Supervision as a Space of Recreation of Qualitative Communication and Self-image in Caritative Social Work and Social Entrepreneurship

Supervīzija kā telpa kvalitatīvas saskarsmes un paštēla atjaunotnei karitatīvajā sociālajā darbā un sociālajā uzņēmējdarbībā

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The article deals with the specific possibilities and main principles of supervision in social work, caritative social work (a profession developed by Latvian Christian Academy and being nationally legalized) and social entrepreneurship, which is an innovative form of caritative social work. The article characterizes the anthropological crisis in helping professions and emphasizes the potential of ethically and anthropologically centered supervision as a source of recreating the practitioner's self-image, professional identity, and competence of the ethical communication meeting stressful issues in the professional process at human service organizations.

Key words: supervision, caritative social work, social entrepreneurship, communication, self-image, professional identity.

Introduction

Today social professions are experiencing methodological changes focusing on the innovative, anthropological and interdisciplinary content of the helping professions.

In this context, supervision as a reflective and consultative support of social practitioners with the aim of promoting professional growth is becoming of increasing importance in the global environment. Because where there is economic pressure to compete for 1) resourcing, 2) human potential, 3) efficiency and effectiveness of services, there is a corresponding demand for more interventionist management practices and qualitative interpersonal communication. Supervision thus becomes a location, where

needs for managerial accountability, professional support and innovative transformation meet each other on the level of interpersonal communication. This micro level of practices is increasingly significant – it reveals the possibility of reflecting, enacting and transforming globally affected policies. Complexity of clients' problems and challenges experienced by communities continuously evolves and grows. The challenges posed within the environmental climate in which social professions operate make the helping professions, and simultaneously their supervision, survive definite critical periods and search for innovative solutions and further development.

The issues of these anthropological, ethical, holistic, and transformative capacities and future tasks of supervision in helping professions have been analyzed by Weld (2012); Fook (2012); Fook & Gardner (2007); Beddoe & Davys (2016); Dirgelienė (2010).

Descriptive setting of the problem of the professional identity in the social professions

To identify the most urgent problems and critical points in the process of social professions, a research was conducted by the author of this article, – during 2015-2016 within the supervisions (conducted by the author of this article) there were regularly initiated discussions and performed questionnaires on opinions of social specialists (social workers, social rehabilitation specialists, specialists of social entrepreneurship) with the aim to recognize the main expectations, difficulties, types of problems, and wishes of specialists working at human service organizations, as well to recognize how practitioners understand the content of their human-orientated profession, what kind of meaning they attribute to their profession. Conclusions are based also on the experience and observations which the author has gained working as supervisor of social work specialists.

Common critical issues and professional risks faced by those working in human service organizations (Dolace, 2016):

1. rapidly increasing bureaucratic requirements, paper work;
2. increasing workload, overload, and overwork;
3. demand for quick results;
4. need, material problems (both of clients and social specialists);
5. aggressiveness of the governing body; lack of cooperation with leaders and authorities (feeling like 'empty space');
6. low prestige of the social specialist at the local and national level;
7. fall of value of the person;
8. aggressiveness of the clients;
9. lack of motivation of clients; non-cooperation;
10. loss of professional self-awareness and sense of professional identity;
11. permanent stress;
12. indifference to the clients' problems;
13. burnout.

The author observed low capacity and insufficient skills of self-reflection, and at the same time desire of specialists to turn their sight to self-image, self-understanding – this desire we compare with a longing to return to long-ago-left home.

Many of specialists considered that mentioning the self-image theme is inappropriate in a professional environment. They have been trained to develop skills of solving client's social problems, and not reflect and communicate their own inner problems.

Questionnaires and observations gave witness about a typical, dominating trend in the understanding of the meaning of qualitative social work and successful activity in the helping professions: there dominates a demand for specialists that they should be good at specific approaches, techniques, and methods of providing assistance to client. Most typical expressions are: "I wish to acquire what I should specifically do to reach the solution of the social problem"; "how to help"; "what to say to a dying person, alcoholic, etc."; "how to behave in the presence of a patient with serious disease"; "how to convince, motivate a drug addict, suicide, a.o."; "how to corrcctly solve specific situations"; and similar.

