

Call for the International Summer School 2020 June 2nd – 5th, 2020 in Muttenz (Basel), Switzerland

Subject

Under Control? Autonomy and control of and in social work

The tension between autonomy and control is a core issue in social work in several respects. First, as an integral part of the welfare state, the profession is itself controlled: its mandate and resources are shaped by, and dependent on, welfare policies. Hence, social work has been affected by the profound transformation of the welfare state in recent decades – caused by the «activation turn» of social policy and by the managerialist restructuring of public services.

The impact of these developments is controversial: is managerialism compatible with or detrimental to professional autonomy? Does the apparent affinity between the activation principle and core concepts of social work such as autonomy and empowerment strengthen or subvert professional goals? Secondly, in its relations with clients, social work finds itself in a powerful position, resulting in a structural dilemma between granting and fostering autonomy versus exerting control and enforcing social norms. Some scholars argue that societal and welfare state changes can also be felt on this level: direct «normalising» control of clients is replaced by responsabilisation, i.e. imposed self-control in the guise of autonomy. Others claim that a veritable return of paternalism and punitive approaches has occurred in social work. While there are intense debates over professional autonomy and the normative and methodical issues of autonomy and control in the professional-client relation, a third fundamental question is examined less often, namely, what actually constitutes personal autonomy and what its loss. Both social work theory and professional ethics see restoring client autonomy as a central goal. However, the respective debates are often highly normative while empirical investigation is lacking. Moreover, the focus is more on gaining autonomy than on losing it, although losing control of one's life is a precondition for seeking professional help. The Summer School will explore issues of autonomy and control with a focus on change and contextual variation (national, institutional, organizational, field of practice). It will present relevant theoretical debates and empirical studies.

Key questions

- What are the effects of welfare state transformations on the autonomy of social work in terms of professional accountability and discretion?
- In what way has the autonomy-control dilemma been reshaped in the wake of the transformations outlined above and how do social workers handle this dilemma in everyday practice?
- How can the increase or decrease in client autonomy be conceptualized and operationalised in social work theory, research and practice?

Aim and statement for cooperation

The aim of the Summer School 2020 is to continue a collaborative and joint process of exchange on discussion on international level. All participants are invited to work out a presentation related to the key issues of the summer school for presentation and discussion. Beside presentations, posters and discussion we would also invite and to stimulate you to work on innovative and creative ways for presentations which focus on the key questions, including film, art, literature, music etc. The proposal should focus on selected local, regional, national and international aspects of the given subject according to the key questions of the short description. International students (undergraduates, postgraduates, doctoral) and groups of students are invited to participate in the Summer School 2020 as well as established researcher.

The number of participants in the summer school is limited to 80.

Please qualify your proposal according to the following categories:

- workshop proposal
- paper presentation
- others: _____

The organizing committee will review the proposals and define key themes to work on during the summer school. For the participating students as early as possible we will open an online forum for those submitted a proposal to ex-change, discuss and prepare international perspectives to the key themes of the conference.

How to Apply

If you are interested in contributing to the summer school please send a short description (500 words and 2 key questions) to both of the organizers. Please include the names of all contributors, the title and the subject/topic of your planned activity.

Please also email a CV which includes: Full name; Contact details (address and email); Qualifications; fields of work and interest.

Deadline for proposals December 1st, 2019

Comments on the proposals February 1st, 2020

Distribution of the Call for Proposals

Please support us in distributing the CfP to colleagues and students.

For further information please contact the organizers:

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