

REALITIES OF IMPLEMENTING THE SOCIAL ADAPTATION PROCESS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL, DISCHARGED FORM SERVICE IN BULGARIA

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Abstract

Dynamic changes in the security environment put military personnel, discharged from service for one reason or another and their families to serious tests. Transiting from military to civilian social medium significantly changes their conditions of life, affecting various aspects of their lives, in the basis of which lie mentality and personality changes of every person, leaving their usual social medium and entering an unfamiliar one. Since research in this field is not so popular, authors of this paper are provoked to explore the factors affecting the mental state of modern Bulgarian servicemen transiting to reserves and their professional adaptation corresponding to the new living conditions and to identify the problem areas of their social and psychological adaptation.

Keywords: military personnel, discharged form service; social adaptation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of social adaptation of military personnel, discharged from service and the members of their families in the recent years in dynamically changing security environment gives rise to multiple questions in the public space. Since the 1990s and the first decade of the new century the military defence system has been marked by a series of reforms, transformations, organizational and structural changes resulting in a numerous "army" of discharged military personnel. A great number of them and the members of their families live in uncertainty, stress, deprived of basic human values. And although they have high specific qualifications a part of them run into the "army" of the unemployed, and another part deal with underpaid activities that do not require specific qualification. This fact by itself provokes the problem of their social adaptation. There is an impression in the community that after leaving Bulgarian army and the armed forces military personnel (reservists) are thrown "overboard" without any social activity for their adaptation to the new social status or, if there is any, it is too formal and without any significant outcomes. While searching if social adaptation of military in transition to reserve and their families is a myth or reality we focus our scientific research aimed at studying the interactions between various structures and authorities – state, public, nongovernmental, working for the social adaptation of former military personnel and their families

within the civil society we take out leading indicators of social and educational characteristics on various levels and propose a comprehensive social adaptation model.

2. ASPECTS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE STRUCTURES AND AUTHORITIES DEALING WITH SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF FORMER MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES

Starting point for our research is defining social adaptation as a process, involving state, public organizations and NGOs, and business structures, as well as the former military personnel and their families. The definition itself tells us that the active cooperation with specialists in specific services, defines the individual profile of inclusion of former military personnel, together with their families in the civilian environment, taking into consideration developing economic processes in their region and activity of contemporary civil society.

Social work with former military personnel and their families in the course of their social adaptation to civilian environment includes a pedagogical component by itself. Its contents are formed by the focus of socio-pedagogical activity on activating adaptation potential of a former serviceperson aiming at maximum implementation of their knowledge, habits, skills and experience within the new social conditions while keeping their previous social status. Sociopedagogical activity is implemented in the course of social education of discharged serviceperson and their inclusion in new social environment and in the course of restructuring their micro social medium. This supposes implementation of a comprehensive social adaptation model, allowing unity and interrelation of objects, subjects, principles and guidelines of social adaptation of former military personnel and their family members, its general and specific technologies, conditions, determining adaptation potential of former military (together with their families) as well as the potential of the social medium they are forced to enter.

A necessary prerequisite for successful organization of the said process is the personal participation of military reservists at the initial stage of their social adaptation.

In other words social adaptation of former military and their families should be reviewed as a multifold process, implemented at various levels (conceptual and political, public and civil, regulative and legal, day-to-day and practical). Major activities related to this process are:

Forecasting possible changes in social self-confidence and status of major social groups, an important place among which is given to former military and their family members; Setting objectives of military and social work with them on behalf of state institutions, as well as on behalf of public and nongovernmental organizations;

Finding the balance between social needs of military reservists and their family members and the economic capabilities of the state and society in the transitional stage of their development;

Forming an image of former military personnel of highly qualified specialists and getting them the respective attitude on behalf of society, etc.

