

**Challenges for the Social Work Profession in a Time of Global Migration Crisis:
Is a New Social Work Curriculum Needed? - EASSW Project**

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The issue of migration has become a global one, affecting not only those who urgently need to leave their homes and countries, but also people and communities all over the world.

Migration has been considered one of the important domains of the social work profession since the establishment of the Settlement House Movement in England in the late 19th century. At that time, the goal was to enable migrants to become citizens of the host country and, to the extent possible, to create one homogeneous society without cultural differences and without consideration for the customs and traditions that the immigrants had observed in their countries of origin. In that context, the social work profession emphasized assimilation of the social norms, responses to the needs of individuals in disadvantaged populations, and responses for the most vulnerable individuals.

Over the years, the social work profession has adopted pluralistic perspectives with the understanding that due to the social structure there are excluded populations. In this context, approaches to social work have been developed which reinforce multiculturalism, culturally sensitive learning, anti-oppressive, and war on poverty while emphasizing the perception of rights as an integral part of professional training.

The global perspective expanded the boundaries of social work practice, and practitioners found themselves engaging in professional and humanitarian activities following natural disasters and in contexts such as severe social crises. Most of these

activities have taken place in areas defined as developing countries in the global south. Over the past decade, many populations from these countries have forced to migrate to countries in the global north, mainly due to economic and political pressures. As a result, the social balance has changed in host countries which have been dealing with waves of immigration such as the European countries. New populations have arrived on these continents as a result of severe social problems such as persecution, torture, hunger, and poverty. This has forced social workers to deal with a multi-national reality that is often perceived as a real threat and challenge to questions such as justice, equality, and human rights.

In order to deal with the multiple challenges presented by the current migration crisis, faculty members representing six schools of social work at universities in four countries – Germany, Slovenia, Israel, and Austria – attended an intensive three-day international workshop funded by the EASSW. The workshop dealt with "Challenges for the Social Work Profession at a Time of Global Migration Crisis", and aimed to determine whether or not there is a need for a new social work curriculum.

Based on the outcomes of that workshop, we will present: the missing link of knowledge that highlights the need to enhance our understanding of the social effects of current worldwide migration processes; recommended approaches to intervention and the challenges that pose in the classroom and in field placements; and research data, and several challenges entailed in conducting research among migrant populations. We will conclude by deal with the need to develop a new curriculum or to update the existing one.

Abstract 1 - The Missing Link of Knowledge for the Social Work Profession at a Time of Global Migration Crisis

Prof. Orit Nuttman-Shwartz¹ and Sarit Shay², MSW

Since the inception of the social work profession in the late nineteenth century, there has always been an emphasis on the importance of working with a diverse range of marginalized and/or vulnerable populations, including migrants. However, recent social changes and globalization processes, especially the latest global migration process, have had a powerful effect not only on the migrant populations but also on the people and communities all over the world that absorb the migrants, including social workers. This complex situation might shed light on the missing link of knowledge that highlights the need to enhance our understanding of the social effects of the current worldwide migration processes.

Toward this end, based on several examples from our international workshop, we will explore the debate regarding what constitutes the essence of social work theory and practice in dealing with the current global migration and the problems that have emerged:

- What are the preferred conceptual and theoretical approaches for enhancing knowledge about the social effects of global migration, and for improving the lives of the migrants?
- Has the policy of social workers helped improve the social status of migrants populations? Do social workers act as agents of social change, or do they act as something akin to a social "controller," offering aid and assistance but essentially maintaining the inferior status of migrants in society?

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- Are social workers biased by actual and representative dimensions of their own personal or social past and history? This includes issues relating to: personal status; the experience of inclusion and exclusion; oppression and acceptance; superiority and inferiority; current social, cultural, and economic characteristics; and a common vision of the future as part of a local-national society.

To conclude, we will discuss how to narrow the gap in theoretical and practical knowledge through the process of education.

Abstract 2 - Direct social work interventions to address the global migration crisis

Dr. Alvin Lander³

Direct social work interventions appropriate to meet the challenges associated with the global migration crisis should focus on issues of loss, and trauma and highlight the primacy of recovery, concurrently at the individual and family systems levels. Such an emphasis will build on the notion of resilience both as a state and trait resource.

