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Charity Work of People Sentenced to Imprisonment

Abstract: In the current socio-economic situation of the country, it is difficult to provide work for all citizens, and especially those who have fallen in conflict with the law. In terms of social interest, convicted people are placed last in the hierarchy of people needing work. Therefore, it is necessary to remind the significance and place of work in social rehabilitation interactions towards convicted persons. An alternative to the lack of employment in the penitentiary system may be charity work, the importance and value of which is so marginalized in supplementing social rehabilitation interactions. The impact of charity work is multifaceted, because it concerns not only convicted persons, but dependent mainly on the social factor. Society also needs humanization in order to understand the process of social rehabilitation of socially maladjusted people, and above all, should be included in it. The social rehabilitation of convicted persons outside the prison depends first of all on the involvement of the penitentiary institutions themselves in cooperation with the local community.

Keywords: charity work, penitentiary social rehabilitation, social participation.

Introduction

Charity is mercy, goodwill and supporting the poor. Strictly speaking, it is a trend of Christian religious philanthropy. The name derives from the Latin word “charitas”, meaning mercy or Christian love towards the poor (Kopaliński 1989, p. 90). In common use, “charity” and “philanthropy” are often treated interchangeably, but they differ significantly. The source of charity is a religious order, while philanthropy draws inspiration from the secular ideas of humanitarianism. In both cases, it is about direct support in individual cases. For several years now,

Poland has developed an institution of charity work, called voluntary service, as a conscious, unpaid and freewill work for the needy, going beyond neighborly, familial and friendly assistance. The status of voluntary service is regulated by the act of 24 April 2003 on activities for the benefit of the public and volunteer work (Journal of Laws No. 96, item 873 as amended). An employment agreement of a volunteer obliges to carry out activities within the limits set by the agreement. A volunteer has a specific time and scope of activities performed. It often happens that charity work is a prelude to subsequent employment in a given institution. However, it is necessary to discover in oneself the need to act, a sense of accomplishing a mission and define one's own capabilities of helping (Górecki 1999, p. 335). Volunteering brings many values, such as: respect for another human being, responsibility, empathy, sense of duty, selflessness. It teaches to go beyond the circle of loved ones, and above all, beyond the borders of one's own aspirations and often "exaggerated" needs.

Work in the penitentiary system

In the penitentiary system of 1997, the obligation of working for "ensuring the provision of work as far as it is possible" (art. 121 § 1 of the Executive Penal Code) has been lifted¹. A convicted person is employed on the basis of a referral to work or may be allowed to carry out paid work under an employment contract, contract for specific work, contract of mandate, outwork contract or other legal basis (art. 121 § 2 of the Executive Penal Code). Employment takes place on-site or off-site, with exception to persons sentenced to life imprisonment, serving a sentence in a closed type of prison and "dangerous" prisoners. Convicted persons can be employed free of charge at cleaning and helping works on the premises of the institution or for the local government for up to 90 hours per month (removing snow from streets, planting trees, mowing lawns) with their written consent.

The problem of unemployment primarily affects prisoners and people leaving social rehabilitation facilities and prisons, which contributes significantly to recidivism. In the current socio-economic situation of the country, it is difficult to provide work for all citizens, and especially those who have fallen in conflict with the law. Unemployment among prisoners causes a number of difficulties in the field of social rehabilitation and organization of the penitentiary system. The lack of work lowers self-esteem, takes away the meaning of life, causes passivity, frustration and apathy. The families of convicts suffer the consequences

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¹ Act of 6 June 1997, Executive Penal Code. Journal of Laws, No. 90, item 557 as amended. The ordinance of the Minister of Justice of 9 February 2004 on detailed regulations of employing prisoners: Journal of Laws, No. 27, item 242.

of their absence in the form of shame, a sense of failure and financial problems. Unemployed prisoners need financial assistance of their loved ones, who are often in a difficult personal situation and financial situation themselves. The disappearance of the habit of working significantly hinders taking up work once free, especially for people who previously used illegal sources of income. Persons leaving penitentiary institutions are discriminated on the labor market, because of their criminal past and lack of education and qualifications. By filling the ranks of the unemployed, they have a good chance of returning to criminal ways.

