

Economic and ethical dilemma of helping professions and volunteer activities

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Abstract: The activities of helping professionals and volunteers are reflected in the quality of life of all members of society and, consequently, also create a precondition for ensuring stable economic growth. Within the methodology of elaboration, the aim of the article is to characterize a different concept of human work of helping professionals and volunteers by an interdisciplinary approach (especially institutional economics and ethics). Adam Smith's concept of the moral philosopher and spiritual father of economics about productive and unproductive work is considered the starting point. The importance of helping professionals and volunteers is emphasized in the crisis situations of 2020 - 2022 (pandemic covid-19, war in Ukraine).

Key words: helping professions, volunteer activities, productive and unproductive work

1 Introduction

From time immemorial, the human community has had to deal with various adverse influences in order to exist. There are evidence of innumerable factors about the development of the human community through the management of these influences. The present brings a new quality to this development, including through the division of labor. It requires a comprehensive and purposeful approach to development, not just the so-called trial and error learning method. In terms of knowledge of systems sciences, human communities are open, living, cybernetic, complex and learning systems (Šetek et al., 2017). This means that they exist in interaction with their surroundings and have the ability to solve difficult situations of individuals and social groups in case of threat of their degradation or extinction based on the analysis of the results of their functioning so far. The dominant role within these systems is represented by human resources, namely helping professions and volunteers. As a result of the division of labor in society, these groups of the population have set aside to deal with difficult situations accompanying human life (Novotná, Volek; 2014).

It can be stated that the events (wars, pandemics, natural and environmental disasters) accompanying the human community from time immemorial to the present are clear proof of the importance of these specialized professions and volunteering activities. Their importance is also evidenced by the solution of serious pathological social events (such as illness, disability, unemployment, loss of self-sufficiency in old age, drug and other addictions, the effects of crime, poverty and social exclusion) in the individual and his family environment. The aging of the population and especially the acceleration of the development of this trend after 2035 in the Czech Republic is also a challenge for the activities of specialized helping professions in the field of gerontology (Šetek, 2021). At the same time, the responses of helping professions and volunteers to unexpected events since the beginning of 2020, such as the covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine since 24 February 2022, are clear evidence of the moral strength of helping professionals and volunteers.

2 Aim and methods

The article, focusing on the current dimensions of economic and ethical affiliations of helping professions, is elaborated mainly by the interdisciplinary approach of the social sciences concerned to the above issues, such as economics, philosophy, sociology and ethics. The analytical comparative method prevails in the knowledge of the monitoring of interest phenomena during processing, which subsequently enables the determination of special or general regularities

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through induction. For the above reasons, the aim of the article is to characterize the specific paradigms of the economic and ethical dimensions of the issue.

3 Results

3.1 Initial philosophy on the issue

In connection with the beginning of the era of Industry 4.0, the social sciences and humanities are also oriented towards appropriate changes in society. Their interdisciplinary connection with technical fields is also reflected in the quality of services of helping professions and volunteer activities. This manifests itself as a result of the implemented social policy at the level of the state, settlements, municipalities, regions, civil society and the activities of individuals. As a result of its setting, a comprehensive view of the creation of a quality infrastructure for the human life of all groups of the population is significantly accelerated (Blaga, Jozsef; 2014). This is evidenced, among other things, by the events of spring 2020, when the economic and social system not only of the Czech Republic, but of the whole world struggled with the covid-19 pandemic. The helping professions, especially health professionals, social workers and volunteer teams, represent the global dimension of "first-line soldiers" in the fight against this pandemic. The war in Ukraine since 24 February 2020 and the associated migratory waves are also an initiative of helping professions and volunteers on and off the battlefield. These are the activities of military medical personnel, military chaplains and many other specializations (eg psychologists in dealing with post-traumatic syndromes of participants in armed conflict, workers of professional counseling for refugees, etc.). It can therefore be stated that economic development accompanied by an increase in the quality of life of the population needs to reduce undesirable phenomena on a mass scale (Dubin, 1959). Assisting professionals together with volunteers make a significant contribution to this.

