

Editorial

Social work practice in various contexts

by

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We know that social work, as practiced around the world, has many facets. Central to the idea of comparative social work is to promote a greater understanding about social work practice in various contexts in order to reveal the similarities and differences in professional practices.

In this year's second issue, there are three articles and one essay. In each one, the comparative feature is to be found. Methodologically speaking, this is in accordance with Durkheim. In his methodological considerations, he emphasizes that empirical material is first and foremost illustrative and produced for comparative purposes (Gane, 2010; Durkheim, 1985). In other words, all science is comparative.

The first two articles are linked in that they demonstrate the use of institutional ethnography (IE) in social work. In the first article: "Rethinking Vocational Rehabilitation through Institutional Ethnography", Siri Yde Aksnes examines how IE may contribute to a more nuanced and holistic picture of the intricate interactions occurring in vocational rehabilitation. She argues that much of the current research on the implementation of activation policy inadequately captures the mechanisms and process that influence vocational rehabilitation practices. The article forms part of a larger study about the relationship between employers and vocational rehabilitation staff in an employer-initiated recruitment project in Norway.

The second article: "Social work in the Public Services in Brazil- disclosing Ruling Relations in a Local Context", written by Trond Heitmann, explores professional social work in the public services in Brazil. Inspired by institutional ethnography, the article proposes an approach to research on social work practice. It emphasizes the exploration of contexts in order to disclose how professional social work is coordinated. The findings show that the formalization of the relationship with the employer through contracts of employment implicate that the disciplinary normative definitions of social work succumb to institutional regulations. These institutional regulations are not necessarily discipline-specific.

In the third article in this issue: "The Norwegian Children's ombudsman on child participation: Perceptions, impacts and Dilemmas", Polygarp Musinguzi and Ingunn T. Ellingsen explore how workers at the Ombudsman for Children experience 'expert

meetings' and groups with children, and how they perceive the impact, challenges and efficacy of child participation in such dialogs. They argue that active participation should be deliberately promoted beyond adult-led realms, and extended to ordinary contexts in which children interact with society. In Norway, as in many other countries, the Ombudsman for Children plays an important role in promoting children's rights. Executing this position illustrates the importance of public authorities taking children's opinions and experiences into consideration when making decisions which affect them.

In her student essay: "Leaning towards the other? An episode at NAV and an unforgettable meeting with a refugee", Linn-Marie Celand Saga reflects on her position as a refugee consultant in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). Special attention is given to the challenges and ethical dilemmas she experiences in the interaction with a refugee woman.

All articles demonstrate in their own specific ways how a variety of research all focus on science as a comparative approach, in which empirical findings are illustrative and demonstrate a significant aspect of social work practice.

References

- Durkheim, E. (1985). *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gane, M. (2010). *On Durkheim's Rules of Sociological Method*. London: Routledge.