The social rehabilitation dimension of work depends on many factors, such as: remuneration, productivity, social usefulness, compliance of work with qualifications, interests and psychophysical abilities of a convict, vocational training, supervision and evaluation of work and safety (Machel 2003, p. 260). Work teaches regularity, a sense of responsibility, communication, respect for the work of others, and satisfies basic financial needs. It also gives a sense of identity, of belonging to a group, prevents boredom, aggression and a demanding attitude, discouragement and learned helplessness. Filling the large amount of free time with work ensures mental hygiene, by neutralizing the negative effects of prison isolation and shapes a positive image of convicted persons in the eyes of the public. Convicts sentenced to long-term punishment should be guaranteed paid work in order to finance their maintenance and material compensation to the families of victims, who are in difficult life situations, and prisoners who have alimony responsibility, in order to pay alimony contributions. Persons sentenced to life imprisonment are particularly deprived the possibilities of compensating for damage caused to society (Machel 2003, p. 221). Recidivists spend 75% of their lives in penitentiary institutions (Bałandynowicz 2011, p. 33). Any work of prisoners – even free – in an open environment provides a more effective social rehabilitative result than in a closed institution. The punishment itself does not have an influence of an individual's change of behavior, but through it, the person can develop, fight against learned helplessness, get to know his value. According to behavioral theory of conduct, every behavior of an individual with a successful end in his opinion, is strengthened and more eagerly repeated. The main social rehabilitation interaction and priority in preventing and combating crime should be work and its guarantee for all prisoners carrying out imprisonment sentences and leaving penitentiary institutions, in order to maintain themselves and pay off all their financial obligations. Society calls for a more effective fight against crime, among others, through better detection of crime, toughening punishments, rigorous treatment of prisoners, and even the reinstatement of the death penalty. In a democratic state of law, the legislator must remember not only about prevention and satisfying the sense of social justice, but at the same time realize the social rehabilitation function of criminal law (Waltoś 2002, p. 76). From the

social point of view, convicts are at the end in the hierarchy of demand for labor, they are on the margins of public interest, which from the point of view of social rehabilitation is unacceptable. There is a double responsibility for the process of social rehabilitation. On the side of the offenders – as a result of violations of legal norms and on the side of all entities shaping social conditions, which affect non-compliance of moral standards, and consequently legal norms (social fault) (Novosad, Wyrostkiewicz 2005, p. 577). In Poland, public education on the subject of penal policies is not yet carried out sufficiently.

The concept of charity work and its types

An alternative to the lack of work and supplementation of social rehabilitation interactions in penitentiary institutions may be charity work, the value of which is so reduced. Undertaken consciously, voluntarily and free of charge for socially excluded people, the sick, the homeless, the disabled, the needy, being in a difficult life situation, as well as for animals. It teaches empathy, selflessness, change in thinking and often an attitude change towards themselves and others. Valuable time spent through practically learning the difficulty of everyday life, it soothes the pain of the punishment and promotes social rehabilitation purposes. Active participation in improving their fate and the fate of others, it encourages to analyze their own situation in terms of the profitability of the committed crime. The natural freedom of a human being (internal and external) will always clash with the most severe ailment which is imprisonment. Preparation for release cannot be done by isolation from the world of free people (Machel 2008, p. 17). Being in prison cannot be time wasted, but it is to serve reflection on one's hitherto conduct. Any work performed outside the prison has an impact on social readjustment of convicts. Prisoners who work become more active, more willing to enter other penitentiary social rehabilitation programmes in the system of programme interaction and express a will to participate in similar works once free. Such actions force them to reflect on their own behavior in the past and to change attitudes towards themselves and others.

