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SOCIAL WORK IN MILITARY SETTING

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ABSTRACT: One of the key elements of the success of a complex modernization program covering the entire defence sector is the availability of adequate quantity and quality of human resources. Staffing is provided in a highly competitive labor market by attracting members of a target population (generations X, Y and Z) with significantly different characteristics compared to previous generations. In addition to recruitment activities, the organisation's ability to retain manpower has become extremely valuable in terms of the cost-effective organizational operation of armed forces. An important subsystem of sector-level efforts to increase retention is the human services (family support) system, which provides personal social services to personnel. In terms of its goals, orientation, and tools, the professional activity carried out within the framework of the human service system is fully equivalent to the social work known or recognized in the civil sphere (Military Social Work, which has been officially recognized in the US military since 1945).

The author describes the nature of military social work, utilizing a multidisciplinary-based framework of general social work and the knowledge of the inner functioning of the army as a totalitarian societal organization.

The aim of the study is to help to strengthen the professional identity of military social work, clarify its competence boundaries, take stock of its objectives and tools, and contribute to the effective cooperation of the military's supporting subsystems (social work, health care, psychology etc.) that are provided to the personnel and their family members.

KEYWORDS: social work; physical, mental and societal welfare; systems approach; interdisciplinary team work; characteristics of a totalitarian organization; dual professional identity

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the complex development program of the Hungarian Defence Forces and their practical implementation necessitate a significant increase in the number of personnel (professional, contract, and reserve personnel). In addition to the increase in the number of employees, a further goal has been set to enable the human resources flowing into the organization to perform innovative, high-quality work in accordance with the requirements of the renewable organizational environment and mode of operation. Successful organizational integration, motivation, and long-term retention of a well-qualified workforce acquired in a fiercely competitive labor market at the expense of significant efforts is essential to achieve this goal.

The Hungarian Defence Forces must ensure its effective operation taking into account significantly different generational characteristics in a fundamentally aging and dwindling society, in a severely and structurally changed labor market situation, with changed employment conditions.¹

¹ Globally operating multinational companies, rise of home office work, atypical forms of employment, etc.

The personnel are made up of members of the young (Y and Z) generations, who differ significantly in their way of thinking, preferences, motivational characteristics, lifestyle, social skills, communication, education, and physical fitness from the previous generations. In order to win this target group on the labor market, a competitive salary is already “only” considered as a basic condition (“entry”), without which the effective recruitment of young people becomes almost unthinkable. In the field of retaining the workforce self-rewarding motivating factors, based on internal reinforcement² as well as employer image (brand), pleasant work environment, professional development, and career opportunity dominate. In order to acquire and retain human resources, the military must increasingly rely on the internal motivational needs of the target groups of employees, in addition to the purely material ones (external motivational factors).

Due to the organizational structure and advancement system of the Defence Forces, the generational heterogeneity of the personnel will remain in the future, so the effective cooperation of different generations with significantly different characteristics and needs will be a key factor in the case of the army. This age heterogeneity requires special action plans and intervention strategies on the part of the staff working in the human resources management subsystem.

All in all, the acquisition and retention of the right quality and number of human resources require complex developments and continuous renewal on the part of the Hungarian Defence Forces. Its priority areas are: organizational image; organizational culture; external and internal communication; getting to know the biological, psychological and sociological characteristics of the younger generations, and addressing the target group (recruitment); military socialization/mentor system; the moral/material esteem and moral status of the personnel; career image/career model; provision of modern technical equipment and infrastructural background; social care/family support system.

As the above areas of development are closely interlinked and in constant interaction with each other (they are interconnected in a quasi-“gear-like” way during the organizational operation) they should not and cannot be prioritized.

With regard that it is not possible to analyze the given sub-areas simultaneously and to map the interactions and possible directions of development within the framework of the present study, I will further narrow the topic of this article to one of the important subsystems that contribute greatly to personnel retention. This subsystem is the area of social programs.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Based on the results of recent research and practical experience, it can be clearly seen that there is a significant demand from the personnel for the effective operation of a social support (family support) system capable of providing personal services (personal counseling, life counseling, individual case management, mental health support etc.).

This need is expected to be even more pronounced in the future, given the high degree of mobility required of staff (and their families) (e.g. change of garrison due to deployment or reassignment, long-term individual foreign service, missions abroad, etc.). The social problems that arise in such situations and affect the entire military family often need a well prepared, professional interdisciplinary team with appropriate tools and command support.

² Search for joy in work, novelty and challenge, feeling of efficiency, spontaneous interest, exploration, etc.