The most important thing is to clarify who is considered a helping profession. The exact definition is lacking, let alone generally accepted or at least marginally enshrined in one of the normative acts (Šetek, Volek, Simbartl; 2021). Therefore, so far, not only differing opinions differ, but also a number of actions of practical content. The fact that it is not clear who the helping professional means is that the systematization of work with and care for him remains tied. According to economic theory, a professional, including a helper, is considered to be one who meets two main characteristics, such as the level of work given by the professionalism manifested in professional competence and performance first; paid work performed in the nature of a profession for the second time (Bureš, 2003). If a professional is to be different from an amateur, he obviously has to meet both characteristics, definitely only one of them is not enough. An amateur can be characterized at most by a component of professional expression, while a professional only in the sense of an employment relationship, but without proper erudition, commitment and success, he degrades himself into an amateur (Bureš, 2003). An helping professional can be considered an individual who has chosen to work in some "noble professions", such as psychologist, doctor, social worker and wherever there is the art of helping others in their difficult situation (Úlehla, 2007). In general, they can be classified as helping professions of physicians, nurses, teachers, social workers, social workers, clergy, psychologists (Šetek, 2019), ie from the areas of providing health, social, spiritual and psychological services to interested clients. Specialized helping professions include, for example, specialists in gerontological health and social care, palliative and hospice care, professional counseling services, community social workers, clerical services (hospital, military, police and prison chaplains), etc. (Šetek, Alina, Bajer; 2019).

Volunteers in social and health services can be considered as a special group of helping professions, as a form of human solidarity without the right to financial remuneration through wages. For this reason, it also saves public budgets. The role of volunteers in today's services is supportive (Act No. 198/2002 Coll., On volunteer service), volunteers complement the work of professionals, increase the quality of life of clients of social and health services (Šetek et al., 2017). Although the activity of volunteers has its legitimate position in modern social and health services (especially residential), the operation of these services should not be based solely on it. From the point of view of economic theory, the above-mentioned groups of volunteers can think about the issue of measurability of their activities in accordance with the concept of labor productivity. As their work does not include wages, their performance is not recorded in macroeconomic indicators of economic performance, such as gross domestic product (Šetek et al., 2017). On the other hand, statistics quantify the annual value of volunteer work. For example, it reached approximately CZK 6.41 billion in 2018, and approximately CZK 9.3 billion in 2020 in connection with the covid-19 pandemic (Czech Statistical Office, 2018, 2020). The amount of the average wage according to their branch of activity is used for quantification. Therefore, in the case of the helping professions, the health and social services sectors in particular are taken into account.

3.2 Deontology of helping professions in the context of institutional economics

In the traditions of Western culture, which arose from the ideas and principles of Roman law, three basic models of aid can be specified - Christian, Jewish and philosophical. The Christian model is based on self-sacrifice, which is taken as the highest kind of helping others. The Jewish model is based on the tradition of understanding hidden things and facts,

where wise words and revealing advice of the experienced help the most. A philosophical model from the formulation of the Greek philosopher Protagoras: "The measure of all things is man." It is clear from this that only aid is judged by aid (Úlehla, 2007). It is important to realize that the helping worker finds himself in different contexts. The Western style of thought, influenced by Christianity, sees the struggle of couples such as light and darkness, God and the devil. One thus gets the idea that he can lean to one side only and develops the theory that there can be good without evil, light without darkness, or well-being without suffering. There is no doubt, then, that European culture tends to be more antithetical (Vávrová, 2012), which means contradictory. According to this process of thought, it is possible to assume the meeting of two opposing, incompatible and contradictory phenomena. At the same time, respect for complementarity is important, which means the meeting of two phenomena that complement each other and work together to create the unity and completeness of the whole (Hawkins, McMahon; 2020).

For the above reasons, the issue of professional ethics - deontology is a very current topic and is very often the subject of many professional discussions. Persons working in helping professions lead a number of ethical dilemmas (Otcenášková, Bureš; 2018), thanks to the increased use of new technologies (mostly in the field of healthcare with the onset of the Industry 4.0 era). The requirement to deal with the ethical principles of certain professions and to formulate them explicitly comes to the issue both from the public and from stakeholders (especially civil society, professional associations, etc.). It is always necessary to find a certain consensus of specific moral principles. Moral principles are too general and not functional for practical application in certain situations. For these situations, it is necessary to create an ethical model of action, where it is important that it is based on qualified knowledge of the nature of the profession and with which the subject of action could identify (Jankovský, 2003). The emergence of professional ethics then has two sources, namely professional competencies (which are necessary for the performance of the profession) and philosophical ethics. The formulation of the principles of professional ethics is then conditioned by the specificity of individual professions. The idea that it makes sense to strive to establish some generally acceptable professional principles is conditioned by the consequence of this specificity (Howitt, 2000). The ethics of the profession is thus not based on the general nature of work, but on the expertise of certain professions. Professional ethics have a chance of success only if they are the ethics of this expertise (Giacalone, Thompson; 2006).