In executive criminal law, charity work is included in art. 123a § 2 of the Executive Penal Code. Prisoners are referred to work under an agreement for unpaid employment of convicted persons in full-time, i.e. 8 hours a day from Monday to Friday. Work is undertaken by prisoners of open and semi-open penitentiary institutions, who are carrying out their sentence in the programme interaction system, usually before its completion, having appropriate personality traits and professional qualifications, required by employers and showing progress in social rehabilitation. It happens by way of exception that persons from therapeutic wards are referred to charity work. This work is performed for the sick, the disabled,

children, adults, the poor, as well as for animals in direct contact with them. It is nursing and care in nature or aims to raise their comfort and quality of life, through the performance of cleaning works, renovations, maintenance works, gardening, cooking, office, cultural and educational, and even hairdressing. It is a “full-time” job outside the institution, providing the possibility to satisfy the basic needs of convicts and change their self-esteem and moral values. Other charitable activities are “occasional”, consisting in, among others, sewing balls for children, preparing holiday packages, help in organizing events, all kinds of collections and producing own artistic goods for sale in order to support people in need. The most valuable experience for convicts is working with former prisoners, charges of homeless shelters, hospices, and associations. They are usually lonely, homeless, unemployed men who struggle with addictions and numerous mental and physical illnesses.

Convicts more or less consciously take care of people, who due to various random reasons caused by life, are unable to deal with difficulties. This makes them useful people, for whom contact with another human being, especially the disadvantaged, is essential in the process of social rehabilitation. A very important reason to work is the desire to repay a debt, compensate for harm previously inflicted. It is about preferring the partnership model of relations between the person helping and the person being helped, becoming “help for self-help” (Kamiński 2004, p. 55). This type of work with social participation, through the discovery of the meaning of one’s own humanity, in the social dimension, must be carried out as early as possible, during imprisonment, and not only in the free world in the widely understood post-penitentiary assistance. There is no penitentiary social rehabilitation without contact with another human being, without social participation. The problem of the penitentiary system cannot be considered without reference, and in isolation from social life. Without fixing interpersonal relationships, it is impossible for convicts to return to society from which they excluded themselves (Nagórny 2006, p. 45).

Punishment cannot be the only form of retribution, much less take the form of social retaliation or institutionalized revenge. Punishment and imprisonment have meaning if they support the principles of justice and prevent crime, they serve the renewal of a person, giving those, who made mistakes, an opportunity to reflect and include themselves again in the life of society, as its rightful members (Gajdus, Stansfield 2005, p. 125). The punishment of imprisonment itself is painful, and prison very often becomes a place of dredging bad habits and attitudes. The consequences of isolation according to Ciosek are: stigmatization (assignment to a criminal minority), standardization (abandonment of individualism), degradation (manipulation, abuse, humiliation) and depersonalization (no plans, not taking any decisions), effectively undermining the effort of social rehabilitation (Ciosek 2003, p. 216).

The multifaceted feature of charity work and its effects

The impact of charity work is multifaceted, because it concerns not only convicted persons, but depends mainly on the social factor (the demands of the local community for the work of prisoners, public awareness about the situation of prisoners and the course of cooperation with prisons) and on the possibility to involve the prisons themselves in cooperation with the local community (good preparation, organization and commitment to working with the local community provide the possibility of social rehabilitation of convicted persons outside the prison with social participation). The most important object of impact of charity work are convicted persons and their potential change of attitude towards themselves and others as a result of undertaking it. According to art. 67 of the Executive Penal Code, the enforcement of imprisonment is to prevent returning to crime by triggering in the prisoner the will to cooperate in developing his socially desirable attitudes, a sense of responsibility and need to respect legal order. In the penitentiary system structural violence can be observed, by imposing on a convicted person institutional procedures that do not take into account or ignore the natural phases and developmental needs of the individual and his personal and social development (Sobczak 2011, p. 193). Imprisonment is depriving in nature, manifested in the inability to satisfy natural biological, psychogenic and essential social needs. This condition leads to the development of aggression, hostility and demanding attitudes of convicts (Ciosek 2003, p. 221). The phenomenon of “prison adaptation” in prison subculture is a self-destructive system, strengthening improper attitudes towards oneself and others; it has a negative effect on the entire psycho-physical development of the convict, and in extreme cases, leads to attempts of suicide.

