

International Summer School 2023 June 5th–9th, 2023, Helsinki



“Transversal skills and competencies promoting sustainable social work” Book of Abstracts

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Abstracts

Tuesday June 6th 2023

- Markus Neuvonen, Metropolia UAS: Heart vs. head: critical thinking as a transversal emotional skill
- WS 1.1 Andreas Schauder Critical thinking - Reflecting the concepts of Paulo Freire, Martha Nussbaum and Geoffroy de Lagasnerie
- WS 1.2 Markus Neuvonen: Critical thinking skills in action

Heart vs. head: critical thinking as a transversal emotional skill

Prof. Markus Neuvonen

Critical thinking is often portrayed as thoroughly rational phenomenon. Quite usually it is taught through techniques derived from informal and formal logic – most often in the form of argumentation analysis and its derivatives. While these techniques and methods are helpful, research has revealed that our critical thinking skills often translate poorly outside our field of expertise. Some things stand in the way for our critical thinking from becoming truly transversal and expanding.

In this keynote some of these common obstacles are explored and examined, for example how deep expertise in some field can paradoxically become an obstacle to critical thinking. In his presentation Neuvonen makes the case for truly transversal critical thinking being ultimately dependent on emotional skills: so-called "hot" and "cold" thinking.

How to develop truly transversal critical thinking? This keynote aims to give some practical – and maybe even surprising – guidelines for becoming a better, more critical and unbiased thinker.

Literature:

TBA

Critical thinking - Reflecting the concepts of Paulo Freire, Martha Nussbaum and Geoffroy de Lagasnerie

Prof. Andreas Schauder

Social work that understands itself as "sustainable" -in the sense of the SDGs- requires thinking that combines multidisciplinary insights and critically reflects on the social framework conditions, political decisions, and their consequences for the lives of individuals. «Critical thinking - derived from the Greek "kritikós: belonging to the decisive assessment" - means to question the world, to analyze the connections and interdependencies and to search for new ways towards humanity.

Freire (1973) draws attention to the phenomenon of "mythologization" and calls for a critical-reflexive way of thinking that opposes (national-)egoistic tendencies of the present and considers: "Where people lack a critical understanding of their reality and understand it in fragments that they do not see as a mutually interacting constitutive element of the whole, they cannot really know this reality." Nussbaum (2012) presupposes global empathy for this attitude: "...the ability to think critically; the ability to think beyond local ties and address the world's problems as 'global citizens'; and finally, the ability to put oneself in the plight of another human being."

Lagasnerie (2017) demands: "Because we live in an unjust, critical world, there is no neutrality. (...) The practice of knowledge necessarily includes a statement on reality. (...) If we want to produce oppositional thinking, we have to create oppositional spaces." Who but universities have to be critical rooms?

During this workshop, the considerations and basic statements of Freire, Nussbaum and Lagasnerie will be reflected and these questions will be discussed:

- What characterizes "critical thinking" in the age of "alternative facts" and "fake news"?
- Where do we need "critical thinking" in the context of social work?
- What challenges or contradictions can be identified and how do we deal with them in professional or private roles?

This workshop starts with a short input and invites you to discuss aspects of the presented concepts and their impacts on Social Work.

Critical thinking skills in action

Markus Neuvonen

In this workshop we explore our own critical thinking and its limitations through entertaining puzzles, exercises and brain-teasers. The aim of the workshop is to provide hands-on experiences on our different modes of thinking and reasoning, and give the participants some valuable insight into how our own minds work.

Wednesday June 7th 2023

- Prof. Dr. Jyrki Konkka: Tensions Between Competencies and (Transversal) Skills
- WS 2.1 Eija Raatikainen and Katriina Rantala-Nenonen: Case-based learning and virtual reality possibilities in training transversal skills
- WS 2.2 Matleena Hanhisalo and Venla Ouattara: Competence Identity and Social Services
- Prof. Dr. Katja Ihamäki: Long shadow of social work - from socialism to neoliberal Russia

Tensions Between Competencies and (Transversal) Skills

Prof. Dr. Jyrki Konkka

Some terminology: 'Competence' is an ability to generally understand and perform things at a basic level. It typically involves skills related to learning and comprehension. 'Competency', at least in my present use of the term, refers to something that can be called a 'professional' skill. That is, competency refers to a special expertise, something that is defined under a certain discipline by that discipline itself. 'Transversal skills', on the other hand, are skills that can be used across a wide variety of situations in life and work. In short, competences are 'basic', competencies 'hard' ((relatively) 'non-transferrable'), and transversal skills 'soft' ('transferrable').

