

Work, Mental Health, Social Economy. New possibilities of development in social work¹.

In accordance with the contemporary community approach to social work, it is accepted that, broadly understood earning of money by individuals and groups who are on social benefits, is the most desired outcome of socio-therapeutic activities. This approach assumes not only the guarantee of full rights of participation in all areas of social life, to marginalized persons, but also the positive responsibilities of individuals both towards others and themselves regardless of limitations encountered (Niesporek, Wódz 2003).

Social politics includes the problem of reintegration of marginalized persons into the so called mainstream of life as one falling into the area of civil participation and the laws and responsibilities held by all members of a community A. Giddens [1999, p. 92] “reintegration” is defined as the actual participation of individuals in given areas of public life, it is also stated that in societies where employment plays a significant part in the self assessment and level of functioning of the individual, access to it is one of the main requirements of participating in key manifestations of community life.

Work and mental health are synonyms. Persons devoid of it lose their ability to function within society. Overtaken by inactivity these individuals fall out of the mainstream of life, not only losing the ability to keep up with social changes but also the ability to make meaningful life changing decisions. The future of well developed societies, the perspective of deindustrialization is linked to the periodic decline of the need for work, in its current industrial meaning, it is also linked to the necessity of searching for – in light of the ever growing phenomenon of mass unemployment, which will continue to change the structure of society – a means by which to maintain the dignity of individuals as well as the unity of society (Rifkin 2001). Optimism may be

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sought in the J. Lipiec conviction 2001, pp. 218-220], that a multidirectional development in work ethics may be anticipated, for work – as a corner stone in the values of civilization and an example of the creative powers of humanity, can not be an area for unresolved moral conflicts. In other words its is a forecast of the end of the fundamentalistic dictatorship of the market, which unceasingly aims to spread its influence to all areas of importance in human life, starting from moral values, through family ties all the way up to esthetic and intellectual values (Soros 1999, p. 24).

Work is not only a means of entering the world of resources but also the source, of a sense of authorship and authority. In industrialized societies employment was the value which defined the identity of individuals, today this role of work is rather limited. Persons fit to work today may in the future find themselves in the same situation as those socially redundant. Thus in attempting to bring about a renaissance of local communities, the degree to which the “left-overs” of economic development category (Bauman 2004) should be incorporated into the new modes of functioning, for the common good, should be carefully considered.

Anticipation of change with regards to the unfavorable position on the work market, of those individuals threatened by permanent social exclusion, can especially be seen in the solutions sought by non government organizations which make up the so called social economy sector.

Social economy generally refers to activities falling between those of the private and public sectors lead by a group of organizations, made up of companies that mutually help each other, associations as well as foundations that set individual and social values higher than those of monetary gain. The aim of these organizations is to meet the needs unmet by either enterprises on the free market or public institutions. These needs are linked to the category of social unity, which encompass most importantly the creation of work places, stimulating local entrepreneurship as well as nurturing stability of the market place (Roelants 2002). The definition of social economy is; a specific social movement created by various civil organizations. By having the potential to be community forming as well as being locally rooted, this movement is re-discovering values such as mutuality, volunteering, and solidarity. It brings with itself a hope for improvement in modern society, through a reintegration of economic activity with community life. The freedom of the individual, in that economic freedom has to coincide with a sense of responsibility for oneself, family and society, as taught by L. Erhard the father of German ordoliberalism (Kaczmarczyk, Pysz 2004). Shaping work ethics, whilst searching for an axiological and normative basis for social and economic

development, almost by definition should incorporate the role of the family, which next to employment is a fundamental element in coherent human communities.

In general the search for a polish model of social economics is as described by A. Giddens (1999), a quest along “the third way”, on which there are no social rights without the simultaneous commitment of the individual. In this context the aim of social work is the co-creation of social arenas which will correspond to 1) the current needs and abilities of the individuals looking for employment as well as 2) the ideas of the given society concerning norms which should govern the functioning of local communities. Today’s social politics shapes this idea by maintaining as its main point of concern, the problem of employment and the main interest of social workers is almost exclusively the relationship of the individual to the employment market. Simultaneously the main obstacle hindering practical actions being taken is a process, which on the one hand is limiting job opportunities in businesses on the free market, whilst on the other hand is creating these opportunities – at an unequal rate to the mentioned reduction, within the third sector. Moreover the fact that income gained within the first sector determines the development of civil enterprise, markedly limits optimism with regards to the *workfare* concept. The rising cost of social aid must however be kept in mind, – the famous “compensation of compensation” N. Luhman (1994) – especially that linked to the passive forms of public “care”. Lack of work, the ability to earn a living is ultimately the loss of social capital.