The composition of the team depends on the given case, there may be a social worker, psychologist, doctor, lawyer, military chaplain etc. in it. Just a dynamic and resilient team with an adequate multidisciplinary composition is able to give appropriate answers to these complex problems.

The operation of a complex social support system providing personal services on an appropriate professional basis, continuous monitoring of the current social situation of the personnel, development and implementation of prevention programs and, where adequate, intervention strategies can be assessed as factors promoting retention of the personnel in the armed forces.

In the previous establishment of human service of Hungarian Defence Forces both management and co-working professions involved in professional cooperation, as well as human service professionals needed human service's professional orientation, competencies and tools to be defined as precisely as possible.

The legal norm on the establishment of human service³ defines the purpose of human service as "to promote the physical, mental and social well-being of the available human resources and to prepare the relevant decisions of the commander". The complexity of the goal and the detailed task system definition in the legal norm (multidimensional, holistic approach to individual well-being) as well as its interdisciplinary nature made it difficult to define the internal professional content of the activity and its competency boundaries had to be deleted. This made the professionally adequate and efficient implementation difficult, as well. Another challenge was gaining acceptance of the human service system among personnel and commanders, and the elaboration of a system of cooperation with co-services.

In my article, I describe the professional interpretation framework of human service activities. In my opinion, this will help to strengthen the professional identity of the personnel, to clarify their competence boundaries, and to take stock of the objectives of the activity and the means available to achieve them.

Given that during the creation of the interpretation framework I adapt the professional orientation and activity of civil social work to military environment, therefore – in order to strengthen the independent professional profile and identity – in accordance with the terminology used in theme-specific English literature I call professional social work in military setting „military social work”.

DEFINITION OF MILITARY SOCIAL WORK

Considering the fact that military social work as a professional helping activity has been officially recognized and functioning for many decades in the Armed Forces of the United States⁴ as a defining factor in the support system providing complex welfare services to the personnel and their family members, I decided to quote an American originated definition,

³ 83/2011. (VII. 29.) HM utasítás a humánszolgálat kialakításával összefüggő egyes feladatokról

⁴ „Military social work” as a military profession was officially recognized in the Army on 1st July 1945. Rubin, A., Weiss, E. L. and Coll, J. E. *Handbook of Military Social Work*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2013. “Major Daniel E. O’Keefe assumed the position as the first Chief of the Army’s Psychiatric Social Work Branch on July 1, 1945.” Harris, J. „History of army social work”. In Daley, J. (ed.), *Social work in the military*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2000. 3–22.

i.e. the definition of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).⁵ In accordance with it: „Military social work involves direct practice; policy and administrative activities; and advocacy including providing prevention, treatment, and rehabilitative services to service members, veterans, their families, and their communities. In addition, military social workers develop and advance programs, policies, and procedures to improve the quality of life for clients and their families in diverse communities. Military social workers provide assistance and treatment in the transition from military to veteran status, including a continuum of care and services for military personnel and their families. As the signature injuries and diagnoses (i.e. traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, depression, substance abuse, combat stress, readjustment issues, intimate partner violence, and polytrauma) evolve with current combat-related events, military social work strives to respond by developing effective interventions and policies to aid service members, veterans, their families, and their communities.

Military social workers engage in advanced practice including clinical modalities of individual, couple, family, and group psychotherapy; community practice and research; and case management to address a wide range of co-occurring mental health and physical health issues. Treatment goals aim to facilitate promotion of health, wellness, and resiliency for service members, veterans, their families, and their communities. This clinical practice typically involves the dynamic, interactive, and reciprocal processes of therapeutic engagement, bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment, and research-informed clinical interventions and programs. Military social workers approach their work with a relationally based, culturally responsive, and theoretically informed perspective.

Military social workers can be deployed into hostile and disaster affected environments to provide community, family, and individual assistance for military personnel and citizens in affected countries.

Military social workers strive to assist and to improve the organizations within which their clients work and live. Military social workers adhere to the Social Work Code of Ethics and the best practice and policy principles of the profession.”⁶

PURPOSE OF MILITARY SOCIAL WORK

The basic goal of the human service of defence forces and the activities of the military social workers operating within its framework is to increase and develop the physical, mental and social well-being of the personnel. The goal setting is based on the definition of health in the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), which states: “Health is a state of total physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or disability”.⁷ This multidisciplinary approach to the definition of health based on a complex, bio-psycho-social approach clearly goes beyond the traditional thinking framework interpreted in the relation of health-somatic medicine, extending it to other dimensions of the

⁵ The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the national association representing social work education in the United States.

