

Developing internationalization in Social work education: the relevance of short programs
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Growing interest in the impact of globalization on welfare services and on professional practices has led to increased recognition of the importance of international components in the training and practice of social work. Recent International Social Work (ISW) programs facilitate academic mobility (Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012; Kreitzer et al., 2012), stress global-international aspects of social work (Healy & Wairire, 2014) as a way for enhancing social sensitivity, cultural competence and cultural relativism, and promoting moral and anti-oppressive interventions. This is particularly relevant in the field of child and family social work where the impact of phenomena like migration and asylum seekers movements have radically changed traditional practices (Chand, 2005; Köngeter et al., 2015; Slonim-Nevo & Regev, 2015). To develop an international training in this area is especially relevant within a shift of focus from a needs approach to a right based approach in social work with children.

Within international programs, it is widely recognized that a special role is played by staff and students exchange, but particularly this latter has proved often difficult partly because of language barriers, for the rigidity of curricula as well as for practical barriers for students. Not many Universities in fact are in the position to offer full courses in English, and practice placements are limited for the same language reason (Nuttman-Shwartz, & Ranz, 2014). As social work courses directly prepare for professional practice, often the programs are quite structured and connected with the specific local requirements and standards. On top of that many social work students, specifically master students, are mature students who work already and have family commitments, which prevent them to participate in longer exchanges.

Our presentation introduces some reflections on an experience of a short exchange program, which aimed to overcome aforementioned barriers and has proved more feasible and easy to access for many students. The exchange was part of a Tempus program involving 10 universities and institutes across Europe and Israel with the aim of developing a transnational career in social work with children and young people. In order to achieve its goal the universities jointly constructed and implemented a variety of academic activities: international courses on child and youth welfare from the perspective of practice, ethics, policy, and research; a range of student exchanges and mobility opportunities; virtual communities; and international social networks of graduate students. The considerations presented here concentrate on students' mobility and are based on the written feedbacks by students and academic staff, and the outcomes of two focus groups held after the exchanges had taken place. We will describe the main traits of the organization of the exchanges; show the potential of such experiences in terms of developing a critical and open mentality: the meeting with a different and similar issues and solutions yield for most students a creative reflection on social work interventions in their own country. We will also highlight risks and limits of short time exchanges: considering that most of the students mobility lasted no more the 10 working days, we identified the cost of not allowing a full appreciation of indigenous knowledge and of fostering patronizing attitudes towards different cultures perceived as less developed. On the other hand, there is the lack of showing only the positive and unproblematic sides of intervention, allowing just a superficial and uncritical knowledge of the social services visited (Zinn, Fargion et al, 2015). In conclusion, we discuss some of the measures and countermeasures identified by the universities involved for addressing those challenges.

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