Research-based Profession in the Changing Context of the Finnish Welfare State

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Themes of Discussion

- Changing Context of the Finnish Welfare State
- What is different in Finland – General remarks of the Profession and Education
- Model of SW Education in Finland in a comparative perspective
- Characteristics of SW profession in Finland
- Doctoral Training and Specialisation in SW
- SosNET - The national University Network of SW
- Current and Future Challenges and Hopes
Changing Context of Welfare State – never-ending story?

- **SOTE** - the most significant reform in Finland since its 100 years of independence: Reform of the social and health services and the local government

- The ‘**Finnish Schönefeld Airport**’: Started in 2002 and should be completed 2019? 2020? 2022?

**Aimed at**

- **Centralisation**: To shift the responsibility for public social and health services from the more than 400 local municipalities to 18 new counties: ‘**Stronger shoulders**’ (and less local democracy)

- **Integration** of social and health services

- **Privatisation**: Putting the services on the market and opening the competition, in particular the multinational big companies have increased their share.

- **Customer orientation**: NPM- chains of services

- **Cost-reduction** and efficiency

Current status: Political deadlock and constitutional conflicts
What is different in Finland – General remarks of the Profession, Education and Welfare state

- The quality of the Nordic type of welfare services is rooted in the high qualification and professional commitment of the (mostly female) staff of services
- Higher front-line professionals in public social, health and educational services qualified at MA-level (nurses, pedagoges in kindergarden and early education, all teachers starting from primary schools)
- Social Work education as part of Social Policy 1950-1990ies
- Social Work as own scientific discipline and independent field of studies since beginning of the 1990ies
- Social workers represent the core academic profession in social services comparable with the position of physicians in health services
- Since 2016 Registration of Professional Rights
Six universities with Social Work as Social Sciences – and the 18 Districts of Social and Health Services (in construction)

- University of Lapland
- University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio Campus
- University of Jyväskylä
- University of Turku
- University of Helsinki, incl. Swedish Education of SW
- University of Tampere
- University of Pori
- University of Kokkola
# THE TWO EUROPEAN MODELS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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<th>The Integrated Research Model</th>
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Model of SW Education in Finland in a comparative perspective

- Qualification of Social Workers requires both BA (180 ECTS) and MA (120 ECTS) in Social Work = 5 years of training
- Includes min. 30 ECTS Practice Placement / In-service learning at different levels
- Includes a researcher – qualification: extensive part of MA-studies consist of research
- A particular type of Social Work Practise Research and a network of Practice Research Centers established
- Collaboration with the regional Centers of Competence for Social Services as well (Projects, Practise research, Knowledge productions)
- Current situation: Lack of qualified Social Workers in practise, (payment, team leading and professional authonomy need ot be improved)
- Demanding entrance examination as a selection of students to be enrolled, since the number of applicants to universities is high
- Drop-out rate is low, growing annual intake 1990: 175 and 2015: 527
- Government’s extra investments in SW Education while Social Sciences generally are to be reduced
“The curriculum is designed to prepare graduates for
- analyzing and understanding clients’ different life situations,
  - meeting clients and defending their social rights,
    - raising social awareness and
  - influencing political decision-making,
    - writing reports and other documents,
  - planning and leading different projects,
    - multi-professional cooperation and for
  - the ways of legal argumentation of the field as well as
    - for application of legislation.” (SosNET)
Doctoral Studies and Researcher Training

- Each of the 6 SW university units offer doctoral training
- Doctor of Social Sciences in the discipline of Social Work 240 ECTS (60 ECTS longer than in most European countries)
- Either in full-time with a grant/as paid part of a research project or as part-time studies while working in the practice or in teaching SW
- Free choice of research theme or according to the special field of research of the supervisor
- An individual curriculum designed according to the different regulations at different universities, mainly consisting out of
  - compulsory general studies: philosophy, theory of science, research methodology and ethics, communication and further working life skills (20 – 30 ECTS)
  - studies in the own discipline which consist of research seminars, conferences, literature etc. (20 – 30 ECTS)
- Doctoral Thesis:
  - A) Article based cumulative thesis (3-5 peer-reviewed articles)
  - B) Monography
Profession of SW and its fields of involvement

Main fields:

CHILD WELFARE AND FAMILY SERVICES: case work on child protection, school social work

SOCIAL WORK WITH ADULTS: includes income and labor market issues, addictions, migrations, mental health issues, housing services

DISABILITIES AND GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK mostly in multiprofessional teams

FURTHER AREAS: School SW, Hospital SW, forensic SW,
SosNET - The national University Network of SW

- Established in 1999 by the 6 SW university units, to promote the collaboration between the universities and to present to discipline in the national university policies, social policies and at international forums

- **Joint doctoral training network** has been big success: funded by the national research Council Academy of Finland (doctoral students positions, supervision and training courses), 1998 – 2016: 65 doctoral degrees completed

- Several joint MA courses annually available on-line for all SW students (currently 9 thematic courses offered, from Roma people, Technology in SW and Domestic Violence to Process Management of changes)

- Support for SW teachers (Learning material, joint training, thematic sub-groups)

- International project: Finnish-Chinese collaboration for Doctoral Studies and Teachers’ training in SW

- Novelty since 2016: New post-graduated **Specialised Social Worker** – program to reply to the increased demands in the SOTE- frame of Social Services and the diversity of social challenges in society

http://www.sosnet.fi/In-English
Further Specialisation in SW - new offer since 2016

National-wide joint offer of the six universities:

SPECILISATION of SW (70 ECTS) after MA and practice experience, in following fields:

• Welfare Services (management, evaluation, innovations)
• Rehabilitative Social Work in challenging situations (capability approach)
• Child, Youth and Family Social Work (Child protection, multicultural SW)
• Structural Social Work (Public relationships and media, political work, community work)

http://www.sosnet.fi/In-English
Challenges of the Finnish SW education and profession in the next Future

- **POLITICAL CHALLENGE:** To keep the Social Agenda strong and resilient in the SOTE reform against the tendencies of medicalisation, marketisation, and technocratic management – new wave of multi-professional settings

- **CHALLENGE OF DE-PROFESSIONALISATION** due to the lack of qualified Social Workers tasks of SW moving to practitioners with lower qualification

- **ACADEMIC CHALLENGES:** To keep the high level of combining academic demands of performance and training of capable reflective research-based professionals

- **SOCIETAL CHALLENGES:** Increasing polarisation of the society, diversity of new social problems where the professional knowledge and research-based is always delayed

- **THE RISK OF THE PROFESSION ITSELF:** diverse levels of professional awareness, competence, and courage, pressure in daily working conditions, burn-out is a serious risk
... and the hopeful perspectives

- Increasing recognition of Social Work in the society and university policies
- Growing interest of collaboration from other scientific fields
- Increasing numbers of applicants interested to study Social Work
- Results of SW research as increasing co-created knowledge-base of SW practice
- Growing space for experience-based knowledge as epistemological growth of knowledge
- New social-media-based networks of powerful and critical young social workers