Ondersteuning van slachtoffers: Kwaliteit van onderop
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SUMMARY

1. Introduction, the problem and framework of this thesis

In every field of endeavour the concept of quality is currently the subject of discussion. Each organisation, professional, any type of welfare, in short every product or service is subject to an eagerly executed debate about quality. This concept can be interpreted in many different ways. To some people quality stands for the intrinsic good, the universal answer to every client's desires. Other people see quality as the way a product is delivered; it must answer to certain norms of efficiency. Quality is also used as a concept which guarantees a certain method and functions as a measuring stick for governmental financing. The striking aspect in all these descriptions is that quality is connected to a fixed form of uniformity and standardization. In the field of victim support there is also an energetic search for 'quality'.

Perhaps there is ample reason to strive for such uniformity and standardization. With the beginning of Victim Support activity in The Netherlands one could speak of initiatives, which were quite diverse. In Groningen, Rotterdam, Alkmaar and Amsterdam willing volunteers, led by a pioneerminded coordinator, started to create local centers of Victim Support. One could detect a highly motivated effort directed to being of service towards victims of crime and a fews years later also towards victims of traffic accidents. Today the support of victims has grown into a mature activity with a yearly budget of many millions of guilders, financed by national and local governments. Victim Support has become the subject of government policy. Because of this type of involvement there is a risk that Victim Support could grow from a movement into an institution, whereby the disappearance of the original involvement is at risk to disappear.

The 'real' Victim Support is being executed by volunteers, who are highly motivated and who, without any material interest, are of service to victims each day. Most of the time this work is done in one-to-one meetings with victims, i.e. without any direct guidance from above. This type of work by these 'frontline workers' generates quality from 'bottom up'. From this point of view it is apparent that quality is not something which only originates from above, i.e. 'top down'.

Therefore it is worth the effort to look for the conditions in which quality from below is being produced. The notions of discretionary space, the frontline worker, equality of the care and judicial perspective seem to point in this direction. These notions are applied by the Dutch criminologist De Savornin Lohman and lead to the questions: to what extent are these of relevance to the practice of Victim Support and do they bring quality within reach?

The answers to these questions are offered in the chapters throughout this thesis. Chapter 1 contains a general description of quality, which later on is applied to the practice of Victim Support. This chapter also poses the central problem, which addresses this thesis.
In chapter 2 the method of research is being elaborated. The notions of prescriptive research and, again, the quest for quality are problematized. In this chapter the reader is introduced to the practice of Victim Support through three cases. This practice is followed throughout this publication.

Chapter 3 contains a description of today's criminality and comprises the situation of victims of crime, set against a general sketch of Dutch society nowadays. Also there is a further description of those elements which can enhance the concept of quality.

Chapter 4 offers a description of traumatic emotions as result of a life disturbing event. In this study attention is focused on secondary victimization, the feeling of guilt by the victim and the support of quality. Again theory is complemented by a description of the practice of Amsterdam Victim Support.

In chapter 5, the actual working of Victim Support is situated against the background of Dutch social work since the Second World War. Again the notion of quality, specifically in the context of Victim Support, is elaborated.

In chapters 6 and 7, attention is focused on how the police and the office of the public prosecutor deal with victims of crime. Decentralisation, client-directedness and the call for alternative settlements in addition to penal law are presented as possibilities for attaining quality. Again samples from Amsterdam are presented.

In chapter 8 the reader can find the results of a field research project among workers with Victim Support, police officers and workers with the public prosecution all in the greater Amsterdam region.

Finally chapter 9 is meant as a concluding one. In there the reader will meet all the basic conclusions of this thesis. The book is also enhanced with a list of used literature and is of course accompanied by a table of contents.

2. Societal context and victimization

The support of victims does not happen in a social vacuum. During recent years in The Netherlands there is a great deal of attention devoted to criminality, victimization and the necessity to do something concerning the situation of victims.