⁶ „Advanced Social Work Practice in Military Social Work”. Council on Social Work Education. 2010. 2–4. https://cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Other/EPAS-Implementation/Advanced_Social_Work_Practice_in_Military_Social_Work_2010.pdf.aspx, Accessed on 14 Oct 2020.

⁷ „Constitution of the World Health Organization”. https://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf, Accessed on 28 January 2019.

individual's social existence and social functioning. The WHO Constitution states that human health is essential to social peace and security, and that cooperation between individuals and the state is key in this area. Values, such as fundamental human rights, social security, and the responsibility of the state for maintaining and improving health also appear. Thus, the definition extends the concept of health from the intrapersonal (physical/mental) level of an individual's existence – by introducing the social dimension – to interpersonal events that take place at the micro, meso or macro levels of the social structure and (formal and informal) contact systems. By adapting the WHO's complex, extended concept of health as a goal-setting, human service and military social work as a professional support activity face a rather complex system of tasks and professional missions. In order to see clearly in this dynamically changing field of action and to accurately assess the place and role of military social work, it is worth reviewing Ronald Woods's (1994)⁸ interpretive framework, which is a systems-based approach to human ecology, based on Welch's theory (1987).⁹

SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF MILITARY SOCIAL WORK – SYSTEMIC APPROACH

According to the interpretive framework described by Woods, the centre of the system (human ecosystem) is the individual himself, surrounded by the ever-expanding levels of his/her social environment, covering the micro, meso and macro levels of society. Each level has its own characteristics.

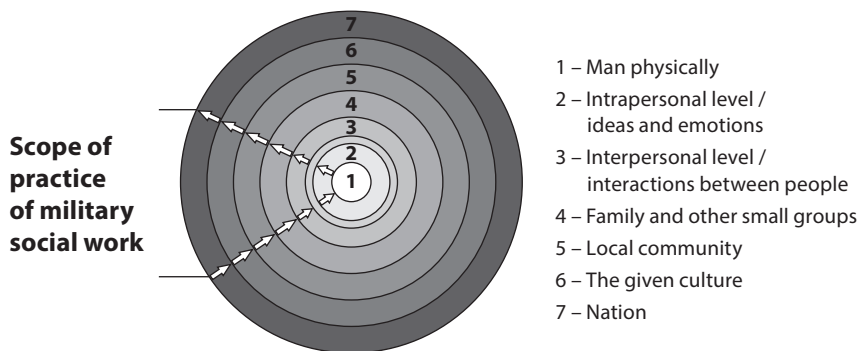


Figure 1 *The human ecosystem*¹⁰

There are two-way interactions between the individual and the social environment around him/her. The individual enters and acts on certain levels of his environment, and there are also interactions coming from his/her environment, as well. The individual at the centre of the system strives to ensure and maintain his/her equilibrium (bio-psycho-social comfort) during interacting with the environment, and to restore it as soon as possible in state of imbalance.

⁸ Woods, R. „A szociális munkások tevékenységeinek egy lehetséges rendszerezése”. In Hegyesi G. and Talyigás K (eds.), *A szociális munka elmélete és gyakorlata: Vol. I.* Budapest: Semmelweis Kiadó, 1994. 32–45.

⁹ Welch, G. „An Integrated Approach to Social Work Practice”. In McKendrick, B. W. (ed.), *Introduction to Social Work in South Africa.* Pinetown: Owen Burgess, 1987. 152–176.

¹⁰ Woods, R. „A szociális munka természete”. In Bácskai E. (ed.), *„Pokolra kell annak menni...”.* Budapest: Népjóléti Minisztérium, 1992. 18. (translated and edited by the author)

At each level of the individual's environment, there are natural resources/supports (e.g. family, friends, local community, municipal social services, etc.) that vary in quantity and quality in the case of each individual. In the case of a tilted equilibrium situation (problem situation), the individual usually turns to these resources primarily for help to restore the equilibrium (i.e. to solve the problem). In an optimal case, by using them, the problem can be solved on the basis of individually developed problem-solving strategies and methods, and the equilibrium situation is restored between the individual and his/her social environment.

However, if these natural supports do not function properly or are missing, non-natural, professional supports in the social environment (e.g. social worker, social educator, psychologist, psychiatrist, addictologist, etc.) should enter the problem-solving process.

TYPICAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS EMERGING AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL

The focus of military social work activities is on critical life situations that occur during a military career. These are the critical periods around which prevention programs should be planned, and during the existence of these life situations it may also be necessary to increase the monitoring and support of the life of the individual or group/community.

The following can be considered as a critical phase and life situation: integration into the organization (problem of organizational socialization); dislocation and adaptation to associated environmental change; military service abroad and related problems; adapting to increased expectations, obligations and environmental changes resulting from changes in position (e.g. receiving a new assignment); separation from the organization due to a reason beyond the control of the person (e.g. redundancies due to organizational change, damage to health); retirement.

The thematic and individual-specific prevention/intervention program corresponding to the critical phases of the military career is activated before the occurrence of the given life situation and exerts its preventive, helpful and supportive effect. Depending on the nature of the case, the activity may be carried out through an individual facilitator-support relationship (social casework) and/or through group sessions and training programs, as well as through information provided through internal communication channels.

The primary goal of the military social worker's activity is to restore the dysfunctional relationship(s) between the problem individual and the natural or artificial supports in his or her narrower social environment, to strengthen/develop the individual's problem-solving skills and, as a special goal, to support command decision-making (with realistic situation assessment, exploration of causal relationships, and forecasting expected trends).

ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK AMONG OTHER HELPING PROFESSIONS

According to Gordon and Schutz (1982),¹¹ social work should focus first and foremost on the interactions between the individual and his/her environment, its nature and quality. The more it directs its interest and the focus of its activity to one of the actors of the interaction (client or environment), the closer it approaches its professional competence limits.

¹¹ Gordon, W. E. and Schutz, M. „The Roles of Frames of Reference in Field Instruction”. In Sheafor, B. W. and Jenkins, L. E. (eds.), *Quality Field Instruction in Social Work*. New York: Longman, 1982. 21–36.

If it focuses on intrapersonal levels, it comes to the frontiers of medicine, psychology, or psychiatry, but if it focuses on the functioning of the social service system, it reaches the boundaries of social policy.

Thus, social work focuses on the relationship between the supports and resources of the individual and his/her environment. It seeks to restore the functioning of dysfunctional connections, and where these connections are missing, it strives to establish them. It means establishing a connection between the “user” and the “service provider” and ensuring an appropriate level of connection.

In parallel, another key area of intervention for a social worker is to develop the client’s problem-solving skills. The ultimate goal of the social worker is, paradoxically, to make himself/herself “redundant” in the relation of the given client for the future. This means that after the end of the helping relationship, the individual should be able to solve his/her problems on his/her own, with the help of the available problem-solving repertoire and tools – without the use of social work as an artificial professional support. According to Bartlett (1970),¹² social workers do not deal with people who have problems, but with people who cannot cope with these problems.

Returning to the original aim of the study, the question may rightly arise: how can the place and role of military social work be determined in the complex and dynamically changing field of action presented above? The answer must be based on the fact that the army is an integral part of society and, as an organization, can be well placed in the above system (level 5 – local communities). Its personnel is made up of members of civil society, who, despite serving in a special-purpose organization with a special purpose and function, continue to be attached to civil society through a ‘thousand threads’ through their systems of contacts at different levels of the human ecosystem. According to this, the soldier, as a potential client of military social work, must also be placed in the system (multi-level scope of action) presented above.

TOOLS OF MILITARY SOCIAL WORK (KNOWLEDGE, VALUES, SKILLS)

The system of tools available to a military social worker, like social work in a civilian environment, consists of knowledge, values, skills, and a set of objective conditions (natural and artificial resources) found in the environment.

General knowledge of social work

The general knowledge of social work covers the interdisciplinary knowledge corresponding to each level of the human ecosystem. Of course, this does not mean that the social worker has to practice other helping professions (e.g. psychology, psychopedagogy, mental hygiene etc.) corresponding to certain levels of the human ecosystem at the same time, on an in-depth and professional basis. The social worker does not have the necessary professional qualifications or the necessary depth of knowledge for this. Actually, his/her professional activity does not focus on individual levels or events within the individual, but primarily on the system of relationships between the individual and his environment.

¹² Bartlett, H. *The Common Base of Social Work Practice*. New York: NASW, 1970.

Thus, the social worker must have a comprehensive, complex knowledge of the system as a whole, as well as the characteristics of its different levels, the problems that may occur on them, and their prevention and intervention options. In relation to the given client or problem situation, he/she must be able to recognize and adequately identify the nature of special problems at each level, and then involve in the helping process (work of a professional team) a representative of the competent profession (e.g. psychologist, psychiatrist, advocate, etc.).

