International Dimension in Social Work Education

Teaching community development within an international context

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Content

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• Community work in social work education
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• Online teaching and learning in community work
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• How to integrate the online courses in BA programmes
Background

- Running international online courses; SW-VirCamp

- An edited international book about Participation in Community Work, international perspectives
Adressing global challenges in social work education

- Person-in-situation
- Meeting global challenges
- Socio-ecological conditions influencing all human beings
- Political and ethical discourses
- We are all participants on the planet Earth

Figure 17.1 An integrated emancipatory framework for community development, from Participation in Community Work (2014:242)
**Community work** is a broad umbrella concept referring to a method of working with groups of people that include a range of community organisation and community development strategies for the purpose of enhancing human wellbeing and fundamental freedoms, optimizing opportunities and human capabilities, and ensuring sustainable species biodiversity and ecological development.

**Community organisation** represents valuable strategies, often externally mediated for engaging people in dialogue and action to work towards their preferred goals, and/or the negotiation of conflicting and competing goals, through capacity building, and/or organisational, infrastructural development and the mobilization of resources from within or outside of the community.

**Community development**, which may include community organisation strategies and goals, from a radical and critical perspective has, as its key trust, consciousness raising by engaging people in reflective dialogue and activities to understand the sources of oppression and/or privilege on their lives, and in doing so increasing people’s hope, self-esteem and creative potential to confront and challenge oppressive power dynamics and structural sources of injustices.

Online teaching and learning in community work

• Community work from an international perspective
  › 15 ECTS credits during 4,5 month
  › Using the Learning Management System –its learning
  › BA students in social work from different European Higher Education Institutions
  › Supervision given by an international group of teachers
  › Using online learning material, online conferences, chats and co-writing tools
  › Learning-by-doing, participation and collaboration, task-centred and reflection on learning, and portfolio assessment in a transparent classroom
Teaching and learning principles

• Students and teachers have easy access to all written and virtual learning material
• Transparent classroom
  › Open ePortfolio and reflection blog
• Teachers are moderators
  › Participate with feedback and in chat meetings
• Co-operation among students from different countries
• Co-working space and peer feedback
Community worker’s roles

- Mediation and negotiation
- Support
- Building consensus
- Organising
- Skills and resources
- Group facilitation
- Social animation

- Consciousness-raising
- Informing
- Confronting
- Training
- Needs assessment and evaluation

- Resources
- Advocacy
- Media
- Public relations
- Networking
- Sharing knowledge and experience

- Research
- Presentation
- Management
- Financial control
- ICT

Figure 7.4 in, Larsen, AK. & Hole, GO. (2014) Participatory learning of community work in an e-learning course, in Larsen, Sewpaul and Hole (eds) Participation in Community Work International Perspectives, p. 95.
Examples of virtual learning material

Some of the tasks during the course

1) Write a paper related to Community Work and Participation or about Community Work and Empowerment. Use the theoretical perspective you have outlined and analyse how this affects your approach as community worker in the Green Park.

2) Mapping the Green Park Community.
Read chapter 3 and 4 in Henderson and Thomas (2013) to understand the mapping of a community. Visit the Green Park Community and make your own mapping.

3) Develop a project plan together with your group. Use the template for project planning.

4) The project plan you are making has to reflect the principles of community work. Write an academic paper where you, by referring to the literature in the course, explain how and why this is a community project and how changes can be developed.
5) Be critical to the way social issues/problems are addressed in your country. During the course you have been reading several examples of projects presented in the book Participation in Community work. What come to your mind about how community work could be an alternative approach also in your country?

6) Reflection on learning. You have been reflecting in your blog during the course. Present your reflection on your own learning process. In what way did this e-learning experience increase your knowledge about Community work, and what influence will it have on your current and future professional practice?
How to integrate the online courses in BA programmes

- Optional courses from the second year of the social work programme
- An optional course also for incoming students – ERASMUS exchange
Students evaluation of the course

<<Co-operation between teachers and students made this classroom a learning space creating a climate of solidarity and cooperation conducive to developing the skills of each. No word could express better these 19 weeks than 'co-construction of knowledge'»*

(from Q36, 2010 end survey)

17 of the 24 students responding to the end survey in 2015 will recommend the course to other students

/respondents in the 2015 survey

References

- SW-VirCamp: http://vircamp.net + Facebook –VirCamp community