From the point of view of deontology, it is certain that in almost every profession ethical norms go beyond legal, so law is the minimum of ethics. This is formulated by Georg Jellinek (an important representative of legal positivism) in his famous work *General Political Science and the System of Subjective Public Rights* (Hanuš, 2009). In this context, it can be stated that the qualification prerequisites, knowledge, and skills are insufficient for the helping professional. In particular, loyalty and subordination of one's own profits to the moral values of society and, most importantly, moral character must be added to them (Barro, Martin, 2004). These values are so important that without them, the individual cannot be a helping professional, which is not only a profession but also a mission. From the economic point of view, the set parameters of values for this mission thus create preconditions for the growth of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of social life (Giacalone, Thompson; 2006)). This is a reflection of the appreciation of human capital in social, cultural and religious contexts (Mlčoch, 2015).

3.3 Primary analysis and comparison of theoretical concepts of helping professionals

Based on a comparative analysis of the average wage of selected helping professions in 2021 in the Czech economy (doctors CZK 93,658, nurses CZK 53,468, social worker CZK 28,588, social services worker CZK 26,144) with an average wage at the macroeconomic level of CZK 37,839 CZK (Czech Statistical Office, 2021), it is possible to state a completely lower evaluation of some professions on the labor market.

The genesis of this problem is necessary to find the essence of the mentioned below-average evaluation. It winds from the independence of economic science with the onset of the first industrial revolution and the modern type of society. At that time, the impression was created that economics deals only with activities related to the production of material goods. As has already been indicated, this was the case in the emergence of a separate economic theory, for all the material goods produced represented the wealth of society. The Scottish philosopher Adam Smith, the spiritual father of economic theory, is a proponent of this theoretical concept. He first dealt with a completely different field - moral philosophy. In it, he considered solidarity and charity to be fundamental human qualities, from which the organization of society is also derived (Smith, 2005). This is illustrated, among other things, by his important work, *The Theory of Moral Emotions*, where he sees the basis of all ethics in social feeling and, according to him, the voice of conscience is an echo of how others judge us (Smith, 2005).

A major turning point came with A. Smith in 1776, when he published his famous work *A Treatise on the Nature and Origin of the Wealth of Nations*. Unlike the position of moral philosophy, this work established itself as a starting point for pursuing one's own individual benefit. From an ethical point of view, A. Smith can therefore be seen as a "moral philosopher" and an "immoral" economist. A. Smith's certain "immoral" attitude was essentially based on human labor,

its division, and productivity (Smith, 2001). If the result of work are material goods capable of satisfying human needs, according to his concept it is only productive work (unlike physiocrats not only in agriculture but also in industry or craft), ie work in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy (Sojka, 2010). According to the established function of productive labor, the main factor in the economic growth is the production of tangible goods as a source of wealth. For him, unproductive work was associated with the provision of an intangible service, so it falls into the tertiary sector (Smith, 2001). Based on the method of induction and inductive inference, after the analysis of A. Smith's theoretical concept, it is possible to unambiguously arrive at an interpretation of the position of helping professionals in the economy of the national economy. Helping professionals thus clearly perform unproductive work in the so-called non-productive sphere, and therefore their profession is considered inferior in society.

Analytical conclusions on the theoretical concept of Karl Marx can also be drawn by an identical method as in A. Smith. He was a fundamental critic and opponent of A. Smith, however, it can be clearly stated that they had almost identical views on the concept of productive and unproductive work. Marx's concept of human labor is broader, especially productive labor, leading to the interpretation of the theory of surplus value (Marx, 1978). As with A. Smith, his "degradation" of helping professionals in society can also be deduced. Moreover, according to Marx's interdisciplinary approach to economics, philosophy and sociology, these professionals were merely "saviors" of the interests of the bourgeoisie before a revolution aimed at eliminating exploitation, the source of which is the existence of surplus value. This is also evidenced by his ideology directed against the social doctrine and charitable of the Church, from which specialized helping professions for the needy were also formed.

