

**1. Creating links between theory and practice: a professionalization path for the initial training of social workers**

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To be able to practice their profession in the province of Quebec, social workers must first complete a three-year undergraduate university program. Since 2012, to adequately respond to the current challenges and requirements of practicing social work and train conscientious, critical and committed future social workers, the Sherbrooke's University Social Work School, in an innovative teaching process, has been offering training based on a determined professionalization path.

Following a skills-based approach, the training program is characterized by a close correspondence between more traditional activities, such as classes, and experimental activities such as interventions in authentic situations, both simulated and real. To achieve this, many key players – teachers, practitioner coaches, supervisors, users and actors – will be mobilised in the very first hours of training, to support students in the development of different resources and skills.

In a perspective of continuous evaluation, the objective of this presentation is to explain the added value of this teaching method, from the different points of view of the key players who participated in both focused and nominal group discussions. Beyond the positive effects of this training – strong links with actual practice, progression of learning and acquiring diverse resources – analysis of this method's data enables us to identify the challenges and issues related to the actualisation and consolidation of such a professionalization path: “Working together”, cooperation, student mentoring as they acquire skills and assessment. Finally, this presentation invites to think about the paradigm and the transformation of practices that this teaching innovation can bring to all the different players involved.

**2. The involvement of users and their carers in a knowledges community within the social work program**

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Training students in the current social work field contains some requirements, in terms of increasingly demanding standards and heavier social issues. It is now crucial to consider the renewal of university education to guide future professionals in developing skills to meet the challenges of the profession.

With the help of an educational innovation grant, the Sherbrooke's University Social Work School (Quebec) established, in November 2015, a commitment comity involving the service users and their carers. Built on the principle of a knowledge's community, this group aims firstly to practice the combination of three different knowledges – academic, professional and experiential – but also ensures to strategically consider the involvement of the people in the training.

Although the involvement of the users and carers in the higher education is supported by political and institutional orientations in many countries, this topic progresses slowly in Quebec. Our

innovative pedagogical approach seeks to offer much more than a simple opportunity to share their story, by allowing them to have a leading role in the educational training, by becoming an instructor, a teacher supporter and an evaluator.

This presentation aims firstly to expose the innovative curricular and its challenges, but aims also to demonstrate its contribution in the transformation of the teaching strategies in social work by bonding the students to the realities that are facing the people with whom they will be intervening.

3. **The use of the *Projet Baromètre* web tool to stimulate the experiential knowledges of the service users: pedagogical thoughts and users perspectives**

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*Service user to be confirmed*

The *Projet Baromètre* is a web tool created since 2013 by a first line reseaching team at the *Institut universitaire de première ligne en santé et services sociaux* in the Eastern townships in Quebec. This tool consists as an online platform that uses perceptual scales to document any changes observed within people in a social intervention context. The *Projet Baromètre* is based on the personalisation of social services, highly inspired by multiple projects from United Kingdom. The use of this device aims to promote and encourage the commitment of those concerned in the evaluation of their needs, in the establishment of ways to satisfy their necessities, in the evaluation of the impacts that the services have of their lives and in the follow up of their overall situation.

As part of a pedagogical experiment, the *Projet Baromètre* web tool has been adapted to be used in the initial social work program at Sherbrooke's University (Quebec). Thereby, throughout practical activities, students were able to become familiar with the personalisation services philosophy while using the device. These participants have also been engaged in a direct dialogue with the service users, whom represent the first actors of the experimentation, by performing different meetings with them, within an authentic simulated context.

This current communication intends to expose and discuss the accomplished experiment, with a pedagogical and experiential perspective, while mentioning the value of its presents in a social work education program: it allows students to co-construct with the people, to engage in an authentic dialogue and to recognize the value of the experiential knowledges.

4. ***The 'confrontation' with the experiential knowledges of the service users and their carers: student's vision concerning the advantages and the challenges in the social work program***

*Student to be confirmed*

The discussion concerning the value of people's experiential knowledge and the importance of relying on such in the social interventions is increasingly prominent in the university education programs in social work. Based on the values of the profession, the approaches focused on the strengths, empowerment and the equality principle all follow that direction. For the university students in social work, these principles make great sense and none tempt to oppose. But how is this articulated in reality?

The initial social work program for students at Sherbrooke's University (Quebec) is based on a professional pathway. Therefore, during their studies, students accomplish a variety of practical activities where they train to intervene. Service users and carers are implicated in certain activities, allowing learners to have access to their own experiential knowledge. The accomplishment of this task has its range of challenges for the students. Indeed, having to face a 'real life' reality, often being exposed to difficult situations, having access to the inside world of people can all be opportunities for students to reflect on different aspects but also a moment where they will doubt and be questioned. Furthermore, the pedagogical value of an approach of this sort is evident. More so, the experience is crucial in the professional identity development of students by the positive 'confrontation' of reality and the importance of a human relation with people.

This presentation reports a student's point of view, certain program activities regarding a variety of student's personal experience, while mentioning the challenges that they cope with during their pedagogical experience.

**5. *The double value of a knowledge community: promoting service users and carers empowerment while improving the social work program***

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Literature concerning the implication of service users and carers in the university social work program highlights its double value: 1) the positive impact on the assumption of power from the services users and carers concerning their overall situation (promoting empowerment) and 2) the important impact on the enrichment of the program. The first aspect allows us to notice that a simple invitation given to these people to participate in an event of some sort provides a sense of pride and of competence that reminds them that they have power on their situation. The second aspect implicates the importance of recognizing and considering the different experiential knowledges, combined with the academic and professional knowledges. The mixture of these many knowledges, seen not as hierarchy but more so complementary, enhances the program followed by our future social workers.

The establishment of a knowledge community in the academic program of social work enhances the use of dialogic methods that are based on the combination of the values of every member concerned. The values implicated in a process of such are respect, equality, a genuine partnership and the power to act. The use of this way of thinking raises a certain amount of challenges within a university institution: the combination of knowledges, mutual appreciation and the capacity to work as a group. Therefore, this method allows to reduce the gap between the students and users and carers.

Inspired by an achieved experience, this presentation aims to reflect on the many challenges and advantages associated with the creation of a knowledges community in a university institution based on the thoughts of a professional and a carers.