The implementation of the mentioned activities requires definition of major indicators of their socio-pedagogical characteristics. These include:

Status of military reservists and their family members as a respectively separate group, requiring more attention on behalf of the state and society;

The correlation between the type of attitude to that group on behalf of the state and society;

Availability of mechanisms for studying its social condition and practical work with every individual after discharge from the Bulgarian Army (including their family members) etc.

The conceptual and political level of socio-pedagogical set of types and fields of actions for solving social problems of military reservists and their family members presupposes the elaboration of social policy with respect to the mentioned population group, which is at risk when placed on the employment.

In this case social policy is defined as a specific activity carried out by state authorities in particular and by society in general for satisfying quality of life needs of citizens, discharged from military service and their family members.

Leading indicators for the socio-pedagogical characteristics at this level are:

Degree of importance of the intellectual and physical potential of discharged military personnel and their family members for the state and society;

Level of preparedness of state institutions to implement social policy priorities, for purposeful and systematic

social work with specific categories of military personnel;

Level of preparedness of state institutions for social work with military reservists and their family members (at all levels of the socio-pedagogical set) etc.

The public and civil level requires participation of nongovernmental, public organizations (parties, social movements, foundations, various associations, groups, etc.) and business entities in the implementation of social policy concerning military reservists and their family. In terms of their statutory objectives or business interests these civil society representatives are capable not only to influence the priorities of social work with military and their family members, set by state representatives, but also to put serious effort in development and operation of the social infrastructure necessary for the implementation of the mentioned social policy.

Some of those problems are generally included in various concepts for social protection of discharged military personnel and their families.

Leading indicators for the socio-pedagogical characteristics at this level are:

Availability and degree of development of NGOs operating in the field of social work with former military and their families;

Degree of practically feasible orientation of public and civil organizations towards social work with former military and their families within the framework of other activity objectives;

Degree of collaboration of those organizations with state institutions and business entities in social work with this population category;

Level of financial potential and duration of operation of that potential in one or another public organization or civil association with a socio-military focus, etc.

The regulative and legal level for addressing those issues includes provision of socio-legal protection of military reservists and their families. Socio-legal protection is defined as a system of social guarantees (and activities aimed at their development, legitimation and implementation), providing minimal sufficient living conditions, advantages and privileges of various categories former military personnel and their families. These social guarantees constitute a part of the general Social Law in the country, which could be related to the Social Security Code, Social Assistance Act, Employment Promotion Act, etc. The resulting leading indicators for the socio-pedagogical characteristics at this level are:

Level of coverage of the social problems of former military and their families during their transition from military social medium and integration in civilian life in legislative documents and regulations;

Quality of elaborated legislative documents and regulations in the field of social rights and guarantees provision of former military personnel and their families;

Degree of practical implementation of Social Law regulations by state institutions at various levels (at national, regional level - military district commands and district level) with respect to discharged military personnel and their families, etc.

Day-to-day and practical level of addressing social problems of former military personnel and their families suggests designing a separate system for social work with former military personnel and their families as well as one integrated within the structure of the general population social protection system.

Where social work with military reservists and their families is seen as:

Social policy implementation mechanism on behalf of the state and society with respect to a specific population category;

Approaches for integration of former military personnel and their families in the civil society;

Means for the implementation of socio-legal protection of the specific population category;

Conditions for the provision of social partnership and social security within society;

Tool for addressing day-to-day social problems of military reservists and their families, where they reside etc.

Without developing the socio-pedagogical set infrastructure on a day-to-day practical basis, the types and fields of actions, and social priorities remain intentional; laws and regulations remain just rules, put on paper. This is one of the reasons for the low efficiency of the activity undertaken by state institutions in implementation of social legislation in the field of social protection of military reservists and their families.

Requirements for the implementation of such programmes and projects:

Availability of corresponding infrastructure and quality of activity of institutions, specialized in social work with military reservists and their families;

Professional competence level of social workers in state institutions, focused on families of military reservists;

Level of coverage of the needs of certain population category representatives (medical, retirement, spa, cultural, educational sports and other needs) etc.