Proof of the special meaning of “employment” with regards to the shaping vision of polish social politics can be found in: EU documents (for e.g. in The Lisbon Strategy), the National Polish Strategy for Social Integration, in attempts to include sections referring to social politics into the Plan of National Development, as well as growing numbers of academic analysis and publications (Golinowska 2004). The participation of a number of non-government organizations in the Community Initiative EQUAL is also of importance, this participation will contribute to their stronger representation in politics. The importance of “employment politics” is also underlined by the recent introduction of new legal regulations in Poland. New laws regarding “Public benefits and volunteer work” as well as “Social employment” are key elements in a series of legal regulations which are established so called in the “third way” state policy and for civil society.

The potential direction of the development of social work, with socially excluded persons will be described using examples of solutions implemented in Kraków, targeted at helping those handicapped by mental illness.

A part of the community system of treatment, psychotherapy and rehabilitation of persons suffering from schizophrenia, led for many years by the Chair of Psychiatry Collegium Medicum Jagiellonian University, as well as the Psychiatry Clinic for Adults of the University Hospital, in conjunction with social services, nongovernmental organizations made up of experts, patients and their families is concerned with the problem of lack of employment for persons suffering from a mental illness. The socio-employment rehabilitation program is based on the assumption that the effectiveness of therapeutic actions, is depended on the level of integration of newly acquired social skills as well as traditional therapeutic modalities with the possibility of the person suffering from the mental illness to acquire – at various stages of the rehabilitation process – specific skills required in a form of employment existing in reality. It is for this reason that in a broader range of treatment programs, psychotherapy and rehabilitation of persons suffering a mental illness, an integral part of which are the following: the Outpatient Department for the Therapy and Rehabilitation of Psychosis, Day Clinic, Family Advice Center, Hostel, Occupational Therapy Workshops – possibilities of creating economic enterprises, which will be able to employ mentally ill persons are being sought out. This kind of activity is linked to the practice of initiating various non-government organizations, geared at socio-employment reintegration of persons having been through a mental health crisis. The first such organizations was the “Hamlet” Foundation in Kraków (established in 1992), which created job opportunities in a social firm called – Miodowa 9 café. The café employs a group of patients, with other individual patients having the opportunity to gain work experience there.

Another form of development within Krakow’s psychiatric services resulted from the necessity of coordinating activities aimed at the reintegration of employment and community education – embarked upon in programs such as the national „Schizophrenia – Open the Doors” program aimed at reducing the discrimination and isolation suffered by persons with a mental illness. The Association for the Development Community Psychiatry and Care came about. In conjunction with the Family Association “Mental Health” another venture aimed at creating more job opportunities at the Center of Professional Activity was undertaken – namely the Hotel and Restaurant “U Pana Cogito”. The Center, in which 18 persons handicapped by schizophrenia have found employment, is closely integrated with Occupational Therapy Workshop and a broader range of local psychiatric services. An important aim of the association is establishing a model for polish social enterprises to be used as a tool for social development. This aim is being realized by Kraków Initiative

for Social Economy – Cogito, or in other words the Partnership for Development created as part of the EQUAL program in 2004. The functioning of such social enterprises throughout Europe mainly depends on the provision of various, complimentary social and rehabilitation services, directed towards the project participants as well as producing products or services whose price is not necessarily dictated by market conditions. The elaboration of an income sufficient to cover costs of the enterprise without necessarily gaining a profit is none the less a mandatory requirement.

There is no one answer to the question of how employment influences the symptoms of mental illness. It is however unarguable that the results of psychiatric care programs which appropriately integrated employment into the broader range of treatment and rehabilitation, have been spectacular (Kaszyński 2004). The organization of various forms of social-employment support should occur at a municipal level with close co-operation of mental health professionals, social workers, employment centers and patients. National initiatives aimed at creating local projects of mental health awareness are crucial; their goals should be the involvement of persons, who have experienced a mental health crisis, in the life of society and especially work as one societies most important aspects.

The development of Polish social enterprises, able to include persons suffering a mental illness and other handicapped persons into their work force, is dependent among other things on third sector employers maintaining a “close distance” to mechanisms governing the free market, the renaissance of the co-operative movement, the new “non-charitable” mentality of representatives of non-government organizations, as well as to the development of work ethics and knowledge of the market place.

If we are thus trying to attain a civil society which possesses “power/work”, investment is also crucial. Investment thanks to which the process of unemployed economic growth in Poland could be stopped (Kwiatkowski, Tokarski 2004), macroeconomic analysis showing its responsibility for 19% of general unemployment, 40% of unemployment amongst youth, lowest employment index in Europe, reaching 51%, also negative consequence of human activity on the black market.

