

APPRECIATION AND REFLECTION

Thesis about shaping tomorrow's working environment in a responsible way

Basis for discussion for the Annual General Meeting 2010 of the German Association for Supervision (registered association - DGSv e.V.)

Background

Supervisors offer guidance for people in professional and working life. They give support to organisations and companies in developing cooperation and communication. Those, who help to facilitate good working results, like supervisors do, contribute importantly to the societal enhancements alluding to work and working life. The following theses resulting from practical experience and professional evaluation shall position the profession "supervision" within the running debate. The Executive Committee will present them to the Annual General Meeting for deliberation.

Thesis 1:

Work either contributes essentially to the individual and social working quality - or affects it.

In political and media discussions, work is often reduced to its function of gainful occupation. That way, he who does not dispose of a performance assessed and paid source of income is considered as unemployed. By defining the term of work that narrowly, only one segment of the social reality of work is covered.

Extensive areas of life, in which work is formative but not getting remunerated directly and in a perceptibly substantive way, are neglected in the debate. Today's working and gainful life appears more manifold, complex and dynamic than ever - for the individual as well as in the overall view. Nowadays, in people's vita there can be found parlous instability, risky systemic changes or entirely new requirements to their adaptability. These developments play second fiddle in the public notice and thus do not experience appreciation and support.

To work means existing as a live part of a dynamic and complex society. Thus, work does not only contribute to the earning of financial resources, but rather accounts significantly for quality of life. Narrowing the definition of work and with it the alienation from people's real life can be jointly responsible for the case that individual and social quality of life cannot be achieved and psychosocial stresses and strains of humans increase.

Thesis 2:

Future work has to create the change - instead of fighting it.

The modern working environment is subject to profound changes. Some of the specifications trying to subsume this accelerating process are globalisation, increased flexibility, dynamisation, dissolution of boundaries or congestion. On closer inspection however, it becomes evident that work has been getting more internationally, flexible and dynamic for a long time already.

The change in the working world is not a process to which people have to be exposed to helplessly. In fact, changes are always wanted - no matter if having been taken into account deliberately or just having been done improvidently. This will and the interests linked to it hardly find an expression in the current debate, so that change and dynamics have finally ended in themselves - without a widely legitimated objective, without sustainable benefit and without responsible control.

We want political responsible persons to actively shape the change in working world instead of administrating it or leaving themselves to it like to an uncontrollable force of nature. That would mean giving space to every individual in order to accept responsibility, identify opportunities and seize chances.

A new social interaction is needed, giving up on blind power struggles and cut-throat competition. Rather, the change of work environment has to be negotiated by the involved parties so that it can be shaped appropriately, usefully and goal-oriented.

Thesis 3:

Work needs a common ethically bound basis of values taking people and organisations seriously, so that both parties can grow.

Work means actively supported culture. People operate in connection with work on basis of common core values, such as social justice, emancipation, participation, collegiality, solidarity, respect and appreciation. These values are not only symbolically phrased guidelines for individuals, but shape - often unconsciously - the private emotional experiences in their everyday life.

Work must not end with organisations or companies merely aiming to take advantage of it. Like this, people would be burdened and exploited unilaterally and - due to that - run the risk of increasing uneasiness, psychosocial instability and finally diseases. Working culture to us means being constantly involved with inconsistencies and strains in the context of professional needs of action among person, role and organisation. Here, the human being is (co-)creator of its (working)environment between ethical beliefs and actual responsibilities.

Politics and administration are called upon to acknowledge and take people seriously in their different roles within the working world. Their needs, options, challenges and problems must not be disregarded. Labour policy must serve people and organisations and have the ability to identify and boost potentials and capabilities from all-around.

Thesis 4:

Reflecting complex and dynamic working processes systematically entails stability of dynamics and ensures successful working relationships.

Those working nowadays are exposed to significant insecurities and an increasing necessity of self-directing. It has to be thought through anew and intensely, how and whereby an inner and outer stability can be achieved for people in working life. Macro- and/or microeconomic theories are not sufficient for this. Just the attempt to cover dynamics by means of abstractly phrased and seemingly universally valid explanatory models results in a further alienation of people with regard to the structures surrounding them.

What is required in this context is the courage for openness, being sensible about the complexity of reality of work and the ability to allow diversity and utilise it. Thus, change becomes an implemented and desired normality. Without intentionally planned pauses for reflection, however, alterations and change become fugacious processes, which people have given up to design. Pauses for reflection prevent exhaustion, allow assurance and critical reflection. By a purposeful and specifically arranged reflection it is possible to act satisfactory and self-determined within working environment despite of less certain structures and less universally valid control systems.

Facilitating, developing and ensuring this systematic reflection is the major task for all of those bearing responsibility for shaping working environment.