Analyses of scientific and other specialized literature, including various studies and monographs and papers from recent years show that a significant number of specialists keep on focusing on separate sections of the socio-pedagogical set of types and fields of work with former military personnel and their families.

For example, a number of researchers point out that the most important factors for the quality of the socio-military work in general and for the social reintegration of military reservists (and their families) as part of the armed forces of the Republic of Bulgaria are: successful military reform, leading the army towards a new functional quality, based on new legislation priorities and NATO membership; significant humanistic changes in military social medium and military education system; effective functioning of the system for forming orientation values in military personnel, corresponding to the qualities of the serviceperson and citizen of their country; improving their living standard; ensuring the social justice principle upon solving problems of formal and private character, etc.

A significant part of researchers and social workers claim that the foundations of the social adaptation of discharged military personnel and their families lay in the legal groundwork of this process. According to them the state should provide the particular population categories not only with and acceptable living standard but should also compensate them for limited rights while on military service. State social policy in the field of law in particular guarantees discharged military personnel and their families the respective civilian living conditions.

In our opinion there is a basic contradiction here. Its essence is in the fact that on the one hand the state provides regulative framework for transferring military personnel from military social medium to civilian. On the other hand we have the social protection activities implemented by the state for this category of violations of its own social regulations. Experience shows that state institutions at various levels do not implement adopted laws and regulations and rights of this population category remain unrealized. In order to prevent this situation they include mechanisms, constituting social protection processes.

The described contradiction is the source of the term "social protection", and its content is limited to the establishment of a new regulation system for stabilization of society, aimed at minimizing social contradictions, resulting from the legal and economic status of various population groups. State grants social protection to its citizens form risk situations in normal life such as: disease, unemployment, death of household head, old age, and disability. Social protection is a combination of social and legal guarantees providing every member of society with an opportunity to exercise their most important socio-economic rights, including right to a living standard, necessary for normal reproduction.

This, experience analyses of transition of military personnel form military social medium to civilian shows that nowadays such guarantees are fully sufficient, i.e. at regulative and legal level such a transition would not have to cause social problems to the family of the former military. The presence of such problems on a day-to-day and practical level requires social protection. The mentioned contradiction- between the declarative nature of the regulative and legal framework of the social needs of military reservists and their families and the actual level of implementation of the regulations and of meeting the needs of this population category lays in the foundation of understanding social adaptation problems of discharged military personnel and their families.

Recognizing underdevelopment of mechanisms for meeting the needs of this population category at the stage of transition to the civil social medium, many researchers focus their efforts on searching for conditions to optimize the process of reintegration of the military reservists. Limited opportunities to influence the processes happening at the conceptual and political, public and civil, regulative and legal level of the socio-pedagogical set- the types and fields of social adaptation action for military reservists objectively determine the attention, paid to the psychological problems of this process. Several studies of problems, related to socio-psychological support; sociopsychological adaptation of military reservists; their socialization as a socio-psychological issue; psychological support to their families; their socio-psychological rehabilitation; sociopsychological support to them and their families; psychological and pedagogical foundation of social work with them, etc. have been done in this direction.

Social work with a certain population category does not only implement the social guarantees system,

ensuring minimum level living conditions. Such one-sided understanding deforms its essence and results to limiting its potential and represents military reservists and their families as users in social crisis.

Socio-pedagogical modelling of the transition processes of discharged military personnel and their families from military to civilian social medium allows defining more accurately the content of the processes taking place in the socio-pedagogical set of types and fields of actions with a certain population category.

Social work is called to satisfy social needs of representatives of specific population groups such as discharged military personnel and their families. Their social needs may differ. Meeting those needs that guarantee minimum and sufficient living conditions is part of the social protection. Violating those conditions threatens the life of the people and the functioning of human organism in the social medium.

