

Pavel FOBEL
Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica
Faculty of Arts. Department of Ethics and Applied Ethics
pavel.fobel@umb.sk

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING IN ETHICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Summary. The social role of ethical counselling has been increasing. It proves that future and development will be more and more confronted with ethical requirements and professional help in this sphere. Ethics becomes the expression of good reputation, social and employee's expectations, positive changes, the overcoming of crisis situations. Ethical counselling can balance the deficit of morality in current society, and it is one of the solutions for creating a moral society.

Keywords: ethical counselling, ethical expertise, applied ethics, ethical competencies, changes of society.

DORADZTWO ZAWODOWE W ETYCE A ROZWÓJ SPOŁECZNY

Streszczenie. Społeczna rola doradztwa etycznego wzrasta. Dowodzi to, że przyszłość i rozwój będą miały coraz więcej do czynienia z zasadami etyki oraz profesjonalną pomocą w tym zakresie. Etyka staje się wyrazem dobrego imienia, oczekiwań społecznych i pracowniczych, pozytywnych zmian, przewycięzania sytuacji kryzysowych. Etyczne doradztwo może zrównoważyć deficyt moralności w bieżącym społeczeństwie, i jest to jedno z rozwiązań dla tworzenia społeczeństwa moralnego.

Słowa kluczowe: doradztwo etyczne, wiedza etyczna, etyka stosowana, kompetencje etyczne, zmiany społeczeństwa.

The counselling in ethics gradually achieves significant social acknowledgement and acceptance. It relates to acquiring new experience, looking for the new accelerators of economic growth, retaining competitive advantage. Its specific mission focused on ethical support accomplishes the important task for ensuring economic and social dynamics. Therefore today, we can consider ethical counselling an active tool of social changes. This

type of counselling service represents, similarly as legal or social counselling, qualified professional orientation. It offers a special social order and requires specific expert competences. The active entry of ethical counselling to social life is understood as some effort for social revitalisation, including human rights protection and the support of living in dignity. Therefore, we consider it the important strategic part of social transformation, the vitality of humanity itself. This role of ethical support is multifunctional similarly as any other forms of humanity support.

Despite some terminological closeness, first of all we should distinguish ethical counselling and counselling in ethics. While ethical counselling is understood as the professional ethics of counsellors or ethical rules applied during the process of counselling, the counselling in ethics expresses the implementation of specific professional dispositions (knowledge and skills) or a special expert activity focused on the support (institutionalisation) of ethics in the individual spheres of practice. Generally, counselling is such a professional competence and activity that enables to understand and solve specific ethical problems in some concrete sphere of life and practice. Theoretical disposition is only one and not sufficient presumption. The acquisition of some important presumption for the institutionalisation of ethics, the ability to enforce it in organisations and social life are not less important. Thus, we agree with the opinion of P. Singer that inly “that one who has acquainted with moral concepts and moral arguments, who has unlimited time for searching information and thinking about it, can expect that he will come to conclusions more often than that one who does not know moral concepts and moral arguments due to shortage of time. Moral expertise would be impossible for him“. (Singer, P., 2008, 18)

The dominant mission of an expert in counselling in the sphere of ethics is represented by the execution of professional activities to achieve the main objective – to enforce ethical changes, to propose and implement specific supporting mechanisms. In general, the institutionalisation of such counselling requires some specific *knowledge and skills* of professionals. Knowledge in this case can be defined as a complex professional knowledge necessary to perform this special work (i.e. in particular, to know basic ethical theories, methods, principles, concepts and approaches). Skills represent complex practical abilities to implement some ethical intention, including creative possibilities and the conviction of positive change.

The social role of ethical counselling is not still appreciated in the countries of former Eastern Bloc despite the fact that it is devoted particular attention in the countries with highly developed economies. Ethics is considered the expression of social and managerial exclusivity, the value added to their standard activities, the tool of social prestige. Individual subjects declare with ethics and its implementation their conviction that it is possible to solve problems honestly and correctly. They proclaim not only social but also moral responsibility of stakeholders, their philanthropic interest is implemented in cooperation with the centres of applied ethics, the management acquire the ethical style of decision making, the selection of

personnel for important positions is based on the evaluation of ethical requirements, companies and public institutions implement ISO quality standards with the significant present of ethical component, which requires ethical audit or ethical trainings, important companies establish subjects for ethical supervision, implement educational e-learning programs for ethics and so on.

