

Abstract

Today organizations constitute crucial parts of the public sphere. Recent organizational models, like the systems theory of Luhmann, try to describe organizations in their complexity. Socio-economic organizations are particularly characterized by a multiplicity of rationalities and goals, a reason for high requirements for organizational ethics. Decision-making processes consist nowadays in managing these organizational conflicts. Organizational ethics according to Krobath and Heller means the provision of an environment that makes ethical reflection possible inside the organizational structures and everyday processes. The key focus is reflection by all involved persons. The process of organizational ethics is bottom-up, which necessarily needs to be supported and guided by the executive.

This master thesis deals with ethics and value orientation in socio-economic organizations. Content of this paper is a qualitative and comparative case study about organizational ethics in four institutions of Caritas Vienna. Three main questions are very important in this study, namely: (1) Are ethical reflections already part of the organizational structure and processes in the institutions of Caritas Vienna? (2) What resources do members of staff need for good ethical working and decision? (3) On what values are organizational and individual actions based?

The findings of the 17 interviews with employees show that in the institutions of Caritas Vienna, ethical reflections are carried on mainly in the staff meetings and team supervisions. This gives the staff confidence in their actions. The team leader has a special role. He or she facilitates and directs such processes. The employees of Caritas Vienna manage challenging situations out of common ethical reflection processes. The principles of organizational ethics are therefore already present in these institutions.

Organizational ethics recognizes the organizational conflicts present in all socio-economic organizations and that these conflicts need to be continuously reflected on in reference to the key values of the organization and the realities of both clients and staff.