Changing improper attitudes of socially maladjusted people is one of the goals of social rehabilitation. It is formed as a result of own actions and experiences, and on the basis of social experience and contact with another human being, through observing the behavior and perception of verbal information (Mądrzycki 1977, p. 51). The assimilation of attitudes of others influences the process of socialization, enabling adaptation in the social environment. Changing attitudes takes place, among others, as a result of empathy, imitation, modeling and identification (Mądrzycki 1977, p. 52–65), as well as cognitive dissonance (Festinger’s theory). Empathy consists in feeling the same emotions that occur in the observed person. It allows one to explore the emotional state of others, through compassion, building a close relationship with another person. Convicted persons may feel the emotions of people in need, by participating in their illness and suffering. The specific situation and life perspectives of the charge triggers a convicted person to make a balance of profits and losses, self-reflection and

re-evaluation of his own life. Another form is imitation, consisting in observing and behaving in a similar way in a similar situation. Employed prisoners learn, among others, how to nurture and care from personnel by imitating activities and mutually from one another. Charity work shapes attitudes towards work, teaches regularity, a sense of duty, accuracy, patience and responsibility by constantly repeating the same tasks and acquiring new skills. It also shapes attitudes towards people who are sick or handicapped, by teaching tolerance, respect, control, kindness, benevolence, and understanding. This work may model the attitudes of prisoners, who adopt the behaviors of others, their feelings and motives, as well as identify with others, imitating their attitudes, emotions and values.

Shaping attitudes through integration and changes of attitudes through disintegration is affected by factors such as: changing living conditions in prison, a new job, establishing new interpersonal relationships, changing social role, contact with culture and nature. One must keep in mind the individual factors shaping needs and, consequently, attitudes, such as: age, sex, intelligence and knowledge. Shaping attitudes as a result of own actions can manifest itself in positive forms, such as: conformity, commitment, dedication, but also aggression, rebellion and avoidance (Mądrycki 1977). Some prisoners may show resistance to changing their entire attitude and its individual components. Shaping attitudes also occurs as a result of own actions and personal experience, through observation, thinking, perception and memory. This experience can occur in the form of beliefs, motives, feelings and habits. The source of an individual's experience is conditioning emotions or feelings (Mądrycki 1977). Positive emotions associated with their work will shape positive attitudes. Needs satisfied as a result of work will have positive effects on emotions, and consequently a positive effect on attitudes. Appreciating prisoners' work will result in good emotions and adequate attitudes towards them. A pleasantly associated situation, for example, connected with a kind word, will be repeated more eagerly. Punishment always affects the experience of an individual, creating a new range of needs. The need for freedom, notice, recognition, appreciation, compensation, social acceptance is very strong in isolated people. Belonging to a group, a certain community, working for a common goal, causes stronger experiencing of emotions, even in people who did not already show such feelings. The following will motivate the change of prisoners' attitudes and to resume work: assimilation of external opinions about a job well done and information that shapes knowledge regarding the importance of charity work and its social acceptance. Every job and learning provides experience, which is used to create one's own attitudes. Previous professional experience, charity work and any care before and during carrying out the punishment of imprisonment will have an impact on working with people and animals in need. The attitudes of prisoners will also be affected by the occupied position at work, the atmosphere, individual approach and perception, regulation rewards, the possibility to apply for parole and freebies for work from the employer.

Work teaches proper interpersonal relationships, breaks social prejudices concerning convicted persons, reduces their sense of fear, shame, loneliness and abandonment by loved ones, affecting the sense of stigmatization. The lack of external freedom translates into the need to realize internal freedom as understanding oneself, one's own identity and by way of social recognition. Changing the prison environment often leads to the need of one's own creation through imitation and inspiration by others and their values. The result of creative activity becomes the development of interests, acquisition of new skills and qualifications that give confidence about one's own uniqueness. Thanks to sensitization, ennoblement, work creates new attitudes towards oneself and others, as well as values that affect the realization of new life plans.