The social worker coordinates, facilitates and manages the work of the professional team in order to solve the client's problem situation. In addition, of course, he/she maintains the helping relationship with the client throughout, until the problem situation is resolved and the relationship is closed (or in the subsequent follow-up phase, as well).

Knowledge of a special organizational environment and clientele

The military social worker must pay extra attention to the characteristics of the special organizational environment where the service is performed (totalitarian and bureaucratic organization, specific organizational culture). He/she should also be aware that the repertoire of natural and artificial supports in the military's social environment is supplemented by support from the army's human resources support system (e.g. human-, psychological-, housing-, recreational support systems).

In the course of his/her activities, the military social worker must strive to enable those in need of support to make the fullest possible use of the opportunities and services provided by the civil and military care system, in order to solve their problems and increase their well-being in a complex sense.

Additional specifics include the knowledge of a special clientele (soldiers/military families) that can be described with more or less different characteristics from the members of the civil sphere (e.g. observing and appreciating the very specific formal and informal rules in interpersonal contacts, special attitudes toward military service and fellow soldiers etc.). In addition to the formal and informal operation and interpersonal relations of the organization, this knowledge means the knowledge of the attitudes, motives and behaviors of soldiers in general, which has decisive importance for the effectiveness of social work in a military environment.

Values

When discussing the values of military social work, we find ourselves in a seemingly somewhat contradictory situation at first glance. In this case, the democratic and inclusive social work, which has a fundamental value of human self-determination, dignity, diversity, and tolerance, meets a hierarchical, uniformed organizational order. In order to understand the situation, which seems contradictory at first, it is worth examining the explicitly declared moral-ethical norms that fundamentally influence the operation of the two spheres.

The preamble to the Code of Ethics¹³ for Social Work, adopted by the Assembly of Delegates of the Social Professional Association in 2016, states, inter alia: "The principles of

¹³ „A Szociális Szakmai Szövetség Etikai Kollégiuma által 2015–16-ban átdolgozott Szociális Munka Etikai Kódexe”. Szociális Szakmai Szövetség, 15 April 2016. <http://www.3sz.hu/sites/default/files/Etikai.pdf>, Accessed on 14 Oct 2020.

social justice, human rights, shared responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. [...] Social work grew out of democratic ideas and is based on respect for human dignity.”¹⁴

The current Code of Military Ethics¹⁵ of the Hungarian Defence Forces, which contains the basic moral and ethical standards of military service, includes the following: “Respect: respect for the values of Hungarian and universal culture, the historical past and military traditions and symbols, respect for service and human dignity, acceptance of human differences and personalities, to the extent that it does not constitute an obstacle to the military profession, as well as appreciation of the authority of rank”.

Comparing the above two ethical approaches it can be seen that the human and world-views of the two spheres are extremely similar. In the case of military ethics, although there are limits to the priority of practicing the profession, similar limits exist in the case of civil social work (respect for the rule of law and respect for the freedoms of other people). So the principles, the ethical attitude are very similar, the difference is only in the framework rules and in the room for maneuver of the social worker.

Skills

Skills are key factors in the practical implementation of theoretical knowledge of social work. The social worker, like other professional helpers, works with his/her own personality, and the activity is based on a relationship of trust between the helper and the client, and a helping relationship based on mutual acceptance and rapport.

The key skills of the social worker in establishing an appropriate supportive relationship with the client and in the further management and facilitation of the support process are: empathy; excellent communication skills (always in line with the situation, tactfully, if necessary diplomatically, and always congruently); assertiveness; the ability to think in a complex, system-wide way and to work with other helping professions (team work). In case of military social work, another important factor is the ability of the social worker to reconcile professional identity with military identity.

Due to the above reasons, personality development group sessions conducted on the basis of different methods (e.g. person-centered/encounter and psychodrama groups) are important and integral parts of social worker trainings. These group sessions aim to develop and deepen the self-knowledge, empathy skills, and problem sensitivity of helping professionals.

Another important skill-level knowledge material comprises those communication techniques that can be used effectively in various – often extreme – situations (e.g. crisis situation on the battlefield). These techniques can be internalized through communication skills development trainings.

DUAL IDENTITY OF MILITARY SOCIAL WORKER

In addition to helping and supporting the client (soldier/military family), the military social worker must also pay attention to the basic interests and objectives of the organization (HDF) that creates a dual identity situation: he is a professional social worker who helps his

¹⁴ Translation by the author from the original Hungarian citation.