Results of our study are appropriate to complement with some aspects of another study of social work practice, carried out by J. Fook and F. Gardner. The authors, searching for possibilities of practicing the method of the critical reflection in social work, investigate the problems of professional practice. We are mentioning some of them:

1. focus on the parts rather than the whole;
2. focus on outcomes;
3. the tensions between value-based professional practice and economically and technically focused organizations;
4. the need to find ways to continually develop knowledge and practice that fit with all changing and complex context (Fook & Gardner, 2007, 18).

Summarizing all these results, it is important to notice some essential tendencies peculiar to the helping professions nowadays:

1. invasion of human concept, influenced by philosophy of pragmatism. A practical, pragmatic, achievement-oriented individual of modem market society is a typical example of reduced anthropology. This anthropological type has been defined by J. Habermas calling the practice of such a person as an "instrumental behavior" that is based on "instrumental rationality". Instrumental behavior is a threat to peers of a person and to nature, because everything is being subjected to achieving only the individual goals of the operating subject by ignoring the communicative activity (*see* Habermas, 1990; Young, 1989);
2. a tendency of losing a person, disappearing of a person and lack of qualitative interpersonal communication and solidarity. This process can be designated by term – *anthropologic emptiness* of the concept and practice of helping professions, characterizing the social systems at the 20th century.

Context of modern anthropological crisis

Turn of 20th and 21st century is characterized by all-embracing shift of social, cultural, and theological anthropological paradigm. It is connected to the crisis of traditional anthropological views (on anthropological crisis in welfare system *see*: Gūtmane, 2016, 21-28). Sign of crisis is inefficacy of existing knowledge about human being in situations where one should find answers and solutions to modern social,

educational, pedagogic, religious and other problems in conditions of aggressive social changes of the century. Symptoms of crisis, first, are expressed in practice – there happen rapid changes of the human person – new destructive dynamics have appeared: extreme psycho-practices, suicidal terrorism, pseudo-mystical sects, drug addiction, immersion into virtual reality, criminal behavior, terrorism and similar. Philosopher and theologian Sergey Horuzhy for the designation of these phenomena uses the term "park of anthropological deviations" (Horuzhy, 2004). Theoretical crisis of anthropology is characterized by the fact that existing theories and concepts cannot describe and explain this newly-emerged dynamics. That refers also to the main basic elements of European human concept. And now one should admit that this coherent, integral scheme with all of its terms is not working because it cannot provide an explanation to what really happens with a human being, and cannot provide strategic practices for education, social inclusion etc. to overcome the pathological conditions of this human existence.

Philosopher and theologian Konstantine Sigov, one of the prominent interpreters of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, describes anthropological crisis as a break between ontology and ethics in modem teachings on human being. With this break there are associated socially anthropological processes that E. Levinas define in the "theory on disappearance of a human being" (Sigov, 2004).

This weakness of anthropological factor today is the reason of difficulties to deal with tensions between growing institutionalization of social processes, economic pressure, and exclusion, on the one hand, and the necessity of social inclusion, social adaption, and effective interventions, on the other hand.

Here appears the niche for developing innovative, anthropologically-based methodologies of social work and social entrepreneurship. The anthropological aim of this social professional approach means 1) to restore the conceptual focus on the respect and value of human person to reach a new attitude towards so called *client* – solidary dialogue instead of formerly passive recipient of service and assistance (client); 2) master the competences of formation of self-identity and professional identity; 3) to do adequate exploration of the human needs and resources; 4) to focus on communication quality, interdisciplinarity, common good, and solidarity.

And in this context supervision with its transformational anthropological paradigm today is the most appropriate space for re-creation of professional identity, values, and competences for different specialists of social helping professions.

Development and definition of the caritative social work (CSW) in Latvia

The author would like to introduce with one of innovative, anthropologically-based professional concepts created and developed in Latvia. Concept and theory of Caritative social work in Europe has long history and stable traditions that are rooted in European cultural consciousness, which in turn historically has developed under the influence of Christian Church, Patristic ascetic anthropology, philosophy of humanism, and Christian democracy.

