

E	C	C	E
C			C
C			C
E	C	C	E

European	Centro	Centre	Ευρωπαϊκό
Centre	Europeo	Europeen	Κέντρο
Community	Educazione	Education	Κοινωνική
Education	Comunitaria	Communautaire	Εκπαίδευση

"The future of internationalisation in social work training - points for discussion"

1. Social work (just as social pedagogy) is a historical profession with origins in specific historical circumstances linked to the project of establishing social stability structurally and psychologically after challenges to social bonds.
2. The theoretical analyses necessary for a deeper understanding of those processes of disruption and their prevention developed in greatly varying political, cultural and intellectual contexts, leading correspondingly to different methodological frames and 'schools'.
3. Differences in titles, academic 'home' (or host) disciplines and institutional service contexts cannot be 'harmonised' or standardised across countries without changing the character and mandate of the profession fundamentally.
4. This does not mean that social work is simply the 'product of circumstances'; rather the central task of professional education centres on imparting an understanding for the inevitable tensions arising from this cultural 'embeddedness' and the skills to confront them constructively.
5. Social work academic discourses therefore have to take into consideration both 'universal constants' (such as human needs, human rights, behavioural patterns) and cultural, political and material specificities (such as relationship patterns, ideologies, legal frameworks...) in order to be able to interpret needs in specific relational contexts against the background of constraints operating on those situations and reversely to be able to engage critically with the forces and powers that define those constraints.
6. While there are plenty of opportunities to trace and analyse the relativity of 'circumstances' of social problems and social service responses within national contexts given the diversity of cultures, life-styles and conflicting ideologies impinging on members of modern societies, the relativity becomes especially evident in the context of cross-national comparisons because social policies in particular are still regarded as a prerogative of national politics.
7. The actual situation has however become precarious and confused in the light of the impact of economic and cultural globalisation on social work and on society in general. Globalisation implies a fundamental ambiguity between homogenisation on the one hand and individualisation on the other.
8. Moreover, neoliberal economic policies and principles amount to a denial of the importance of welfare policies in general and delegate care and protection services more and more to the private sphere of informal and non-formal assistance.

9. This 'homogenisation by default' forces social work out of political discourses and facilitates a preoccupation with positivist cause-effect links under the heading of 'evidence based practice'. This has the effect of marginalising a critical engagement with cultural, political and ideological constructs as 'meanings'.
10. There is clear evidence that globalisation and the advance of neoliberal ideologies have not managed to erase differences in political and social cultures; allegiances to distinct preferences, such as the prerogative public services still have in Nordic countries or as the principle of subsidiarity maintains in Germany, can be witnessed through cross-cultural and trans-national comparisons.
11. The 'disunity' of forms of social work can therefore be regarded as an heuristic advantage for the study of these processes and can become a strategic tool for demonstrating the central relevance of inter-subjectivity as a shared search for 'meanings' in all attempts at bringing individual and collective solutions to social problems.
12. ECCE, on the basis of the extensive experiences of its members in international exchanges and collaboration therefore opposes
 - a. attempts at bureaucratic standardisation of modes of delivering social services,
 - b. the ideological shift from public to private services,
 - c. the promotion of positivist methodologies under the guise of 'evidence based practice'.
13. ECCE promotes
 - a. a critical, dialogic engagement with 'relativity' in the form of culture, tradition and other markers of identities,
 - b. a historical approach to the understanding of patterns of care, social solidarity and welfare,
 - c. the collaboration between teachers and practitioners in social work from different countries, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
14. Members of ECCE call upon those responsible for the design of social work training courses to ensure that professional formation remains oriented towards maintaining and furthering the historical character of social work as a discipline through promoting international exchanges.

Decision of the ECCE-Executive Committee
http://www.ecce-net.eu/vors_en.html

"Position paper" to be presented in Milano:
EASSW - Conference 29.06. – 2.07.2015