The abstract: UNESCO defines transversal skills as follows: "Skills that are typically considered as *not specifically related* to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a variety of situations and work settings (for example, organizational skills)." Competencies, on the other hand, at least in the sense I am using the term in this presentation, are skills that *are specifically related* to a particular job, task, academic discipline, or area of knowledge and that are respected and promoted within a certain discipline, its special situations and work settings (for example, laboratory or "field").

Transversal skills are important general skills and a species of interactive expertise, as I understand the term in terms of the categories e.g. UNESCO gives in a controversial list: critical and innovative thinking, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, global citizenship, media and information literacy, etc. The list is, in part, political, culturally biased, and value-laden, but I'll leave those issues to be considered on another occasion. Instead, I'll focus on an important topic of interactive expertise on part of the transversal skills.

Competencies, as disciplinary skills, are important special skills that are required for a competent professional in a discipline. Disciplines provide, even force, a certain worldview, a paradigm, to its members, and for the purposes of the whole society. In essence, this worldview is not easily transferrable (though, it is transferrable through special commitment and education). A worldview, or a discipline, has its own commitments to a certain ontology, methodology and values that are not easily transferrable to a situation or work setting in which there are participants from several different disciplines.

In my presentation I'll aim at bringing the tensions implied here in the foreground to be discussed and making some suggestions for solving the problems concerning these tensions.

Case-based learning and virtual reality possibilities in training transversal skills

Eija Raatikainen, PhD Education, Principal lecturer, Metropolia UAS

Katriina Rantala-Nenonen, M.Soc.Sc, Senior lecturer, Metropolia UAS

Learning transversal skills in social field, such as critical and creative thinking, interpersonal and socio-emotional skills and learning to learn, requires versatile ways and methods of studying and practicing. In the international ITSHEC-project (Integration of transversal skills in health and social care, higher education and curriculum) has been developed virtual reality learning environments, which provides social and health care students with the opportunity to be immersed in highly realistic learning experience. In this workshop we will demonstrate and discuss about how VR learning environments can support development of transversal skills and which are the strengths and weaknesses of VR environments. In the workshop we will also reflect our transversal skills in working in multi-professional environment.

Competence Identity and Social Services

Matleena Hanhisalo, Metropolia UAS

Venla Ouattara, Metropolia UAS

We're hosting a participatory and action-based workshop about competence identity in Summer School 2023, "Competence Identity and Social Services – What Are the Transversal Skills that Form Your Competence Identity?"

Competence identity is understanding how to identify your knowledge and strengths and verbalize them. Competence identity can give an answer to the question "Who am I professionally in constantly changing society?" We invite you to join us in thinking about how to cultivate, nurture and grow our competence identity as future professionals in social services.

We all have unique transversal skills and knowledge in the field of social services. This workshop aims to help you in locating and highlighting your transversal skills while reflecting on your competence identity. Together we'll find ways to verbalize and describe our own professionalism and to market our own expertise (in a job interview).

In the workshop, small groups will build a creative display of skills and knowledge that future social services professionals possess.

Matleena Hanhisalo

student in the Master's degree programme in Social Services

Work experience in social services since 2006:

Social instructor in child welfare (current occupation)
 Social advisor in a shelter home for the victims of domestic violence.