Current publications in the media report about, more than desired, about all kinds of criminal violence. As a consequence of recent incidents in our country there is an ongoing debate about the necessity to call a halt to violence one way or the other. The many reports in newspapers and on the radio and television draw attention to so-called "senseless" violence. The term refers to violence against innocent onlookers on the street, which is perpetrated without any apparent reason. The debate about violence, which also includes genocidal practices abroad, makes emphatic use of ethical components. The aftermath of the debacle of a Dutch army unit in Srebrenica in Bosnia offers an eloquent example of this debate.

This is why it is worth the effort to enquire into possible ethical components of criminality and victimization and to investigate whether they assist in deepening the concept of 'quality from below'.

In comparison to former decades certain differences become apparent, which are
also related to victim support.

The situation in which people willingly gave their lives in support of all encompassing ideologies made place for a much more individualistic striving for the future. The cry for individual determination of one's existence is louder than ever before. At the same time, people lack the feeling of being part of a meaningful historical development. People seem to be wholly absorbed in the present. So, in the image building of government policy, one meets the calculating citizen who is directed purely by his own personal interest. Rorty, however, a present day American-Hungarian philosopher, offers arguments to lighten this somber portrayal of affairs. He claims that social subjects are part of the same reality. In relation to each other they each create their own pattern of values, beliefs and norms. During this creative process the individual contribution becomes greater and does not focus on established stipulated rules. Predictability becomes greatly reduced. People assume more individual self-determination and offer more creative contribution to social intercourse, which leads therefore to more social diversity. Rorty foresees a type of social intercourse, where the experiences of individual people combine with notions of greater self determination to produce more solidarity among human beings in the long run.

Social traffic loses its predictive value and thereby becomes less subject to direction from above. During recent decades the government has changed its view of its role concerning the way (semi-)governmental agencies provide service to the public. The government has grown from central actor to facilitating and participating partner in a wider network.

The phenomenon of growing self determination and a less centrally operating government go hand in hand with a view of society where all, rich or poor, young or old, indigenous or foreign, can become victims of a number of destructively working phenomena such as Tsjernobyl, the destruction of the ozon layer, traffic queu collisions and lack of safety, due to street violence, burglary or other forms of crime.

Such collective risks are combined with an individual lack of ability to relate to these phenomena in a competent manner. One could describe this as an important feature of our present social system.

Crime and the incompetence of the penal system to to respond to it adequately is a meaningful example of the above mentioned observation. Criminal incidents lead to experiences of victimization and to feelings of powerlessness. These emotions are a result of a governmental system which is less capable of battling crime in a competent manner.

With this in mind one should realise that crimes induces traumatic emotions which have a much more serious effect than which one generally assumes. Recently psychological researchers have been able to deliver much more detailed data on this subject. The experience of seeing oneself as a loser, the injuring of one's self image, the disturbance of one's own life and normal daily routine and the reaction to a severe crisis are terms with which the complex reality of a victim's emotions may be described.

The tendency towards growing individualization, also in terms of victimization, is
likewise being influenced by a tendency towards ongoing de-pillarization. The observer of Dutch society uses this to describe the tendency since 1970 of far fewer Dutch inhabitants considering themselves to be part of one of the traditional segments which formerly constituted our society (i.e. Protestant, Roman Catholic, Social Democrat or Liberal). During recent decades the social and moral fabric of society, supported by ideology and religion, came into a strong decline. In the sixties and seventies established relations of authority were challenged and came to an end. A society based on acceptance of authority made place for a society where negotiation has central focus. In the meantime tolerance towards deviant behaviour seems to have changed into lack of social engagement and likewise of social control. Victims of crime no longer encounter the government as a meaningful institution. People observe that the government system has lost its function in regulating and upholding current social norms. The credibility of the penal system is under pressure. Given this climate, one can wonder to what extent people have any confidence in a government which is not capable of providing them with adequate protection. With the Dutroux murder case in Belgium this situation became appallingly manifest.