Catholic priest, doctor of philosophy William Ferree, when interpreting the text of Apostle Peter (1 Peter 4:8): "Love covers over a multitude of sins" (*caritas operit multitudinem peccatorum*), emphasizes that caritative work is solidary approach to a

human being, taking as a strategic starting point not negations and sinful state of a person, but the good, the vital that every person possesses in expressions only characteristic for him or her. Caritative approach accepts a human situation as it is, in all of its realism and at the same time focuses on the human potential. Thus, the nature of charity is integrating one (Ferree, 2003, 11). Father Ferree states that only such an approach is able to reanimate creative power of spirit inherent in a person – ability to answer the charity and become a companion in life-witnessing processes in one's own life and those of society.

In Latvia, Caritative social work is a new profession. It has been developed since 1997 – as the basic study program at Latvian Christian Academy (LCA) since its accreditation. The study piogram provides interdisciplinary-based professional socially-oriented education, which incorporates the Church Tradition of anthropology and social ministry. In 2003, profession of CSW was registered in Classifier of Occupations and in 2007 got final legitimating in the Law of Social Services and Social Assistance, which defines "the caritative social work as analogue to that of social work." The goal of CSW is "to provide assistance to persons, families, groups or society in general to recover ability of social and spiritual functioning" (*see* Sociālo pakalpojumu un sociālās palīdzības likums). Specific and innovative character of Caritative social work is determined by the phenomenon of *caritas* (Latin term, equivalent to Greek '*agape*') – divine energy of love and mercy functioning through a human person; active compassion; charity. *Caritas* capability lies in the heart of personal professional identity and self-image of caritative social worker.

Credo of CSW and its supervision: in the midst of methodic schemata and technologies never lose a human being, a living human person – professional growth stems from understanding truth and renewing caritative self-identity.

Caritative social work as activity is based in solidarity and relates to modem sociological statements and prognosis about crisis of individualism and liberalism in society. According caritative social strategy, social policy and social professions should become the builders of '*solidary civilization*' (The Caritas Europe Strategy, 2004, 6). Lacking anthropological reflection, social work and social policy has no possibility to critically evaluate existing trends in society. CSW which is initially interdisciplinary, cohesion- and solidarity-based, incorporates social entrepreneurship as a perspective form (or model) of social work, because the mission of a social enterprise is to improve the living conditions of individuals and to contribute to social-economic welfare, which are traditionally the agenda of social work (and caritative social work).

J. Habermas, speaking on the so-called '*instrumental rationalism*', characterizes it as ultimately simplified attitude of secularized society towards education and culture. To his mind, instead of this type of consciousness there should appear communicative activity as a precondition of becoming a person. Communicative interrelation as indispensable component of modem society means that any form of human activity exists within the limits of ethics (Young, 1989).

Problem of supervision for anthropologically-centered social workers and specialists of social entrepreneurship

Supervision is an integral part of the social entrepreneurship and professions of social and caritative social work, and as such. it, on the one hand, should adopt the shape and follow methodological guidelines of the social profession and, on the other hand, it should become the invaluable agent of the development of the 'supervisee-profession'.

Today supervisions for caritative social specialists which are working at human service offices are mainly led by supervisors-psychologists, infrequently – by supervisors-social work specialists. Methods orientated on discussing social work process (e.g., how to manage social case; what to do with aggressive client, etc.), or psychological 'ventilation', or other psychological methods used in these supervisions do not reach the inner goal of supervision of this innovative anthropologically- and solidarity-orientated profession. Expected goals of caritative supervision are following:

