

2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCES

ICCONSS

PUBLIC POLICY AT THE CROSSROADS: SOCIAL SCIENCES LEADING THE WAY?

Rethymno, Crete, 14-16 June, 2018

For the Panel

Mental Health Policies and Professional Networks

Chair: Tzanakis Manolis and Sofia Triliva

Abstract for submission

**TuTo+: Training of tutors and immersion in Europe
of young mental health professionals**

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Keywords

Mental Health, Psychiatry, Vocational Educational Training, VET, Europe, Labour Market, Tutoring, Mentoring, Training, Certification, Public Mental Health

TuTo+: Training of tutors and immersion in Europe of young mental health professionals

Context

On various levels (local, national, international, European), mental health is considered as a major issue; it is a growing sector, undergoing major changes and reforms. Data shows that depression is the biggest cause of disability worldwide and suicide is the second highest cause of death for young people.

The European Commission and the European Parliament are highly concerned by mental health problems. Projects discussed in this paper were co-funded by Erasmus+, strategic partnership programmes.

The major changes in mental health epidemiology and the new therapeutic approaches, including information and computer technology are major challenges for the organisations involved but also for a political public health strategy.

Contrary to the somatic health care of which technology is essential, mental health care is based on the interpersonal competences of the professionals. Research shows early retirement of the staff and a decrease of motivation after some years of everyday work. The quality of work life is of the most importance for the professionals dealing with mental health patients and users. The academic cursus do not correspond to the fast moving changes. So it is compulsory that all professionals can benefit from practical and lifelong training.

Problem

The shortage of qualified professionals is obvious for any mental health employer. A high level of stress and career burnout is extensively documented in researches and the early retirement of professionals causes a difficulty for the transmission of knowledge. Due to the gap between competencies of the young professionals and new trends in mental health, this project was of huge interest in the public health sector.

Intuition

The objective of the TuTo project (2014-2017), is to raise the skill levels of young employees and to increase the attractiveness or competitiveness of careers in the Psychiatry and Mental Health sector. It also promotes intergenerational connections, knowledge transfer and the introduction of new practices.

The main purpose of the TuTo programme was to organise traineeships that linked young professional trainees to experienced tutors on an European scale. The trainees were nurses, educators, social workers, doctors, occupational therapists, etc. They subscribed, left 3 times 1 week per year to a selected partner project, where they could train and learn more abilities in an informal way which is the strength of our programme, as this cannot be learned at an academic level. The tutor's tasks are to support the trainees during the process with a focus on the transmission of knowledge, the choices of hosting institutions and a reflection on actions.

With the TuTo programme, we developed individualised tutoring and an assistance-programme for young professionals, active in psychiatry and mental health care in general. To benefit from as much expertise and competences as possible, we opened up the programme to Europeans. Competencies are not concentrated in one country or region, which is why we need to upgrade this project from a regional level to a European one.

Implementation

This project involved 10 partners and more than 30 organisations in 10 European countries. During several immersion periods spread over 3 years, Belgian, Luxembourg, French, Spanish, Swiss, German, Icelandic, Romanian, Greek and Swedish participants were enriched by the know-how of their counterparts, resulting in a consolidation of a European network of specialized centers in Psychiatry and Mental Health. More than 110 trips were planned for the trainees. Mental health organisations (hospital, support center, day center, etc.), research centers and educational partners were active in the partnership. Thanks to a close cooperation with universities and high schools we delivered more than 150 ECTS credits to the trainees.

Results

The cooperation of a wide variety of multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary organisations, generated related activities and following results:

- a. Consolidation of an European multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary network of organisations experienced in mental health;
- b. Manage a close cooperation between the educational system and the mental health sector;
- c. Building several tools: traineeship agreement, portfolio for trainees, inquiry form for trainees, list of hosting institutions, excel sheets for managing the time slots, etc.
- d. Construction of deliverables e.g.: two published books one in French, another in English in a famous academic worldwide publishing company located in Paris, some scientific and professional articles, a practical guide for tutoring, etc.
- e. Organisation of 6 scientific and professional conferences in famous places around Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Spain) reviewing the innovations in mental health through European projects.

Impact

The impact on young professionals is obvious with a better adequacy to the new mental health trends and further more a better employability. The impact on the tutors is impressive, motivation is reinforced and the transfer of competencies to the newest generation confirms their self-esteem. The impact on the organisation is mainly to fight the shortage of working force and avoid absenteeism. Obviously organisations gained also transcultural competencies. The impact on the educational system is to have a better match with current requirements in the mental health area. The educational system will benefit from several results of the programme and will tailor the training programme.

Further developments

This ambitious project reached far more than the initial objectives. With a great involvement in all participants and partners, the partnership gained an international reputation with European visibility. Organisations involved acquired a real expertise thanks to this healthy emulation. Considering this institutional enhancement, the consortium decide to continue the project and we already set the steps further. A practical guide is available and the connection with high schools and universities is confirmed. The consortium will be very pleased to launch in 2018 this continuing adventure.

The new TuTo+ project will begin September 2018 with a focus on the training of the Tutors. The training will combine formal and informal exercises. Training sessions will be held in high schools and universities. Several periods of job shadowing and workshop with trainees will be scheduling over 3 years. At the end of the process, Tutors will receive a certificate of capacity in the transmission of innovative knowledge with 10 ECTS credits.