

Self evaluation of the quality of social work practice

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Evaluating the quality of social work practice is becoming more important in the light of changes in the welfare system such as the introduction of managerial policies, the reduction of resources; the increased awareness on the effectiveness of the interventions but also the threats to professional social work. Meanwhile, it is acknowledged that evaluating social work practice is complex because of various factors such as: the different meanings that are attributed to the concept of quality; the presence of different subjects that are interested in social work practice and the structural existence of multiple mandates to which social work is called upon to respond; the difficulties to operationalize the criteria adopted and to evaluate situations that are highly variable. Moreover the common understanding about what is 'good social work practice' is low also in the professional community. At least in Italy, social workers have very little room to discuss and share their ideas about which criteria and which indicators can be used. This lack risks to weak the capacity of the professional community to face the challenge of evaluating and assessing social work practice in compliance with professional criteria. In order to overcome those risks and enhance professional sharing, a participative research-intervention project was built. It aimed to: 1) bring out the criteria the social worker use to define a 'good social work practice' and 2) build a self evaluation questionnaire based on these criteria. The research project was proposed to groups of social workers, from 2006 to 2011, involving approximately 400 social workers. The research intervention project will be presented and discussed considering both some contents, stemming from a cross sectional analysis of the questionnaires, as well as the method used. The structure and the usefulness of the questionnaire will be also discussed.

Key words: research intervention, self evaluation, social work practice evaluation,