1. return to the self-image and personal identity as to the creative center of the professional capability. Today the most urgent and progressive concepts of supervision turn towards the focus on the person of supervisee rather than the work, defining the supervision as a moral agency which helps the practitioner to activate his/her inner recourses (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2006; Šneiders, 2005). Supervisor Nicki Weld in her monograph on transformative supervision stresses: "Being involved in this type of continuous insightful learning is what enables our true selves to be most evident in everything we do. It is through honesty and openness that we truly connect to others, and supervision, being a protected relational space, isnaturalyy part of it. (..) Our goal in life is to understand what it means to be human and to learn from life and then give this learning back to the world. (..) This is an ability to act out that real self in our lives and profession." (Weld, 2012, 11-12). If there is a lack of this deeper "true self", human being acquires skills how to put a "social mask" on, staying at the level of outer signs. The formation of anthropological identity as a strategic task for supervision means as well that there develops the capability of transcending (Latin *transcendentia* 'crossing-over, trespassing'). Philosopher J. Hull describes this ability of transcending in the following way: "That is ability and skill to transcend one's own biological reality, respectively, ability to make one's own biological organism into an instrument for achieving over-biological and over-instinctive goals. This kind of transcending potential contains ability of abstract and critical reasoning, imagination, empathy, ability to perceive spiritual symbols and capacity to integrate experience and knowledge by confirming all what is meaningful, what is higher than individual feeling of pleasure or pain" (Hull, 2003, 28). Definition marks human transcendence, first of all, as overcoming of modern individualism, and, secondly, as qualitative revolution of "instrumental thinking": not to make the people around into instruments for achieving one's own professional goals but to instrumentalize one's own natural anthropological dimension for reaching higher goals.

2. stabilizing professional identity, call, professional motivation. The issue of clearing up the motivation in helping professions is one of the topicalities of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007);

3. and resultantly – developing professional skills, competences, methods and techniques.

Supervision as a space of truth, communication and ethical growth

Regarding supervision as a space of ethical standards and moral development there should not be ignored the following problem, which become essential in the process of implementation of the ethical strategies during the process of supervision. Supervisor should be very conscious of moral discourse changes in up-to-date social consciousness.

In the context of crisis of classical European ethics, classical proclamation of moral norms and principles in helping professions has become ineffective. The method of moral proclamation no longer works. Tracing the decline process of the classical moral consciousness of society, theologians and philosophers (Yannaras, 1996; Horujy, 2005) have outlined several phases:

1. rejection of platonic (and later patristic) ontology or *kosmos noetos.* This stage has been basically completed to the end of the 19th cent. with the loss of consciousness of sacred unity of humans, nature and God;

2. rejection of the Cartesian epistemological subject – the famous "death of subject" widely discussed at the beginning of 20th cent.;

3. rejection of Kantian ethical subject. This "death of ethical subject" is a result of the Second World War and the experience of the Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism, which was quite correctly interpreted as a total bankruptcy of classical ethics.

Therefore classical propositional formulas, 'ethical dogmas' from above could not be practically personified by modem society, and also by social workers and their clients, and supervisors and supervisees. But, searching for possibilities of regaining authority social worker/ supervisor should not fall in another extreme – losing the Truth in efforts of improving social, etc. situation.

Describing this problem of moral "efficacity", Orthodox philosopher Christos Yannaras (Yannaras, 1996, 196) analyzes the specific character of Orthodox ethos, which is imbedded into Eucharistic community and Truth. There is a distinction between Truth-based moral position and between "ethics of improvement" peculiar to a large part of Western Christianity and philosophy.

The expectations of direct improvement of outer situation or other person (supervisee or client) are based on two premises, which are taken as self-evident:

1. one such premise is that organized effort, where individuals engage in struggles against other individuals or structures which maintain social injustice, is capable of bearing fruit and restoring the life of society as a whole to its correct functioning;

2. the other premise is the conviction, that correct functioning of life can be secured by an objective, rationalistic control of the individual's rights and duties.

On the other hand, Truth is still a teaching with the power to transfigure the world. The problem arises when "objectification of Truth" (Yannaras, 1996, 201) comes about. The historical and cultural life of the West has been built identifying the truth with a particular function of human logic. "Objective" truth presupposes rationality as the only possible way of interpreting and ordering natural and societal reality. In modem Western consciousness truth is no longer something achieved by a personal approach and personal experience, by anthropological transformation in the process of striving for the Truth, but a complete, closed system of concepts. When Truth becomes "objective", this leads to the "infallibility" of its representatives, of the bureaucratic structures.

The ethics of the supervision aims neither at an "improvement" in the objective conditions of life, nor at an "improvement" in the character of other individuals. Its aim is to enable life to operate in the limitless scope of personal freedom, the freedom which can be existentially realized only as an event of communion or '*communal becoming*'.