Venla Ouattara

student in the Master's degree programme in Social Services
 Work experience in social services since 2012
 Kindergarten teacher in the city of Helsinki (current occupation)
 Social advisor in multicultural women's shelter Mona

Long shadow of social work - from socialism to neoliberal Russia

Prof. Katja Ihamäki

This study looks at social policy and social work but also transversal skills, such as critical, innovative thinking and intrapersonal skills in Russia, before the country's invasion to Ukraine in 2022. The Soviet Union declared itself responsible of welfare of citizens for over 70 years. Administration was centralized and strictly controlled. The system discouraged and even frightened people to take initiative or, action or to think critically. Paternalism combining care and responsibility of citizens has now become to an end for that part. However, people are nowadays controlled differently because they cannot express their differing political views.

In post-Soviet Russia, the market economy with scarce resources and privatization have transferred responsibility to individuals who should be able to cope with their everyday problems independently. Lack of empowerment and passivity continue to influence to some extent the behavior of clients in the social field. Contemporary Russia has many contradictions such as poverty, lack of expertise and co-operational work, heavy bureaucracy, low salaries and benefits, but also high level of education. The paradigm shift from socialism to neoliberalism is causing confusion of values and scarce resources permeate society as a whole especially people in vulnerable situations. In addition, current political control diminishes freedom of expression and critical thinking.

What would you suggest, how would you empower social services clients to use their transversal skills such as abilities, critical and innovative thinking, when resources are scarce?

What would you recommend to encourage people to participate in community development?

Thursday 8th June 2023

- **Workshop 3.1:** Joel Gasser: The Case of Transformative Social work
- **Workshop 3.2:** Magdalene Schmid: Growing up in times of climate crisis

The Case for Transformative Social Work

Joel Gasser, MA Social Work, Social Innovation, FHNW

Transformative Social Work is theoretically defined by Joel Gasser and Laura Wanzenried, as a systemic approach to address the current and future global challenges. It aims to transform both the individual and the collective mindset from a linear mechanistic neoliberalism towards a sustainable paradigm of organic interconnectedness ("The Web of Life"). The underlying holistic theory is the Systems View of Life by Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi as a common scientific denominator and interdisciplinary language. The theory is a synthesis which emphasizes the relationship of all living systems for a systemic conception of health (ecological, biological, psychological, social, and pragmatic spirituality). The main aim of Transformative Social Work is to facilitate and moderate interdisciplinary processes to actively design a livable and sustainable future for generations to come. To create a unifying vision is

urgent in view of the global challenges such as rising inequality, social injustice, climate change, geopolitical tensions, which require a fundamental shift in our understanding of the world and our place in it.

This common new mindset (Paradigm) is the deep layer leverage point for the urgent systems innovation. To facilitate the needed practical mindshift, all agents of change (social workers according to IFSW) should be invited to develop transversal skills. These skills are closely connected to the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), which include self-awareness, critical thinking, courage, self-regulation, openness and learning mindset, creativity, connectedness, and more. The IDG Initiative is developed by interdisciplinary experts and the framework serves as a necessary foundation for personal and collective self-actualization and empowerment towards a more just and sustainable society. The framework has to be used during training to develop these skills and qualities in social workers. The application of the familiar IDG Tools allows Transformative Social Work to drive change in organizations of practice and communities.

Key Questions

- 1) How can we effectively integrate the systems view of life and the IDGs into existing social work practices and education?
- 2) How can we effectively create the interdisciplinary processes needed in education, the state, organizations, and communities? Are you aware of any best practices?

Growing up in times of climate crisis

Magdalene Schmid, PhD, FHNW

Children and young people are growing up at a time when social justice is increasingly linked to climate justice. They are affected directly and in the long term by the global climate crisis and its consequences, which do not stop at national borders. As questions around climate justice concern adolescents, social work needs to find ways of taking these issues into account, e.g. in children and youth services.

The importance of sustainability issues for young people is also part of the latest Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for Switzerland (October 2021). They contain the recommendation to involve children and young people in the design of programmes in order to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is climate protection.

This workshop will provide an insight into recent studies and publications on the topic of "Growing up in times of climate crisis". The following questions will be explored in discussions among the participants:

- What is supportive for adolescents in order to face the climate crisis? What values or skills can be helpful?
- Which transversal skills do professionals of sustainable social work need in order to support children and young people in growing up well in times of climate crisis?