The regular meeting of the social needs of people in social crisis refers to their social support. When military reservists and their families get into social crisis situations during the process of transition from army status to civilian status they need such support.

The implementation of the statutory guarantees for meeting the social needs of a wide range of persons, entitled to it refers to their social security. This process and type of activity is typical where there are such guarantees for every military reservist and their family.

Meeting their social needs by rendering specific social services may be characterized as social servicing or social support.

Therefore socio-military work is a broad term for the socio-pedagogical set of various types and fields of action by various subjects for meeting the social needs of its customers, implemented on conceptual and political, regulative and legal and on practical level. On each level it provides:

Theoretical development and scientific justification of problems, i.e. the elaboration of a theory on socio-military work a part of which is the theory on social work with military reservists and their families

Guaranteeing the functioning of educational institutions for socio-military work (training social workers to become specialists on specific professional activity i.e. development of sociomilitary work as an academic set;

Implementation of objectives and tasks of practical social work with discharged military personnel and their families, i.e. socio-military work as good practices.

Social work with discharged military and members of their families is a dynamically developing set (in perspective as a system) of types and fields of action (professional and nonprofessional, formal and voluntary) and their essence is in meeting various social needs of discharged military personnel and their families, arising in the course of their interaction with the social environment, with the specific social medium they live in during the period of transition from military service to civilian life. By nature socio-military work is one of active transformation, which objectively determines the needs of this population category during the period of transition, i.e. in the period of social adaptation. The specifics of this process are determined by the differences of the social military environment and medium on the one hand and the civil social environment and medium on the other.

Social environment- these are the new living conditions, surrounding military reservists and their families in the civil social medium. Social macroenvironment includes all surrounding, social, material, and spiritual conditions of life, formation and activity. Social microenvironment is the immediate social surrounding of military reservists (family, next-door neighbours, colleagues, reference and other micro groups, etc.) with significant influence on their activity, behaviour and communication, and on their interactions in general.

Civil social medium is the social space of living of military reservists and their families; their sustainable social community, united by the place and by the new living conditions, determined the specifics of civil employment and life.

Clients /users/ of socio-military work are as a rule representatives of three specific groups:

The first group are military personnel (officers, sergeants, soldiers and seamen). That part of the socio-military work that targets that group of users is called social work with military personnel. Its major characteristics are:

It is carried out at the place of military service (and place of residence of military personnel), i.e. at the barracks, headquarters range, vessel, commanding center, etc.;

Specialists in the field of psychology, sociology, cultural activity organization, etc. are trained to work with military personnel;

Social work (in its variety) is part of their functional duties;

The physical infrastructure for this type of social work depends on the resources of the military organization, where it is being carried out.

The second group of users of socio-military work are the families of discharged military personnel. The combination of the types of activity, aimed at meeting their social needs gives an idea of the social work with the families of discharged military personnel. This part of users shall be a priority for socio-military work in connection with the fact that families as units of the civil society are the foundation of the reproduction of the nation. In the first days of life of children their family determines the attitude to surrounding world, other people towards oneself. It is where the respective cultural medium is formed. The priority of socio-military work for this part of users is set by the significance of family for officers, sergeants, sergeant-majors including after their discharge from service, as well as by the role family plays for them when on service and in civilian life.

Major characteristics of work with families of military personnel:

It is carried out based on the places of residence of military personnel: in military garrisons, polygons, bases;

Its organization is practically not determined by regulative documents and is not part of the functional duties of officials (with the exception of experts specializing in work with military personnel families);

Material resources and staffing for this type of activity are practically missing;

Social work with family members of discharged military personnel has not been developed, although they are also part of the users.