Also in Russian Orthodox theology we can find similar theological position – S. Horujy proposes topicality of 'experiential ethics' today opposed to any abstract ethics (*see* Horujy, 2005).

This type of ethos stems from Orthodox patristic and monastic ethical tradition which is based on two factors: 1) divine and human love and 2) personal communion. This does not make ethics a doctrine; it is rather like a live instruction or counseling. Contrary to other frequent accusations of ascetic ethics, it is not egoistic or purely individualistic. The God-man connection, being personal, in. hides al the same time rich inter-subjective aspects. These inter-subjective or "counciliary" (Rus. '*soborny*') aspects shape appropriate methodology of developing solidarity, associations and communities – links of life and ethically-based relations which penetrates and heals the canvas of social life.

At the starting point the Ethical Space, i.e., the sphere of validity of ethical judgments, coincides here with the Space of the personal experience of love and *praxis* of *caritas*. This personal ethical space is, of course, much smaller than the whole Human Space (space of human and social being), which serves as Ethical Space for classical European ethics. But the experiential Ethical Space is also expanding, keeping always its personalistic and cohesive nature.

The process of approaching and experiencing the Truth in the relational space of supervision is an important catalyst of the reciprocal transformation of participants of supervision (Weld, 2012). Emphasis on the transformative function of supervision becomes more and more remarkable (Shohet, 2011).

The anthropological principles of qualitative ethical communication is further developed by T. Florenskaya – modem Christian psychologist (*see* Florenskaya, 2001):

1. main condition of ethical dialogical communication – the recognition of potential spiritual "I" of the other person;

2. from it results that it is not possible to make pressure and lead a person by not doing him or her harm. The deepness of other person is a secret to us. In the dialogue, due to the quality of relationships, personality of companion unfolds itself; it allows seeing its mystery. Also the authority of 20th century pastoral theology Metropolitan of Surozh Anthony (Bloom) points out that in communication with a seriously ill or spiritually injured person the basic law is to avoid a dominating activity, which is expressed as efforts to help him or her by calming down, preaching and convincing about spiritual issues (before this person has even asked ill). The condition of caritative approach in that way become – waiting, which is regarded as equal to inner, charged with tension, silence, which in turn is charged with prayer, utmost devotion, listening and concentrating on the other. This caritative scarifying or *ek-stasis* is goal-oriented coming closer to a break int relationships when an individual, which has closed him of herself in suffering, first one gives an impulse for a serious conversation about things that touch his core of personality (Anthony (Bloom), 2005);

3. qualitative communication is the one, in which there takes place acceptance of a person and that is based on conviction about dignity (image of God in personality) of that person, not considering the actual state of this person. Wisdom of love exists in ability to see in dynamic unity the person's both spiritual potential (seeing his or hers spiritual face), and actual existence as well as in ability to critically separate and evaluate this actual behaviour, and in case of need to express one's firm attitude towards it;

4. caritative dialogue is also a therapeutic process (in most general sense), in which partners help one another to make spiritual "I" of each one real, visible – to embody it in actual processes of social life, respectively, to help the other realizing, acknowledging him or her as a person. These challenges require the further development of the concept and practice of supervision updating transformative, ethical and anthropological functions of supervision. Supervision continues to develop as a tool of professional development.

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Kopsavilkums

Raksts aplūko supervīzijas galvenos principus un specifiskas iespējas sociālajā darbā, karitatīvajā sociālajā darbā un sociālajā uzņēmējdarbībā, kas rakstā tiek aplūkota kā karitatīvā sociālā darba inovatīva forma. Rakstā tiek aprakstīta antropoloģiskā krīze palīdzošajās profesijās un tiek uzsvērts ētiski un antropoloģiski centrētas supervīzijas potenciāls kā avots praktiķa paštēla, profesionālās identitātes, un kompetences atjaunotnei, tādai kompetencei, kas sastopas ar sarežģītiem jautājumiem profesionālajos procesos cilvēkpakalpojumu organizācijās.

Atslēgas vārdi: supervīzija, karitatīvais sociālais darbs, sociālā uzņēmējdarbība, paštēls, profesionālā identitāte.

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