Of central importance to developing a social work practice response to the adversity and hardship associated with the current migration crisis are the concepts of hope, compassion and forgiveness. Hope theory provides a potentially valuable motivational basis for struggles toward recovery in the face of apparent hopelessness and despair. Yohani (2008) describes an art based hope promoting intervention for refugee children. Hope is seen as a relational process, as a commodity that can grow between people in the context of relationships. Beginning with psycho-education on the concept of hope, children's drawings, paintings and collages are used in order to elicit their hope stories. Compassion, particularly self compassion, will also be of importance in fueling recovery from the traumatic loss associated with the current large scale forced migration. Gilbert (2003; 2007; 2010) describes compassion focused therapy which is largely based upon the engagement of the client in a series of compassion eliciting guided imagery exercises. Clients may strengthen their capacity to soothe themselves from the wounds of adversity. Forgiveness may help contribute to recovery with its emphasis on the place of emotional transformation in the recovery process.

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Social work interventions appropriate to the global migration crisis should place a commanding focus on emotion, emotional expression and emotional regulation. Experiences of adversity and hardship have at their foundation profound, largely negative, affect. Interventions should promote an emotion focused dialogue, both in the self to self relationship, and in the self-other relationship. This will necessarily involve psycho-education regarding emotion and its relationship to decision making and behavior.

The development of appropriate interventions for the current migration crisis should take into consideration the position of the social work practitioner with respect to forced migration and resettlement. There should be an emphasis on the important interplay between the personal and the professional when working with the immigrant or refugee. Countertransference issues should receive significant attention.

Abstract 3 - Research-led Teaching Social Work Students on migration and diversity

Mag.^a Helga Moser⁴ and FH-Prof.ⁱⁿ Mag.^a Dr.ⁱⁿ Gertraud Pantucek⁵

Modern societies are characterised by the diverse composition of their populations. Past and current immigration movements are one reason for this heterogeneity. This fact is significant for social work, since the diversity is also reflected in the composition of its clients. Social workers are required to respond to the complex and diverse life-worlds of their clients. To meet this challenge, intercultural or diversity-oriented competences are necessary. This need is recognised in the curriculum for social work students at the University of Applied Sciences – FH Joanneum Graz. Certain courses for Bachelor as well as for Master students cover topics such as immigration, asylum, ”culture“, diversity, etc.

The presentation will focus on two aspects. In the first part of the presentation it will be argued, that the concept of intercultural competences needs to be broadened to include diversity-orientation. The reasons for disadvantage and inequality in society in general and in particular in the population with a so-called ”migration background“ or ”migration history“ lie not only in the ”culture“ of the migrants, but in an intersection of biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, class, ability, religion, age, nationality, etc. which interact on multiple levels thus reflecting and acknowledging the complex life-worlds of the clients.

In the second part of the presentation an example of research-led teaching will be presented. The aim of a recent international research project cooperation with practice and research institutes in Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden is to identify good practice examples that facilitate the process of refugees

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entering the labour-market. Labour market integration is central in the social sphere in general, and it is also a crucial aspect of the life-worlds of migrants and refugees. Experiences and preliminary results of the research in cooperation with students will be presented and discussed.

Abstract 4 - **Doing Research in the area of migrants and refugees**

Prof. - Darja Zaviršek⁶

In spite of the dramatic increase of migrant people and refugees in the last decades migrants and refugees still remain an “invisible population” from the perspective of social work research. Most often they are subsumed under the research of the official figures and seen as a “flow”, “masses” and “economic burden” for western countries as well as for the poorer countries in Africa, Middle East and Asia. Critical and a person-with-experience led research where migrant people and refugees would present their own perspective, their everyday lives stories and the pertinent issues they have to struggle with, is very rare. These make them from a research point of view an “invisible population”. Even more so, the racist, xenophobic and economically unwelcomed contexts make migrant people and refugees into a “vulnerable population”. Foucault has shown how in specific contexts and with the processes of biopower people are changed into “populations”, which are categorized, sorted and make “vulnerable” for human rights abuses. The presentation will focus on qualitative international social work research on migrant people and refugees, where they themselves are subjects of research, and on research which focuses on their live stories, events and challenges. The presentation will present three areas of research, perspectives and focuses: 1.) a comparative overview of critical social work and social policy research literature on migrant people and refugees within European context ; b.) an overview of the existent media analysis on migrant people and refugees in Europe, as an important social work method in the area; c.) a comparative overview of specific research competencies and methods needed when conducting research with “vulnerable population” and with “invisible people”.

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