We are more often aware of the fact how important is a correct ethical attitude and value coexistence. Interest in ethics had been increasing not only in our country, but also in other eastern countries, and not only with the globalisation of economy and foreign investments into Slovak business, but also with European integration, the acceptance of international ethical standards and the development of new technologies. Future and success of various social subjects is more and more related to ethics (in its largest sense). Analysts point out that the causes of newest economic crises are associated with systemic causes. Their character does not any more correspond with traditional cyclic crises. It is just ethical failure that is considered the systemic cause.

Similarly as the expert of the UN on global and economic changes Hazel Handerson¹, we are convinced that the changes for supporting ethics are necessary. This author associates future just with this new quality. We can overcome increasing social and global differences through the implementation of ethical norms into economy and company conduct.

The Slovak futurologist I. Klinec² together with economic experts dealing with future is of the opinion that economic system as a whole will be changing in following years. He is also convinced that the time of ethics comes. The opinions of these authors are based on the futurological project from 2008 – the Millennium project – the vision how economic system will be developing the following 20 years. The key word ethics took the first place. Ethics should become the decisive element of new economic order till 2030. According to these strategists, the concept of ethical market economy has been described. Now, it is necessary to implement it into practical life. There are 20 years ahead during which it should be implemented, and undesirable forms of behaviour in economy marginalised. Among others, it is also envisaged that the rating of companies will be also evaluated from ethical point of view – how and where a company operates and how it behaves.

With respect to social changes, attention is drawn not only to ethical relations in economy, but also to other spheres of social life (health, ecology, social coexistence). The question how to create a better life at the both global and local levels, social segments, in business and private sector, in policy and law, comes to the foreground again. On the other hand, ethics

¹ Hazel Henderson is a consultant for sustainable development in more than thirty states. She is the member of the board of Worldwatch Institute. She is the author of several books and co-author and co-editor of the first report of the Global Commission to Fund the United Nations. In 1996* she created the new group of indicators Country Futures Indicators. These indicators were improved later and named Calvert-Henderson Quality-of-Life Indicators. She presented the model of better future with the idea of everyone winning.

² I. Klinec, Slovak scientist – economist, prognostic and futurologist. As a researcher of the Slovak Academy of Sciences deals with prognoses and futurological visions, predominantly with the prospects of the development of global economy, society and the prospects of civilisation.

largely absentees in social visions and strategies, in social discourse about vital issues, in important mass media and in relevant interdisciplinary representation in the educational programs of technical, economic, legal, political and health orientation. The counselling in ethics also offers services for these spheres of preferred social interest.

The third Millennium is associated with a new type of ethics and social prosperity with such new spheres as nano-ethics, responsibility in science and research, the evaluation and use of modern technologies, the creation and functionality of ethical infrastructure in public administration, ethical audit, the ethical action of public officers and whistleblowing, the credibility of nongovernmental organisations and so on. These all proves that future and development will more and more depend on how we will be professionally prepared to respond new challenges of value and moral nature. Therefore, we attach high importance to the professional preparation of specialists that will be able to approach changes with ethical sensitivity and will cope with competent interdisciplinary discourse. We need such specialists who are able to defend and enforce intentions at the both national and global levels. Broad spectrum professional activity in the ethical revitalisation of social mechanisms is a necessary precondition for stability and unfair and misleading practices avoidance. Corruption, social scandals, physical punishment in companies, money laundering and other practices are difficult to be eradicated completely, but it is possible to reduce them by means of ethical tools. Today we know many effective procedures verified in practice that we can offer for this purpose.

Experts in ethics implementation must be included into the modern dialogue about the changes of society and to offer professional help. It is apparent that practice more and more demands experts in ethics implementation with professional competences for ethics. Counselling in ethics becomes a relevant expert service participating in transformation processes. This fact should be understood as an actual professional mission. Without professional support, the implementation effectiveness of ethics could be low and sometimes even harmful.

Professional counselling in ethics requires not only adequate professional preparation, but also the acquisition of some specific competences. Experts should always take into account a wider social context as well as specific conditions under which ethics is applied in practice. If we understand individual applied ethics as a specific free discourse with own formulation of theoretical framework, it is always necessary to accept its specific theoretical disposition, too. Ethical expertise as a base for counselling in ethics can never underestimate practical and social side of social fragment that is a subject of the analysis. The normative component is significant, but the descriptive component is not less important for applied ethicists. Counselling will not be beneficial if the knowledge of moral factors is underestimated. The knowledge of research techniques for their identification is an important precondition for ethical expertise and the effectiveness of ethical recommendations.

