc.). In spite of those attempts, there are still concerns that with time new, neutral or positive descriptions may gain negative overtone, that will adapt to popular consciousness of citizens who perceive people accepting social help as "the worse ones".

According to A. Kamiński, the base of this relation is educational function. Under the influence of social worker, the charge should not only solve a certain problem issue (find housing or a job), but also change as a human, and develop as rightful member of society, to which he/she did not belong. This kind of attitude states that the individual is deprived certain features, habits, and skills necessary to enable him/her functioning in society, and it is the social worker's task to help him/her make up the lacks. The weak point of this view is certain reductionism, as social work is not only about educational impact (relatively psychotherapeutical), but also about mediation, cooperation with certain groups in order to improve their living standards or offering help to groups addicted to certain services, in organizing their life. It is hard to find educational impact in such cases.

What is often discussed is also the attitude of social worker towards his/her charge. This attitude may be paternalistic or partnership, since there are not any considerable reasons to say that one of those two extreme attitudes is better or worse. Paternalistic attitude may seem to be more appropriate for people, who need external help but they are not aware of this fact. In this kind of case, social worker works as well as for the good of the charge as for the entire society. On the other hand, partnership attitude should be used by social worker in cases where individuals or groups ask for help in order to overcome difficulties, and who are ready for cooperation.

Every social worker has his/her opinion about human's nature, which has a significant impact on the way he/she treats his/her own duties, and his/her charges. In this case, social worker should become aware of

his/her own views about human's nature, and specify areas, in which his/her views have impact on the relation with charge.

On the other hand, term social work assumes specified conception of a human, according to which affiliation to a certain social group is a significant part of humanity. Impossibility or refusal of establishing correct relations is treated as contradictory with human ideal. For instance, according to definition accepted in examinations conducted by International Institute for Labor Studies "social exclusion means that an individual is incapable to participate in significant aspects of social life-economic, political, and cultural. We can talk about extreme social exclusion when incapacity in participation in those three dimensions, have character of mutual reinforcements than balance". Peculiar social relativism may be a disturbing part of the definition, according to which society, not the individual, has the right to say which dimensions of social life are significant, and also lack of explanation of individual's incapacity in participation can be a cause of lack of clarity. Definitions appealing to conscious desires of the individual for taking part in social life contain similar mistake.

Social worker's duty is to constantly expand, and update his/hers theoretical knowledge. In case of social work, it is important not only to improve one's «technical» skills of helping, but also to identify new problems. Social worker, always work in specific society, and solves problems which are typical for this certain society. Due to constant changes which take place in every society, social work should not only solve the present problems, but also it should contain an element of prediction and planning. A perfect example may be situation in Poland during recent years, when unemployment, poverty, and caused by it social exclusion. As a result of those factors, social workers will have to face the problem of violence in families in couple of years. Prediction of this kind of challenges is assigned to institutions responsible for social work coordination.

In Poland, ethical norms concerning social work, have been codified in Ethical Code of Polish Social Workers Association. It is stated in the code that social work is treated as «society's conscience» and «propulsion force for social changes» (second opinion is not uncontroversial). Except rules, that have been mentioned before, code gives to social worker the right to change the form of work in case former services have been used improperly(but it does not give the right of refusal of further help), it indicates the need of informing the charge with his/her rights to services. The code also orders to take care of common good, and demand changes in law if it is necessary. There are also controversial rules, for instance «social worker has the right to give confidential information without client's permission, when it may be crucial in professional matters (Dział II, pkt.12). It would be necessary to specify, what kind of exact reason, gives the right to break the confidential information. An expression of «trustworthy caregiver» formulated by Kotarbiński, can be found in the code. It can be assumed, that according to code creators, trustworthy caregiver constitutes an ethical ideal of social worker.

Some remarks of professional ethics of social worker

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