

Social Work Education; when neoliberalism meets inclusion

Limbach-Reich, Arthur (2019) University of Luxembourg

On the grounds of current conceptualisations of the inclusion of people with disabilities, triggered by the CRPD (2007), it will be shown how the demands on education in social work run the risk of less satisfying the needs of clients of social work, while neoliberal and human capital-oriented approaches are increasingly gaining ground. This danger of the deprofessionalisation of social work (Gronemeyer & Jurk 2017) will be countered with selected empirical findings from social work practise and social politic programmes. Students shall be able to recognize that so called inclusive activation, activating inclusion and activating social work may tend to oppressive and excluding reversal despite of the inclusion terminology (e.g. REVIS: Revenu de l'inclusion sociale). In the practice of social work, increasingly approaches of help and offers are described with inclusion concepts and thus appear in a positive shimmer, under which, however, control and exclusion criteria often are hidden that go beyond previously existing ones.

Social work, especially in inclusion issues, will only succeed in competing with digitalization, standardized algorithms, software-based decision-making routines and ubiquitous cost reproaches in allocation processes, both in the education sector and on the labour market, if students in social work programmes already pays attention to corresponding tendencies and learn to and learners to uncover the pitfalls of the neoliberal inclusion policy. The renaming of social work services and institutions into inclusion agencies, however they may be specified, not only loses the conceptual, discipline- and profession-related labels, but also increasingly breaks off the scientific and ethical link back to social work. This may lead to a loss of competence in social work. Here the teaching and discussion of the threefold mandate of Social Work (Staub-Bernasconi, 2009) plays an outstanding and crucial role. Illustrative examples of good practice may show how Social Work education can be successful.