

## **Abstract for the EASSW and UNAFORIS Conference 2017**

Social Work Education in Europe: Challenging Boundaries, Promoting a Sustainable Future  
Paris, 27-29 June 2017

### **Workshop**

#### **Theme 2: Development of curriculum and course content in social work**

#### **Contributors**

- Prof. Dr. Daniel Gredig, Leiter Master Studium, Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit, Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz, Olten/Basel
- Drs. Mike de Kreek, lecturer Master Social Work and researcher at the Research Institute for Societal Innovation, University of Applied Research | Amsterdam School of Social Work
- Drs. Mariël van Pelt, Course director and lecturer Master Social Work, HAN University of Applied Sciences, Nijmegen

#### **Abstract**

##### **Educating for ‘Practice Development’ and ‘Social Innovation’**

Across countries, demographic and social change, technological and economic developments, political shifts and transformations of welfare regimes continue to challenge social work. In an environment characterized by these multi-layered, interactive and rapid changes, social work has to respond meaningfully to evolving needs and expectations of service users and adjust their offers. Adaptation of practices, reorientation of offers, further development of services as well as the design and development of new approaches and programs gained importance.

Since the days of the funding mothers of social work the idea has been fostered that practice should draw on scientific knowledge and further development of practice should be substantiated by scientific knowledge. This claim opened the debate about the ways to connect professional practice with research findings and scientific knowledge in general. A wide array of conceptualizations of the interrelationship between social work practice and science has evolved and is still under debate. Some concepts focus on social work professionals and their ways of decision making in direct practice while others focus on the (learning) organization or on the cooperation of researchers and professionals in order to bring scientific knowledge to bear on practice. Some approaches have been framed as ‘practice development’ or ‘social innovation’.

Irrespective of the conceptualization adopted there is agreement that all these concepts only come alive and can be effective if they get implemented. So, social work education and training, curricula and teaching play an important role in the endeavour to develop effective and sustainable responses to clients’ needs.

This interactive workshop focuses on ‘practice development’ and ‘social innovation’ and places curriculum development centre stage. It aims at a) exchanging experiences of social work educators involved in programs preparing students for practice development and social innovation, b) identifying common challenges and c) motivating to endorse teaching for practice development and social innovation in existing social work programs.

To start, participants are asked to share their understanding of ‘practice development’ and ‘social innovation’ and reflect on the role of education in small groups providing an entry to further discussion. The representatives of the three master programs present, set out their understanding of ‘practice development’ and ‘social innovation’ respectively. They point out the ways in which they built up the curricula in place. They describe the central curricular elements designed to allow students to build up the key competences for the further development and innovation of social work practice and give an insight into the labour market integration of graduates. There is time for questions and answers regarding the presentations before the discussion is opened for the participants to elicit the relevance, commonalities and differences of concepts and curricular elements in play. Discussion focuses on:

- results of the programs for students and their social work practice and the relevance for improvement of social work practice and enhancement of social work knowledge/professionalization of social work.

- relevance of curricula like these as a means for bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and practice
- knowledge that emerges in these trajectories of practice development and if this can be regarded as new scientific knowledge
- role of research in the programs preparing for practice improvement and implications for the way research is taught in the curricula
- professional competencies that are to be developed in relation to the central position of research in the programme