The third part of users of socio-military work is military reservists themselves. The combination of activities aimed at meeting their social needs is defined as social work with discharged military personnel. It is appropriate to carry out this type of work in the place of residence of military reservist. It is assigned to nongovernmental civil structures (with significant limitations) and is not part of the duties of military officials (with the exception of military district commands). It in fact does not have its own resources and staff. There is no regulative legislation at all. These clients of socio-military work may rely only on civil social services – Employment Agency Directorate and Social Assistance Directorate /as they do not even consider them to be their clients /. Social needs of former military personnel are partially met at the account of military social recreation and rehabilitation structures (military hospitals, spa centres, resorts, preventative clinics, polyclinics, etc.).

Various studies of problems of the period of transition from military to civilian life show that the composition of the users of socio-military work varies a lot. Furthermore clients of socio-military work are civilian staff of military formations, headquarters and commands of polygons and military bases (before their dismissal). Users might be not only individuals but also various social groups such as: a group of several families; associations, foundations, public movements, etc. The fact that the specifics of their group social needs, undoubtedly determine the specifics of directions, fields of actions and capabilities of socio-military work should be taken into.

There is an impression that the object of social work with discharged military personnel and their families is a specific individual, who:

For various reasons is finalizing legal relations with one or another military structure;

Is in transition from life in military social medium to civilian social medium;

Is forced to change the type, field and contents of their activity in a situation where there is no employment in the civilian social medium;

Significantly changes their status, while trying to keep it;

Whose family economic status worsens, etc.

The transitional period for military reservists and their families from military social medium to civilian one takes different time in every specific case. Every individual in transition passes through several stages:

Stage one- preparatory: it is characterized with the psychological adjustment of military personnel still on service in discharge procedure and in search for a new job and a place to live.

Discharged military personnel and their families living in the place of service during their transition period more easily adapt to civilian social medium conditions with respect to insignificant changes in living. But after finalization of adaptation period the conditions of the military social medium remain a factor that additionally

complicates these people's lives.

There are no timely preliminary job placement options at future places of residence of military personnel subject to discharge and their families.

Stage two is the stage of entering the civilian social medium, characterized by psychological orientation of former military personnel and finding out more about living conditions in the new medium.

Stage two is the stage of getting used to the status of being full members of the civilian social medium, characterized by psychological learning and accepting new living conditions on behalf of military reservists.

Stage four is the stage of development of discharged military personnel in civilian medium, characterised by psychological activation for changing the living condition within the civilian social medium.

The correlation and co-dependency of those stages characterize the transition period of military personnel towards civilian status, which we call social adaptation.

Consequently, social work with military reservists and their families is a practical activity, carried out by the respective institutions and organizations, as well as by the respective individuals, ensuring their connection with the civilian social medium, and the new environment. This work, in its essence is personal help to individuals for their integration in civilian social medium. In some cases stage one and two may coincide, if the military personnel to be discharged from service (upon termination of legal relations with the military organization) already have jobs at civilian organization, without necessarily changing their place of residence.

Major goal of social work with military reservists and their families is harmonization of their interactions with the new (civilian) social environment, with the specific social medium.

Thus, priorities of social work during the transition period- the period of social adaptation of discharged personnel are (ranked): social protection (highest degree); social support (second degree); social security (third degree); social servicing or assistance (fourth degree).

After finalization of the social adaptation period of discharged military personnel and their families the content of social work with them is changed and social servicing and social security are ranked higher. Social protection and support of the specified population category in these conditions is only necessary in situations of social risk, abnormalities in life (unsuccessful period of social adaptations, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, disability, unemployment, etc.).

Social work with military reservist in the adaptation period addresses a number of tasks. In the first place there is the organisation and implementation of purposeful actions, targeted at individuals aiming at their socialization in civilian environment, ensuring their entering and getting used to the specific civilian social medium and its development. This task predetermines the need for social workers with various profiles, specialized in inclusion of individuals in the social medium.

