

Abstract presentation: Sexuality as a subject within practice and education

Drs. Bregje Spaans, MSc

HU - Utrecht University of Applied Sciences Netherlands - Institute of Social Work

bregje.spaans@hu.nl

Nora el Abdouni, BA SW Netherlands

Pretty Woman (social service focused on relations and sexuality) Netherlands

n.elabdouni@prettywoman-utrecht.nl

Workshop

Language: English

Equipment: Powerpoint / Vlaggensysteem

Theme: Educating social workers in speaking about sexuality.

The role of social workers is to offer support and services to those who are in need. *"They help individuals, families and members of groups and communities restore their capabilities to function in society"*. Social workers are familiar with subjects such as health, education, finance and day care. Another important theme is sexuality. This is a very significant part of people's lives and identity but also a very largely taboo subject within practice and education. Alongside, a lot of social workers are not sure how to approach this in a client conversation. There is embarrassment to act.

In the Netherlands, sexuality is becoming an important topic in social work. Within practice and within education. This is the result of the parliamentary investigation on abuse in child and youth-care and the advice of both committees, the committee Samson and committee Rouvoet. In the education at the HU there are more lectures about sexuality (sexual diversity) and students can choose a specific minor about sexuality.

Pretty Woman, a youth welfare NGO in Utrecht, is an example of a social service focused on relations and sexuality. We help girls and young women (between 11 – 23 years) who have to deal with bad experiences related to sexuality and relationships. We provide counseling to victims of sexting, sextortion, rape, sexual abuse and forced prostitution / trafficking.

Pretty Woman also offers prevention and supports other social workers to talk about sexuality. Our mission is not only to talk about the bad experiences but also the positive side of sexuality. About healthy relationships and sexual identity. Pretty Woman uses "Het Vlaggensysteem" to educate other professionals. "Het Vlaggensysteem is a method to define healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior.

Sometimes it is for social workers difficult to define healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior: is it normal for a four-year-old girl to bring in a pencil into the anus of a three-year-old boy? Is it ok to watch porn every day?

Universities have a responsibility to deliver social workers who are skilled to speak about difficult themes as sexuality. In the workshop we will explore how 'Het Vlaggensysteem' works in practice and how it also can be used in the education of new social workers.