

The Change practice – third internship semester International Social Work

The third internship semester is called 'Change'. In this semester students will develop themselves in core task 3: Working on social change with the people in their context. The internship or practice during this third semester is slightly different than the other two internships.

At least half of the time, the student will be focused on doing a Participative Action research (PAR). PAR offers an empowering paradigm for collective action in which you use research in order to achieve social change. As the main method within the paradigm of PAR, we will use Social Design. Social Design is a creative human-centered innovation method in which all sorts of creative tools are used in order to 'design' something with the purpose of empowerment. With the use of social design the student facilitates a learning and co-creation process in which people are aware and able to participate and act to realize the social change they envision together. The student will initiate and execute this PAR right from the start of the semester.

Only by being part of a context, embedded within the social structures and systems, can the student facilitate the co-creation process that is so crucial for sustainable empowerment or social change. For this purpose, it is important that the student is also part of the organization as an intern: contributing to tasks and activities that are relevant for the organization. These internship activities that are not perse linked to the PAR can however be very beneficial for the PAR. For example: while working with service-users and sharing in the case load, the student will be able to get valuable insight in the people's perspective. And by doing this, the student has a close connection with the service-users who can also be part of the PAR as participants and/or as important stakeholders. And by being part of the team as a co-working social worker, the student has short lines with all the staff and their perspective that are also important in order to design something of use. In this way, being an intern and a PAR facilitator reinforce each other.

What do we ask from partners?

We would like to ask for guidance from a supervisor that can guide the student in being part of the organization and can also be of support for the professional development for the qualifications of our study program. This supervisor will also be part of the two evaluation sessions (takes up 1 hour each) in which the development of the student is being assessed.

Within the timeframe of 28 hours per week (540 in total), the students need to be 'free' for at least half of the week (approximately 14 hours) per week for doing the Participative Action Research. The other hours can be filled with activities that are contributing to the organization and at the same time match the qualifications that the students want to develop. This can be discussed and determined by the student and supervisor together. In some contexts, it could be beneficial when the internship activities of the student are in some way connecting to the PAR or be supportive for a successful change process.

The most important conditions are:

- There is agreement and a support base for a specific issue as a starting point for the PAR. For the focus of the PAR, we train our students to align with the change issues, problems, innovation ambitions or wishes for improvement of the community (this can be the target group or service-users of the organization, or the people working at the organization themselves).
- There is at least one person within the organization that is co-owner of the PAR issue and process as the 'insider'. This could be another person than the supervisor. The student is responsible for the process as the facilitator and coordinator of the project. However, we see it as an important factor for success to have at least one co-researcher from within the context that can ensure that the right people are involved and that the designed solutions for change can be implemented in the context.

What can be the starting point for a PAR?

Any issue can be a start for a PAR. The motivation for a PAR can be a knowledge-oriented question; we want to know something we don't know yet. Or an action-oriented question: we want to be able to do something that we are not yet able to do. Or a problem-oriented question: we want to solve something. Or a desire-oriented question: We want to meet an (unmet) need.

Outcomes of a PAR

The outcomes of a PAR with Social Design are very diverse since the process of participative action and reflection will determine what will be the right design and how to design it right. By this, we really strive to contribute to social work practices with this education module. Our ambition is that our students can be involved in bringing about change or at least contribute to the right direction. We look forward to fruitful projects resulting in satisfying and tangible designs together with and for our partners.