In the second place it is the task to improve the social environment (and of course, the specific social medium) in favour of the people. Applied to the social adaptation of the military reservist and to the members of their family, this task is implemented through the formation of a positive image of the military personnel discharged from military service, such as stimulating the interest of the employers to employ this category of the population, development of their motivation for qualification improvement or professional retraining, creation of public or NGOs of military reservists, etc. This task also determines the need for special training of social workers specializing in the restructuring of social relations in the society.

In the third place it is the task for optimization of the interaction of the military reservists and the members of their family and the new civil social environment of one or another specific social medium. It determines the need for training of social workers with special skills and knowledge specializing in the harmonization of the interaction of the customer with the social environment.

Thus, the content, purpose and tasks of the social work with former servicepersons and their families reflect its pedagogical orientation which is typical namely for the experience gained in the development of social work as a whole. The pedagogical component of the social work with the specified group of the population determines the need for the formation of two types of experts: social educators and social workers, among which there are both similarities and significant differences (Terziev, 2017; Terziev, 2017a, pp.1375-1399; Terziev, 2017b, pp.1362-1377; Terziev, 2017c, pp.1378-1392; Terziev, 2017d, pp.1352-1361; Terziev, 2017e, pp.914 - 922; Terziev, 2017f, pp. 923 - 935; Terziev, 2017g, pp.49-59; 9. Terziev, 2017h, pp.452-458; Terziev, 2017i, pp.786-796; Terziev, 2017j, pp. 997-1024; Terziev, Bogdanov, Madanski, Stefanov, 2017k, pp.85-97; Banabakova, Georgiev, 2017l, pp. 46-51; Banabakova, Georgiev, 2017m, pp. 462-467;

Banabakova, Georgiev, 2017n, pp. 84-99; Banabakova, Georgiev, 2017o, pp. 468-483; Terziev, Madanski, Georgiev, 2017p, pp. 923-927; Terziev, Madanski, Georgiev, 2017q, pp. 1051-1055; Terziev, Nichev, Stoyanov, Georgiev, 2017r, pp. 888-892; Banabakova, Georgiev, 2017s, pp. 37-47).

3. CONCLUSION

The content of the processes of social adaptation of military reservists and the members of their families and the issues, associated with the social work with them predetermine as insufficient the practice to receive only social (socio-psychological, socio-legal, socio-economic, etc.) protection and realization of various types of social support (educational, medical, consumer, psychological, etc.). This is the administrative approach, leading to waste of efforts and resources, to duplicating of efforts of specialists of different profile and bringing about the common person, in their regular condition, to be considered outside the frame of clients of social work, and its offices to start their work only when the person goes into the category of the risk group of troubled individuals.

The essence of the social work with servicepersons, discharged from military service, and the members of their families during the transition period lies in the social adaptation of this category of the population to the new conditions of life in a civil environment, in a specific social medium, which is implemented in the following stages: preparation, entry, adaptation and development. The successful result of the social adaptation of a specific serviceperson lies in the psychological acceptance of the new conditions of life, in retaining and developing of their social status and finding a job that provides the corresponding to this status material living conditions for their family (Terziev, Madanski, Georgiev, 2017t, pp. 748-753; Terziev, Madanski, Georgiev, 2017u, pp. 743-747; Madanski, Georgiev, 2017v, pp. 4-13; Madanski, Georgiev, 2017w, pp. 43-51; Terziev, Dzhumalieva, 2016a, s.233-253; Terziev, 2014, s.176-183; Terziev, 2014a, s.183-191; Terziev, 2014b, s.192-204; Terziev, 2014c, pp.194-201; Terziev, 2014d, s.201-210; Terziev, 2014e, s.210-222).

Such understanding of the social work with military reservists and the members of their families determines the logic of the further research, the essence of which consists of:

Analysis of the development history of the social work with the specified category of the population;

Identification of the contradictions, disadvantages and difficulties, as well as the objective and subjective errors in its development;

Development of experimental model for social adaptation of servicepersons, discharged from military service and the members of their families, in accordance with the understanding of it as a socio-pedagogical phenomenon.

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