

Promising practice

University: Università degli Studi di Sassari

Academic discipline: Social Work

Course title: Students' placement

Course description:

By means of direct participation of those directly involved in the learning experience, this project aims at building and sharing knowledge, skills and competencies that are crucial for the practice of Social Work.

Students and their placement Supervisors are asked to participate in laboratories that are based on "altervision" which is a specific method conceived as a collective reflective practice. RRI process requirements and policy agendas are used to stimulate discussion about actual situations experienced by students in the course of their placement experience.

The idea of the course comes from the need to think and build university courses that are really professionalizing, because complexity and multidimensionality of Social Work require the acquisition of specific skills, essential to respond to the labour market needs and to responsibly exercise professional activities.

In that respect, a very relevant role is played by professional placement, which is designed as a participated professional learning experience within a concrete setting which takes place through the continuous articulation of theory and practice. Actual experience aims at promoting a change in both the student who acquires new skills as well as within the systems with which he/she interacts: university, the professional community and system of community services. Providing for Social Work professional competencies within the actual Higher Education system in Italy, is not an easy task, as it demands for a deep insight in the ethical and methodological elements of the profession, as well as a significant attention to the moral attitudes and professional identity of the students who are to become future Social Workers.

Learning outcomes

As a general rule, the skills to be developed with altervision meetings are the following:

- Works within a group
- Reflect on practice
- Address problems critically
- Promote and develop social work professional identity
- Carry out social work research

We want them to acquire a solid theoretical background for critical and creative thinking. And we want them also to develop the competences needed to act effectively and responsibly. More specifically, responsible professional attitudes are addressed by articulating discussions with reference to RRI key concepts.

How students' learning is assessed

There is no exam, students are protagonist of their learning process. At the end of their placement period they have to produce a written report. Their Supervisors write an evaluation report which is taken in consideration by the University Placement Coordinator.

How students learn with civil society organisations through this course

Placement Supervisors are Social Workers that are directly involved in the learning process: the definition of learning objectives, method and contents. Within this project they also actively participate in alternative workshops.

Social Workers are practice-based professionals who promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. They interact with individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities in order to provide various forms of therapy and counselling, group work and community work. The professional training develops skills in the community work to support disadvantaged people such as marginalized people or excluded from society to change their situation and handle community problems. They work with communities or focus on specific groups. Community social workers liaise closely with social workers, schools, local authorities, civil society organizations and advocacy for people to policy makers at local and national level.

How students learn about dimensions of RRI through this course

Students learn how to express their own opinion, to debate, to reflect. They become able to substantiate their opinion and reflect on how they can apply the acquired knowledge in professional placement. RRI keys are integrated as directives for orientating alternative activities. For example:

Reflexivity. Reflexivity plays a central role in Social Work, where it is not possible to consider the thinking and acting as two separate practices. For the professional Social Worker, reflexivity is essential because working with people implies constant self-observation and control. Students and supervisors reflect on their own perspectives, critically evaluate their practice and outcomes and reflect on their feedback from managers, other professionals, clients, adapting their practice.

Social Justice. The Social Work profession's core mandates include promoting social change, social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Students learn to initiate and implement innovative programme for prevention of social problems, and social assistance strategies seeking social justice and personal and social well-being.

Anticipation. Anticipation is also crucial for Social Workers: each one of their actions needs to be weighted as to its consequences on the life of people and communities involved. Student in professional placement develop the capacity to analyse and understand (on the basis of the relevant theories) social processes in society and are expected to be able to project their impact upon the area of social assistance.

Ethics. Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that stem from this. Social Workers respect the right to self-determination and participation, and have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom

they work. Students in professional placement develop capacity to critically reflect the standards of ethics applicable to social work, its legal system and its role in the society

RRI keys integrated in the course:

Public Engagement; Ethics; Social Justice; Governance;

RRI process requirements integrated in the course:

Anticipation (future-oriented ethical engagement, future-oriented integral thinking); Reflexivity (context-awareness, critical thinking, ethical awareness, cultivating virtues; social moral disposition); Responsiveness (ethical-inclusive design & practices); Inclusion.

To find out more, contact:

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