

23-04-2010 DBSH Symposium

Symposium Ethik

“Ethik in der sozialen Arbeit”

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Aim

Ø to promote ethical exchange, debate and reflections

By

Ø presenting a discussion paper

Ø presenting cases/dilemmas and questions



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Who am I ?

Social worker

Practitioner

Manager

Executive Committee Member

Regional President

Danish citizen

A dad



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Introduction

∅ What is ethics in social work ?



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Two levels:

1. Relates to right and wrong – what is the right thing to do in an ethical dilemma
2. Relates to moral doing – what makes you act morally when facing an ethical dilemma



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Reference/background

Ø Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles

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∅ Common challenges and dilemmas, e.g.

- loyalty of social workers is often in the middle of conflicting interests.
- social workers function as both helpers and controllers
- conflicts between the duty of social workers to protect the interests of the people with whom they work and societal demands for efficiency and utility
- resources in society are limited



Ø Definition of Social Work:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work



Definition ...

Facing the tensions between clients needs and rights, professionalism, management, political, economic and societal factors

∅ A dichotomy between:

- to change ("structure and action")
- to adopt ("conflict and order")



∅ International Conventions:

International human rights declarations and conventions form common standards of achievement, and recognise rights that are accepted by the global community



Ø Principles:

Human Rights and Human Dignity

Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being



Ø Principles:

Social Justice

Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work



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Ø Professional conduct:

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general guidelines on professional conduct



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Ethical guidelines ?

Ø to protect the profession ?

Ø to improve the general quality of service ?



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A discussion paper

q Aim of the ethical guidelines

- To strengthen the identity of profession and the individual social worker's position
- To specify the obligations and corresponding rights
- To ensure the quality of professional services by raising the individual social worker's ethical awareness
- To prevent failure, misuse, malicious or insulting treatment of clients



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- q The responsibility of the profession
 - Social workers have through their professional competences a special responsibility to prevent, counteract and eliminate that clients suffer social deprivation
 - Social workers are also responsible for informing the public and policy makers on social factors that bring or maintain people in fragile and vulnerable positions



- q The employers and service users
- are invited to bring forward specific parts for the social workers' ethical guidelines
 - and/or to develop their own ethical guidelines
 - the employer must provide room for continues professional development, parts of which should be supervision



q Ethical challenges

- a dual mandate in relation to the citizen and to our employers (controllers and helpers)

We build a trust with citizens through dialogue and support. At the same time, it is also our job to check the one we are talking to

- one policy and another need

The policy is that all unemployed shall in activation, while the unemployed may have different needs

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q Ethical challenges

- Between parents, families and other groups who have personal relationships with one another

We may experience loyalty conflicts. There may in group context be different perception of the social worker's role and mandate in relation to the safeguarding of individual interests



q Ethical challenges

∅ Social worker must be aware to explain a decision also when it follows an ethical challenge

This is both in relation to the directly affected and others who may be involved in the decision (authorities, colleagues or other actors)



- q How then to handle an ethical challenge
- You describe your problem and look at what values are at stake in relation to the issue
 - your own - the client's - the employer's
 - You consider your options and argues for the one you choose
 - You reflect on the values behind your choice and are ready to explain your choice



q How then to handle an ethical challenge

- To act active

 - è To do something right

- To act passive

 - è To avoid doing anything wrong



Cases/dilemmas

- q Sonja, Sammy and the welfare office
 - a mother
 - an 18 year old handicapped son
 - a family outside the resident country

Cases/dilemmas

- q Family problems – price and quality
 - the most relevant solution
 - a cheaper solution
 - competences ?



Cases/dilemmas

- q An independent job agency
 - company ethic
 - professional body's ethic
 - private/personal ethic
 - client's ethic



Cases/dilemmas

- q HIV/AIDS prevention
 - individual approach
 - family-oriented approach
 - cultural and context depended



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Have you ever crossed a client's personal border ?

If yes – then looking back, was it an assault ? –
or was it necessary ?



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Statements/dilemmas

- q If a social worker needs ethical guidelines, then she/he should not be a social worker
- q The approach a social worker takes in a case is often very different from how a colleague will approach the same case in the same setting è no common ethical understanding



Qualifications

- q Sharing, integration and operationalisation of ethical knowledge
- q Continues Professional Development – to include ethical issues
- q The balance between theoretical proficiency and practice experience (right/wrong – moral doing)