Professional discourse also becomes a suitable method for the implementation of practical experience, the base for the reconciliation of conceptual theoretical frameworks and practice. In other words, the success of applied ethics depends on the extent to which suitable methods and approaches to ethical analysis are mastered. Therefore ethical analysis and professional approach to implementation also requires adequate qualified skills. We can be inspired by recent ideas of R. Rorty³ and Z. Bauman⁴ regarding the specific mission of current applied ethics. According to their opinion, applied ethicists should accomplish specific practical mission.

The abovementioned considerations result in important knowledge and raise the question how such an expert should be prepared for the solution of ethical changes. It is obvious that an expert in ethical practice should have, besides abilities for interdisciplinary discourse, also such intellectual and application abilities that will enable him to perceive ethics not only in a concrete but also wider social relations. It is important to reflect actual topic in specific cultural and value conditions. Expert in ethics should also master the application effectiveness of general ethical theories for the evaluation of partial ethical and social problems. Therefore, we are convinced that an expert in ethics will only accomplish his social mission of applied ethicist if he also uses, besides formative ethical concepts, the methods from the catalogue of non-normative activities – specifically coherentism and contextualism. Their successful application in practice (for example by Dutch applied ethicists) can inspire us to a large extent. Some experts in the implementation of ethics persuade us that the methods and approaches are an effective tool for the solution of social and value changes.

So that ethical experts might be accepted for the solution of social problems, it is also important to acquire, among others, a critical and constructive disposition. It is one of the most demanding tasks for education as well as practical implementation which are very often given up by many theoreticians of social sciences. Ethics including applied ethics is in general associated with long-term normative tradition and efforts to work with preferred ethical principles. Despite the fact that this task remains the subject of theoretical ethics, the origination of applied ethics approximately before 40 years strengthened prerequisites for its constructive possibilities. Critical analysis requires the consistent analysis of concrete conditions and relations, the identifications of the causes of ethical failures, looking for paradigmatic cases leading to failures, the identification of actors and consequences and so on. Critical analysis itself cannot serve for its own sake, but it must be subordinated to conviction about the possibility of positive change, looking for suitable tools and procedures

³ According to R. Rorty, community from the sphere of applied ethics does not need so much people with perfect knowledge in morality theory, but people with journalistic sense for a good story and the talent of writer who is able to make it almost perfect. Philosophy is as relevant to applied ethics as to many other academic disciplines, maybe a little more, but not too much. (Rorty, 2006, p. 378).

⁴ Z. Bauman is convinced that the formulation of ethical judgments (should be) given the special kind of people who are reasonably expected that their positions in life enable them to reach general, future-proof and more than local truth. Therefore, it is desirable to attribute these special people, experts in ethics, the status that is specially appreciated by “common people”. (Bauman, 1995, p. 116).

for the implementation of expected changes. Critical and constructive function of ethical effort should not be succumbed to formal objectives. Therefore, we agree with other ethical experts that serious interest in ethical change also requires (gradual, purposeful) professional management of ethics. We are also convinced that such a change is not possible, or very vulnerable, without articulating correct values and their clarification. Based on the above mentioned, it is an ambition of ethics not only declare its importance, to formulate requirements and expectations, to refer to principles or to justify their validity, but also to implement same changes, to project a moral line, to persuade people in favour of value change.

Why counselling in ethics is not adequately accepted by our national practice?

1. Contrary to developed countries, the profession of ethician (expert in ethics) is not a standard profession in Slovakia. It is not included into the catalogue of working positions.
2. No legal norm has been adopted so far to support ethical behaviour contrary to other countries (governmental plenipotentiary for ethics, law on ethical audit, and so on)
3. Ethical service and the forms of increasing ethical credibility are not required on the market, by companies and public institutions, either due to low awareness (disadvantageous investment) or it is not socially appreciated or does not create an immediate competitive advantage. Companies do not work with a long-term vision, and economic uncertainty does not force to them to consider it despite the fact that ethics should generate profit on the market in the future.
4. If there are any positions for ethicians in organisations, they are hold by persons without required professional competences.
5. Higher credibility in favour of foreign ethicians and their services. Well-known companies are willing to invest much (for example ethical audits in pharmaceutical companies in Slovakia, ethical trainings in U.S. Steel, and so on).
6. No chamber or national organisation of experts in ethics; i.e. a strong partner of government and professional subject that could guarantee quality and professionalism.
7. The issue of ethics has not been worked out in detail with respect to its effectiveness in practice.