Exclusion of people suffering mental health problems from the job market manifests with specific strength. According to advice received by the National Strategy for Social Integration (Kaszyński 2003) the target group shows an employment index of 10-20% while the level of unemployment reaches 30-35% and in comparison to the whole cohort of handicapped persons is at a level twice as high. Simultaneously all forms of social-employment

rehabilitation services available in Poland provides for 10 thousand people, which – taking into account the 120 thousand member subgroup of people suffering a mental illness – meets the needs of a mere 10%. It should be noted that the group of people with psychiatric disorders who are permanently dependent on institutions providing social care, in Poland – number over 500 thousand.

There are four fundamental reasons for the exclusion of those suffering a mental illness from the job market: 1) An inadequate number of positions suited to the individual needs of the beneficiaries, 2) the phenomenon of stigma and discrimination, 3) long term dependence of ill persons to passive forms of social services as well as to 4) older family members. In accordance to the above mentioned reasons for exclusion, the education and training of social workers should be linked to activities in four areas: 1) analytic, assessing new possibilities for social enterprises, 2) community awareness aimed at reducing stigmatization and discrimination of mentally ill persons, 3) practical activities linked to creating social enterprises and creating support networks for them, 4) involving the self-help movement of families of the mentally ill, to take part in the development of social enterprises.

The involvement of social workers in the organization of the third sector as well as support for them within the framework of the polish social economy model will cause the future development of this profession to be dynamic. This development will be strictly related to both theoretical and empirical research into the structural determinants of social problems. It will therefore create further as well as more complex interdependence between social work and sociology as well as shaping the so called sociological perspective in social work, simply called sociological social work by L. Dominielli (1997). In its context sociological social work, by taking into account the complexity of the axiological and normative system, seeks to answer the question of broadly understood aid in light of the needs of the individual, group and local community, it analyses the ability of it being implemented in a specific social context, and looks for answers to questions concerning the type of relations existing between institutions concerned with provision of aid and other more isolated elements of social structure. Moreover is identifies micro and macro structural elements which determine the above mentioned relations. Functions of institutions of care, the direction of their evolution, the rules and values they take onboard as well as issues of social politics and the philosophy of aid, support and care provide a rich source of inspiration for both theoretical and empirical studies conducted by representatives of sociological social work.

The structural approach in social work, when referring to sociological descriptions about the nature of society, human relationships, interactions and social institutions, remains strongly influenced by the sociology of power – especially noting the distribution of finances and social rights. The main source for this type of social work is research done by applied sociologists (Frysztański 1996) as well as the methodology of social work directed towards resolution of social problems existing in specific local environments. Specifics of the defined orientation in social work is linked to the attempt of integrating within its framework sociological knowledge, containing a critique of the described social reality, alongside imperative practical actions – which are the immanent aspect of social work. An analysis of applied sociology with its critical and postulative contexts is becoming a crucial element – ordering the complex world of social work as well as institutions providing aid to various groups depending on social support. The influence of sociological thought on the practical aspect of social work and the organization of changes in social aid institutions remains debatable – it must none the less be underlined – that sociological thought does fulfill a sort of protective role with regards to social work. It's a kind of intellectual guarantee that social workers, whose practical work remains under the influence of legal regulations, the guidelines of social politics and the economy, will not lose the ability to see the processes causing the problems of poverty, exclusion and social inaptitude. This statement becomes all the more true, when social work is viewed as a scientific discipline tied to sociology taking part in the planning process, the giving and evolution of various forms of aid, and not only as a type of job, taken up in the context of a complex institutionalized legal-administrative structure responsible for implementing various specified directives and often hasty solutions (Wódcz 1998).

In this context the goal of social work is enabling individuals, groups and societies to take control of their lives by aiding in the understanding of various processes of life as well as striving to eliminate the sources of inequality and privilege, which are responsible for disturbing a balanced developmental process as well as for the manifestation of social discrimination. In my opinion empowering people and giving them rights without resolving the issue of access to employment seems quite unlikely. Simultaneously professional social work is threatened, if stripped of reflection about the conditions of its work and future consequences. I therefore draw attention to the fact that the vision of social work presented, linked to the “third way” state policy model, carries with it a risk for those social aid institutions located at the margins of main stream social politics, at the same time endangering the rights

of those using their services. It must be underlined that social workers are also responsible for those who “are not, not yet or still not able to work”, for we must not change from being spokesmen for social unity to promoters of discrimination against these groups, who may be described as not fulfilling the contract of being involved and co-operative. The essence of social intervention is linked with the maintenance of social integrity by stimulating development and support for all manifestations of inter human help, also those not linked to employment and economic activeness, because life offers a much greater array of goals.

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