¹⁵ 67/2003. (HK 18.) HM utasítás a „Katonai Etikai Kódex” közzétételéről, a „Honvédségi Etikai Tanács” létesítéséről és feladatairól

client, but he is a soldier/military civil servant as well, who is loyal to the military organization at the same time.

Based on my professional experience,¹⁶ I believe that this dual identity does not pose an operational or moral/ethical problem for the activities of military social workers. This is partly due to the fact that both the helper and the client serve in the armed forces on a voluntary basis, accepting the special, in many cases restrictive nature of service, and partly due to the fact that the human image and moral/ethical attitude of military and civil social work are very similar.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH, COOPERATION WITH OTHER HELPING PROFESSIONS

As it has already been pointed out in many places, given the complexity and multicausal nature of the problems belonging to its professional competence, social work is based on a multidisciplinary theoretical approach and, accordingly, requires high-grade interdisciplinarity for its preventive and intervention activity. For this reason, social work is also characterized as an “interprofessional profession”, as both its theory and practice synthesize and use the knowledge of other disciplines and auxiliary professions in order to achieve its own professional goals.

In this particular situation, it is not uncommon for a social worker to reach the boundaries of other helping professions (e.g. psychology, psychiatry, addictology, social pedagogy, special education, social policy, etc.) in the course of his/her practical activities. Despite the fact that the social worker has a comprehensive and complex interdisciplinary knowledge and, to some extent, also knows the practical methodology of other helping professions, it is unfortunate and even quite detrimental to the client’s interests and the helping process as a whole if he/she starts acting beyond his/her professional boundaries, and takes inadequate intervention steps. In order to avoid this, it is extremely important to recognize and respect the boundaries of professional competence, as well as the planned, coordinated activities of the interdisciplinary professional team, which in most cases forms the basis of effective social case work. (Of course, no two cases are the same, so each case requires a different intervention strategy and a different team of professionals).

The above statements are, of course, also true for social work activities in a military environment, as the members of the target group of the activity (HDF personnel and their family members) are also an integral part of the wider population. In their case the difference is that they are in special service/special status and are members of an organization that operates its own social support system as well. The key actors (cooperating professionals/services) of this social support system within the organization are primarily the followings: human, psychology, health, legal, financial and personnel services; camp pastoral service. These services, regardless of whether they operate on the basis of organizational segregation, must operate on the basis of a holistic approach to the WHO’s extended, multidimensional definition of health, maintaining ongoing professional relationships, effective cooperation, and mutual support. Offensive attempts at professional rivalry and, as a result,

¹⁶ My professional experience in the field of human resources at the central personnel body of the Hungarian Defence Forces.

the unjustified extension of competence boundaries, destroying quality and efficiency, point in the direction of dysfunctional organizational functioning.

In addition to the above, I consider it important to emphasize once again that if a given case – due to its nature – falls within the competence of social work as a helping profession, then the coordination, management, and facilitation of the work of the professional team is the task of the social worker. It does all this on the basis of a “contract” (mutual agreement on a helping relationship) agreed with the client, with maximum respect for the competence limits and activities of the representatives of the partner helping professions participating in the professional team.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the basic conditions for the successful modernization of the armed forces and the development of its organization is the provision of adequate quantity and quality of human resources. Not only does this presuppose successful recruitment in a highly competitive labor market but also focuses on retaining the quality workforce acquired at the expense of significant efforts.

An effective human service system (complex family support system) capable of providing personal social care (tangible, real help) to personnel and their family members with appropriate professional standards, can greatly contribute to the retention of HDF.

Given the complexity of human problems, this system can operate effectively only on an interdisciplinary basis, with the constructive cooperation of the various helping professions and services, with maximum respect for the limits of professional competence.

The activities of military social workers with a dual (military / professional) identity working in a military environment are in line with the work of their colleagues in the civil sphere – in terms of its nature, orientation, and moral and ethical norms. However, in addition to general professional knowledge, military social workers must have a thorough and in-depth knowledge of the specific organizational environment in which and the personnel with whom they work.

The work of an interdisciplinary-based professional team organized in connection with social, family support-type cases falling within the professional competence of a military social worker is coordinated by the social worker. During the team work, it is extremely important that the representatives of the partner helping professions involved should respect each other’s activities and professional competencies to the maximum.

Military social work, as a helping profession, must find its identity, represent its professional interests, and gain recognition with its results among both personnel and co-helping professions, as well as professionals and decision-makers involved in the development of the human resources management subsystem of the Hungarian Defence Forces.

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