Charity work affects the convict by:

- shaping habits (diligence, sense of duty, regularity, responsibility for oneself, for others, patience, selflessness)
- learning new skills (such as nursing and care, general construction, carpentry, gardening, cooking, hairdressing, hippotherapy),
- satisfying needs (basic: additional meals, drinks, extra bath, cigarettes, personal hygiene products; regulation rewards: reward applications, passes; security; social: interpersonal contacts, social acceptance and recognition, respect, self-realization),
- ensuring mental hygiene (peace, preventing aggression, eliminating fear, shame, loneliness, abandonment by loved ones),
- neutralizing the negative effects of prison isolation (stigmatization, standardization, degradation, depersonalization),
- the possibility to change attitudes towards oneself and others (through empathy, imitation, modeling, identification),
- acquiring knowledge about the situation of charges and sensitizing them to their needs,
- learning communication and building relationships,
- respecting work, charges and colleagues,
- spending free time valuably (to prevent boredom and discouragement),
- shaping a positive image in public opinion,
- a sense of identity through the creation of a new person and belonging to a group,
- impact on self-esteem,
- impact on moral and life values,
- preparing for release (social integration),
- activation to participate in other penitentiary social rehabilitation programmes,
- motivation to build new goals and plans for the future,
- changing the way of thinking (analysis of one's own situation),
- personal fulfillment.

Another plane of interaction of charity work is the local community of studied penitentiary institutions. Social rehabilitation based on the community consists in building relationships between the offender and the local community and mutual assistance (inclusive retraining). Convicted persons engage in the production of goods and services for this community through education, employment, recreation, social activities and religious practices (Bałandynowicz 2006, p. 18). A social rehabilitation programme based on social participation depends primarily on community involvement (inclusion, social inclusion), the quality of relationships between participants, but also on the frequency and duration of them. It teaches the proper functioning of an individual in accordance with social expectations through: the ability to satisfy needs, learning specific social roles, learning correct behaviors and alignment of mental dysfunctions (Bałandynowicz 2006, p. 279). The strong relationship between crime and social problems should be sufficient for the application of social rehabilitation in an open environment with social participation, during imprisonment and afterwards.

Charity work of prisoners breaks stereotypes in public awareness with regard to persons convicted even during carrying out the sentence of imprisonment. Work provides the opportunity to prove oneself in a new social role, building mutual trust. It prevents external and internal isolation caused by stigmatization, particularly among recidivists. Persons undertaking work for the benefit of others have a need to show a positive existence in the community, which often rejects, condemns and isolates them, and the need for normal treatment, like in others. Charity work of prisoners, through interpersonal contacts, provides an opportunity to create a new person, minimize the feeling of fear, alienation, loneliness and stigmatization in harmony with the nature of human social functioning. Close contacts with a convicted person enable changing attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes, alleviating individual conflict with social conflict. Often pathological beginnings, committing crimes, suffering associated with serving a prison sentence and continuous social disapproval, form a an unsolvable situation in the minds of the prisoners. The participation of convicts in social life, and the involvement and responsibility of society for social rehabilitation and readaptation of prisoners, provide an opportunity to change attitudes towards one another, far from classification, stigmatization and prejudice. A properly functioning society should help all participants, especially the maladjusted, to compensate for the dysfunction by creating institutional mechanisms, but mainly through interest and building good interpersonal relationships.

Society should aim at aligning and modeling opportunities for excluded and marginalized people, being mindful of their subjectivity, value, autonomy and dignity. The purpose of these actions should be respect for common values, faith in the goodness of human nature and the belief in the ability to experience and express feelings higher by those who are excluded (Bałandynowicz 2006). Being human in relation to another human being is the highest value.

One of the most important goals of social rehabilitation is to achieve optimal human interaction with the environment, built on values (Jaworska 2012, p. 25). Social rehabilitation of persons disturbed in the process of socialization and social rehabilitation consists in educating based on values. The value of social rehabilitation is what allows social rehabilitated people to discover the true meaning of their own lives, shaping their purpose, finding deep happiness, counteracting the ideologies of hedonism and consumerism (Jaworska 2012, p. 27). Values are individual or collective judgments about what is desirable or to be rejected, the result of evaluation based on standards and principles within a group or culture (Mazur 2005, p. 42). Changing attitudes depends on the adopted system of one's own values, shaped throughout life in the family, peer group, in the learning and working environment. Values are conditioned, among others, by needs, life experiences, propagated lifestyle, authorities, stereotypes, tradition and culture. A value is above all what is valuable to the human being in terms of satisfying his needs. Values guide the human life, they have an impact on his actions, behavior and beliefs. In getting to know the human value system, we can predict his lifestyle, attitudes toward himself and others (Mazur 2005). The role of values in the social rehabilitation process of prisoners cannot be overestimated. People convicted of committing an act which is prohibited from the point of view of the law, and morality. They broke the law through the failure to comply with legal standards and related social norms, which have a large impact on the content and interpretation of the law. There is a close relationship between social values and the legal normative system (axiology of law).