3.4 The economic side of motivation for the helping profession and volunteering

Based on the already mentioned statistical data, confirming the lower evaluation (below the level of the average wage) of some helping professions on the labor market in the Czech Republic, the answer to the question can be sought: What is the motive to act as a helping professional in this situation? A similar question is directed towards motivation within volunteer activities. The common feature for the answer lies mainly in the deontological aspects in relation to the reflection of Christian anthropology in helping one's neighbor (Haškovcová, 2012). He represents a social care client who is assisted by helping professionals in rediscovering and maintaining the quality of a dignified life in difficult situations. For this reason, this category of workers does not participate as an actor in any coercive action by trade unions, such as a strike, to support higher wage demands. In addition, the volunteer thus acquires appropriate knowledge about these professions, this activity is an "investment" in his human capital with appropriate benefits for society as a whole in the future (Hlaváček, 1999). This is a typical example for those interested in studying and students of some fields of helping professions (social work, nursing, etc.).

The above statements can also be substantiated on the basis of theoretical concepts of institutional economics, which began to take shape from the end of the 19th century with alternative views from individualism to an organic and holistic view of the world. In this concept, economic categories and phenomena are interpreted as broadly conceived institutions in psychological and legal terms. Customs, customs, traditions, interpersonal relationships, etc. are therefore considered institutions (Sojka, 2010). In the spirit of this theoretical direction at the beginning of the 21st century, Luigino Bruni, a professor at the University of Padua, presented a detailed relationship between financial income and a subjective feeling of happiness (Bruni, 2013). This is the intended "critical point", after which the relationship "money - happiness" turns (Mlčoch, 2007). According to the interpretation of this theoretical concept, the lower level of financial reward should be a kind of "sieve" in the selection of entry into the job position of the helping profession, because it as "noble" is also a "mission" (Bruni, Sugden; 2013). Therefore, individuals with intrinsic motivation should apply for it. This is the subject of interest in the theoretical concept of personal motivation as an integral part of the theory of social capital (Hlaváček, 1999), to which Bruno Frey belongs within the interdisciplinary approach of economics and psychology. His concept of the "economy of happiness" (Frey, Stutzer; 2010) focuses on the relationship between wealth and contentment. With this approach, it monitors the extent to which an individual's wealth makes him happy, and the extent to which these are other matters, such as helping others in their predicament.

4 Conclusion

Helping professions, together with the activities of volunteers, are important determinants of quality of life, and therefore an important resource for providing support for stable economic growth. However, as evidenced by labor market statistics, the valuation of some categories of helping professionals (especially social workers and social workers) is below the average wage in the economy. In this context, the subject of research was the search for a motive to work in the position of a helping professional and volunteer. The starting point for this was the theoretical interconnection of human, social, cultural and religious capital. The mentioned capital interconnection is evidenced by the concepts of institutional

economics with a focus on customs, traditions from the family environment, psychological typology of personality, social roles, etc. as a qualitative aspect of human capital to provide assistance to those in need in their predicaments (Mlčoch, 2005).

These claims were confirmed in the "fight" with unexpected group evils, accompanying society, such as since 2020 the crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic and since February 2021 the war in Ukraine. It is not yet possible to forecast statistics on the performance of helping professions and volunteering activities as part of "fighting" these evils, as the "light at the end of the tunnel" is not fully known when the article was drafted (June 2022). It consists of the end of the war and the subsequent implementation of post-war reconstruction. It is therefore quite certain that not only as a result of the unexpected events mentioned, but also in connection with other fundamental changes accompanying the economy (such as population aging, modern forms of addiction, etc.), the importance of helping professions will increase. In this context, there is also a call within the interested educational programs for the training of specialists and the implementation of appropriate marketing campaigns for recruiting volunteers. An integral part of the strategy thus established will be respect for ethical principles, which will not always be fully in line with economic interests. It can therefore be assumed that the required consensus can be found through social doctrines based on institutional economics (such as the theory of non-profit, etc.).

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