3. Victim Support

Against this background, the cry for more attention to victims of crimes and traffic accidents can be better understood. This appeal is illustrated by the debate in police circles and in the penal system about what an adequate fight against crime should constitute. Aside from prevention, which is not included within the scope of this study, one can ask whether a mere search for perpetrators of crime have priority or whether the government should also direct its effort to the support of the citizen, who has become a victim of the perpetrator. The existence of this question in The Netherlands demonstrates that the present efforts by the penal system are very problematic. Again: should attention be solely directed to law-enforcement or should the penal system also respond to the situation of victims? In a society with a tendency to further individualization and fragmentation of the social fabric, a need arises for a penal system which is able to legitimize it's own function in the eyes of victims and the general public.

With this in mind, the day-to-day reality of victim support appears as a meaningful promise. That there are volunteers who, on their own initiative, report to the local Bureaus of Victim Support says a great deal about the present capacity of this type of social engagement. The volunteers do not immerse themselves in this type of work because of widespread theoretical ideology but because they feel immediate solidarity with their fellow citizens in their own neighbourhood. Not abstract ethics, but immediate care for another marks today's spirit of volunteerism.

A further definition of quality

Firstly, quality in support of victims has to do with the recognition and acknowledgement of the process of victimization. With the contextual process of victim support the possibility of self determination by victims of crime and traffic accidents is of the utmost priority.
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The practice of institutional social work does not reach this ideal by any means. The direction of the support process is scarcely left to the people who ask for help. The practice of institutionalized helping of people can be typified as system-dominant. Assumptions about professionalism, the "top down" implementation of methods on centers of support and institutional bureaucracy prevent the production of 'real' quality. On the other hand a certain level of quality is generated, when so-called user's dominance is present. In the latter case the direction of the support process becomes a matter for the victim and the support worker themselves. The American organisation sociologist Handler typifies this sort of individual, be it a social worker, a police officer, a volunteer with a social agency or a general practitioner, as a 'frontline worker'.

De Savornin Lohman approaches the idea of quality from several perspectives. Quality can be measured in terms of methodology, professional attitude, professional organisation and last but not least in terms of quality of communication between client and support worker. The question as to which perspective is of interest depends on the requirements which the concept of quality must meet. The opinion of the person who asks for help and who is in communication with the frontline worker, who in turn tries to provide assistance, is important if not decisive.

The notions of caring and of enjoying one's work are of utmost importance in such a contextual, "people involved" process. It is not abstract, top down applied principles but the spark of concrete action which determine the level of quality. Again: the quality of implementation is directly related to the victim's possibility of self-determination in his specific context, the possibility of open communication between victim and worker and the importance of a normative foundation of the practice of assistance. These are concretised in the concept of discretionary space.

The main feature of this concept is the idea that decisions concerning the support process are to be made by the support worker and the victim themselves. Such a method of work comes within reach, if within the service offering organisation, such as the local Bureau of Victim Support, the neighbourhood police station or the local counsel of the public prosecution, the central authority does not have a decisive say in matters which are at the level of the support worker. The result of such a limitation of central authority would be that the process of supporting people acquires a much more horizontal character. The support of victims would become much more experimental, contextual and flexible.

Handler states that quality of support is acquired by a creative use of standardized regulations. When implementing such a viewpoint there is ample opportunity for exchange between victim, perpetrator and other involved parties such as police officer and public prosecutor. This exchange goes beyond a purely judicial settlement of the conflict. If only the latter is emphasized, the main parties view each other as adversaries. This is not congruent with a climate, where meaningful recovery of the victim's emotions and improvement of his/her daily behaviour occur.
4. Discretionary space and an \textquoteleft ethic of care\textquoteright

With the situation described in the previous paragraph the central government seems to lose its function as main provider of a fruitful perspective in regard to a productive relieving of pain and shock. It becomes clearer than ever that expectations, directed towards the local or national government, cannot be met. Out of necessity this government becomes more modest. It exchanges its role from central controller to one of facilitator. Such a diminishing of state influence is to be considered positive. The resulting vacuum offers opportunity for parties involved to regulate matters on a much smaller scale. In contrast to an earlier situation, parties themselves are much more involved in settling the consequences of a crime or a traffic accident. In certain cases this leads to better quality.