By participating in the social rehabilitation of prisoners, society helps to build their positive system of values, consistent with social norms. A new environment changes the values of an individual, adapting them to social values, in this way preparing them for release. A way of educating is always another human being. The most important value for the convicted person is freedom and the need to meet with other people. A convicted person should be a conscious subject, involved in the execution of the punishment of imprisonment and responsible for his own social rehabilitation and social readaptation (Mazur 2005, p. 125). In the course of "maturing" to freedom, acceptance of new values leads to self-reflection, verifying one's previous conduct and, consequently, gives the possibility to change attitudes towards oneself and others. The selection of new individual values should be compatible with the ever-changing societal system of values.

A normal system of values, compatible with social and legal order, gives an internal mechanism of control, which is responsible for proper settlement in conflict situations with the violation of social and legal norms. In social rehabilitation interactions it is important to get to know the system of values in the external environment, in difficult situations, conflict situations, when making all sorts of individual choices.

Charity work gives the local community the possibility:

- to build relationships between the offender and the local community on the basis of mutual trust,
- to develop social responsibility for the success of the social rehabilitation process during imprisonment and afterwards,
- of inclusion in penitentiary interactions towards convicted people,
- to acquire knowledge on the needs and situation of convicted people,
- to overcome social prejudices and stereotypes about convicted people, already during imprisonment (external stigmatization),
- to establish and develop cooperation with prisons,
- to employ convicted persons in the local community,
- to pass on social norms and values to convicted persons.

The last plane of impact of charity work are penitentiary institutions. A huge responsibility rests on the prison service, which should cooperate with the local community and reinforce values such as: learning, education, work, pro-social activities.

Charity work gives penitentiary institutions the possibility:

- to establish and develop cooperation with the local community,
- of social education concerning penitentiary social rehabilitation,
- of a valuable form of penitentiary interactions towards convicted persons,
- to employ convicted persons in an open environment.

Conclusion

Volunteering in penitentiary social rehabilitation plays an important role, because it teaches convicted persons responsibility and respect for another human being in a situation where these people, for various reasons, were not responsible for themselves, and much less for others. This work provides personal fulfillment and mental comfort, so needed by convicted persons. Thanks to raised awareness of the needs of another person, it provides an opportunity to change the attitude of prisoners towards themselves, their own lives, towards values, and above all, motivate them to continue selfless help. This activity breaks social barriers concerning convicted persons, it helps to develop a new image and prevents their stigmatization and marginalization. It gives the possibility of purification, compensation for harm done, soothes grief, fear and pain. By changing the environment, it helps to “break away” from the “inhuman” prison reality in which the display of feelings is a weakness. The interaction of prisoners with the needy can give a meaning to life during imprisonment, assist in the creation of new systems of value, and new life goals for the future. Creating a new person thanks to work has a positive effect on the development of interpersonal relations.

Not all prisoners are suitable to perform charity work and they do not always undertake it from the heart. When writing about the positive impacts of

volunteering, one must also mention the negative motives of undertaking it – in order to obtain personal benefits, for example, in the form of regulatory rewards, applying for early parole, doing business of a criminogenic character, trading goods (drugs, alcohol, cigarettes), escape, the need to be in an open environment, the need to fill the large amount of free time, the often received compensation for work on the part of the employing institution in the form of an additional meal, clothing, footwear or personal hygiene goods.

In the case of a “known past” and an “uncertain future”, working for another human being may become a hope and chance to build a better tomorrow. Its kind discussed is addressed only to a specific, narrow group of convicts.

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