We are of the opinion that (applied) ethics will become a generator and supporting mechanism of social changes if relevant activities are strengthened in the following spheres, and therefore it is necessary:

- to extend activities of existing centres for ethics at the governmental level. Counselling and more ethical support will be only possible if Act on ethical audit is adopted, and the position of expert in ethics is included into the catalogue of professions;
- to ensure more support for ethical behaviour in mass media, to highlight moral models, to present and invite applied ethicians to professional discussions;

- to include experts in ethics into the preparation of social strategies and the solution of serious social issues;
- to initiate the establishment of national chamber and international institution for experts in ethics, a professional body with the possibility to certify subjects with ethical credit, and to delegate professional performance in the sphere of counselling in ethics and ethical audit;
- to create a national representative model for appraising ethical behaviour and the evaluation of ethical practices;
- to create and establish subjects with ethical mission in important governmental institutions, the Slovak National Council, state sectors; to establish mechanisms for reporting and supervision as an important precondition for anticorruption behaviour, personnel policy based on value preferences and the expression of sectorial ethical policy;
- to ensure conditions with ethical regime and respect for cultural and value traditions from foreign companies operating in Slovakia. The conditions should include a possibility of regular controlling by means of ethical audit;
- to transform the preparation of experts in ethics in the sphere of education based on worldwide acknowledged trends in the both theoretical and practical levels, and to integrate the most modern approaches of applied ethics and the most effective methods of the support of ethical behaviour into professional education; to create preconditions for trainings the experts in ethics and for the management of ethics in organisations.

But it is important to note that social strategies do not comprise more significant and clearly declared support of ethics. Counselling in ethics can balance some deficit of morality in current society and represent one of solutions to create moral community.

Bibliography

1. British Association for counselling. 1984. Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors. Form 14, 1984.
2. Etika & Poradenstvo & Prax/ed. Pavel Fobel ... [et al.], 1. vyd. - Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, Fakulta humanitných vied, 2012.
3. Fobel P. a kolektív, Organizačná etika a profesionálne etické poradenstvo; 1. vyd. – Banská Bystrica: [s. n.], 2013, s. 212.
4. Fobel P., Význam prípadovosti pre aplikovanú etiku. In: Prípadovosť – aplikácia – etika. Banská Bystrica: Fakulta humanitných vied, 2011. s. 7-28.
5. Fobel P., Nástroje riadenia akademickej etiky, [in.:] Akademická etika. Tvorba a implementácia etického kódexu. Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, Fakulta humanitných vied, 2011, s. 37-64.
6. Heller R., Príručka manažéra. Bratislava IKAR 2005.

7. Merry T., Naučte sa byť poradcom. Poradenstvo zamerané na človeka. Bratislava IK 2004.
8. Singer P., Spisy o etickom žití. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Spolku slovenských spisovateľov, 2008.

Omówienie

Společná rola doradztwa etycznego wzrasta. To dotyczy nie tylko globalizacji ekonomii, wejścia inwestorów do biznesu słowackiego, ale także integracji europejskiej, przyjęcia międzynarodowych standardów etycznych i rozwoju nowych technologii. Przyszłość i sukces odnoszą się do etycznego marketingu wartości, miłości, odpowiedzialności społecznej i etycznej firm, dobrego imienia firmy, infrastruktury etycznej w administracji publicznej, audytu etycznego, zachowania etycznego, odpowiedzialności menedżerów i lojalności pracowników itd. Dowodzi to, że przyszłość i rozwój będą miały coraz częściej do czynienia z zasadami etyki oraz profesjonalną pomocą w tym zakresie. Etyczne rozwiązania są wyszukiwane w wielu dziedzinach, a konieczne jest wyrażenie opinii, które wskazują wymogi określonego, interdyscyplinarnego i zawodowego dyskursu. Społeczności zawodowe i grupy eksperckie stają się częścią współczesnego dialogu i pomocy zawodowej. Etyka staje się wyrazem dobrego imienia, oczekiwań społecznych i pracowniczych, pozytywnych zmian, przezwycięzania sytuacji kryzysowych. Praktyka coraz bardziej wymaga specjalistów do realizacji etyki i doradztwa zawodowego w etyce. Bez profesjonalnego wsparcia etycznego realizacja skuteczności etyki jest niska, a czasem szkodliwa. Etyczne doradztwo zawodowe wymaga nie tylko odpowiedniego przygotowania zawodowego, ale także nabycia pewnych konkretnych kompetencji. Etyczne doradztwo może zrównoważyć deficyt moralności w bieżącym społeczeństwie, i jest to jedno z rozwiązań dla tworzenia społeczeństwa moralnego.