\textbf{Ethic of justice}

Improvement of the situation of victims is not within reach when an ethic of justice is set as sole priority. Quality is not attainable with such a perspective. Central control, standardization, uniformity of support and top-down measurement produce the opposite. Much of human quality is lost. The support worker, i.e. the frontline worker, seems to withdraw as quickly as possible from that type of regulated support worker activity. The elements of a fully human approach are the characteristics of empathy, emotion and the non-rational, all of which constitute the really important elements in attaining quality.

Next to the very long philosophical tradition wherein people speculate about the relation between ethics and justice, there also exists another, shorter, tradition. The latter concerns the way ethics and care are related. This perspective is being described as the \textquoteleft ethic of care\textquoteright. The introduction of this perspective makes people aware of the fact that improvement of the human condition is to be considered as something which is more than a \textquoteleft struggle for rights\textquoteright. Such a struggle can only lead to a refinement of rules, which is at risk to fall short of the, always contextual, desires and needs of the people who seek help. It is the combination of both perspectives, the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, which responds adequately to the fact that the notions of equality and self determination can only be realized in the concrete living conditions of human beings.

5. Case descriptions from the Victim Support practice

The everyday reality of victim support offers an uncountable number of human histories. In 1997 the local bureaus of Dutch Victim Support offered service to 80,000 victims. This number is a substantial increase from the years before. This increase is not related to a drastic rise of the amount of crime but definitely indicates a further acknowledgement of the existence of Victim Support. The organisation has acquired a mature position in our society. It is an striking example of how volunteerism can meet the challenges of society at a critical spot. In this publication, each chapter offers a number of stories about the day-to-day dealings of a local Bureau of Victim Support. Most of the time this will be the
Amsterdam Bureau, which offers support to victims from a central office and from thirty neighbourhood police stations throughout the greater Amsterdam area. These case descriptions epitomize the theoretical notions, developed throughout the first seven chapters in this book. It is obvious that every local bureau of Victim Support in The Netherlands can produce such stories.

In the case-descriptions presented, the reader is shown how the concepts of discretionary space and small scale organisation can attain success in contrast to the limited possibilities of institutional regulations. The strong ambition of the parties involved to reach some sort of solution speaks for itself in these case-descriptions. In some cases their motivation, coloured by an ethic of care, led to the creation of intermediary organisations. People involved could differentiate between their respective roles and interests. They were also able to create networks in order to get everybody "on the same track". Victims and supportive front line workers were capable of connecting the situations of those victims with existing rules and to apply these in a creative manner. This resulted in the development of new ways of solving problems. They, clients and workers, had acquired control over the way to create their own support.

6. Field research among a representative group of frontline workers; the method of concept mapping

Method
During the spring and summer of 1998 a research was conducted among twenty-three workers of the Amsterdam/Amstelland Victim Support Bureau, among twenty-two police officers in the Amsterdam/Amstelland police region and among eight workers with the public prosecution. Three of those eight workers were public prosecutors, who deal with victims on a daily basis.
To the respondents fifty statements were presented. These statements said something about how to achieve quality (guidelines) or how to measure it (criteria). There were 28 guidelines and 22 criteria.
The respondents were asked to do two things. Firstly they were required to give a rating to the statements on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 meaning negatively achieving or measuring quality of victim support, 7 implying very positively achieving or measuring quality). Secondly the participants in this research were asked to combine the statements, which to them formed a logical order. The guidelines were combined separately from the criteria, so per respondent category two different combinations were the result i.e. a total of six different configurations.

Results, the criteria for quality
The by far greater number of criteria were met positively by the respondents. The victim support workers, police-officers and the workers with the state prosecution described the lack to acquire personal gain, the presence of personal devotion, the
willingness to have one's efforts be critizised by collegues, the willingness to communicate, the possibility to work within a personally developed network and the availability of practical skills as adequate criteria to determine the presence or lack of quality. The same remark was made concerning the control by the victim in the shaping of the process of support.

The position of the support worker in a small organisation or the possibility of the judicial authorities to legitimize itself by the offer of victim support were two much more negatively scored notions. Also the idea that one has to answer to the victim, concerning one's professional conduct, at least as a criterion with which one can determine quality, met with a doubtful response from the workers of Victim Support. The police officers and the workers with the Public Prosecution were much more positive on this point.

Results, the guidelines
As far as the guidelines are concerned, the picture was more diffuse. Over all the guidelines got a positive but a bit lower reception than the criteria. The guidelines as communication, the development of one's own network and the application of skills acquired during the process of supporting the victim scored positively. However the workers with the Public Prosecution had their doubts about the notions of victim influence, discretionary space for the support worker, solidarity with the victim, the value of a planned approach and the use of the immediate surroundings around the victim. The police-officers uttered likewise their doubts about guidelines as victim influence, planned approach and the sense that the surroundings around the victim are multi-shaped. Finally the workers with Victim Support also scored lower on the acceptance of the guideline concerning the versatility of the victim-surroundings.

All three respondent categories reacted negatively on the guideline that quality can be achieved by putting in victim support as a means to legitimise the workings of the judicial apparatus. It is commendable for the independence of the participating respondents that they do not care much for this type of argument. Ethical and professional arguments, not institutional ones, have to be the motive for good support of victims, they concluded.

7. Conclusion

Considerations about the relation between the ethic of justice and care offer a number of suggestions on how to support victims. The consideration of discretionary space and that of the frontline worker are central in this. The research in spring and summer 1998 conducted among victim support workers, police-officers and workers with the Public Prosecution in the Amsterdam/Amstelland region prove that these suggestions meet with a positive degree of validity. These ideas prove that it is impossible to attain quality according to a purely judicial model. However one cannot just set this model aside as being dysfunctional. The judicial model has a certain value for victims of crime or traffic accidents. For instance when applied to the situation of victims of sexual violence, penal law can be quite beneficial. In certain cases the extension of regulations might even be required.
But aside from this judicial perspective, the presence of an ethic of care is unquestionably of value. One should be able to deal with penal and civil justice in a fully creative manner in order to give it a place in the whole of qualitative support of victims. Of central importance are the concepts of distribution of responsibility, method development through networking, strategies of cooperation and the increase of listening capacity by all parties involved.

The practice of Victim Support shows that these concepts, which embody the 'ethic of care', can be developed to a systematic method. The case-descriptions offered throughout this thesis and the results of the field research among relevant frontline workers in the Amsterdam area confirm this view.

The caring to people does not involve an universal ethic. Doing well is not a product of rational consideration. In our relational intercourse with people the actual presence counts more than the thinking about it. People produce care in their own concrete circumstances. This effort is led by the realization that human beings are not only strong and competent but also vulnerable and dependable on others. Victim Support proves that quality from below is possible and is being realized by an impressive number of volunteers. The day-to-day reality of Victim Support shows increasingly that the care to victims is contingent on the small scale and the contextual implementation of the perspectives of justice and care. The most important criterium is that the support worker is offered ample discretionary space.
The relationship between the policy of action and the type of action in the context of vicarious violence is of particular interest. The emphasis on accidental and the related nature of the vicarious violence is central in this research. The study examined the gender and cultural aspects of vicarious violence, which are pertinent to the context of the study. The results of the analysis indicate that vicarious violence is influenced by gender and cultural factors.

An overview of the current guidelines and their acceptance reveals that the guidelines are largely based on anecdotal evidence and subjective interpretations. The guidelines lack a systematic approach and the assumptions about gender and cultural influences are often inaccurate. The guidelines are also subject to interpretation and the context in which they are applied is crucial.

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