

Poverty aware social work practice: A new paradigm

Michal Krumer-Nevo

Ben-Gurion University

Abstract Background and purpose of the proposed presentation: Although fighting poverty and working with people in poverty have been two commitments the social work profession took upon itself since its inception, scholars have argued recently that social work lacks “poverty aware approach”. However, little of this literature addresses the needs of social workers working in the delivery of frontline human services who wish to apply poverty aware approach in direct practice. This article aims to fill this void by presenting a paradigm of poverty aware social work practice (PAP), which is based on perceiving poverty as a violation of human rights. A summary of the main points of the presentation: The paradigm consists of four interrelated facets: ontological (which deals with the questions, what is poverty? And, who are the service users?), epistemological (how do we know and evaluate the situation? What kind of procedures is needed in order to get the knowledge?), axiological (what are the ethical values that should be adopted in regard to poverty?), and methodological (what are the implications for practice with individuals?). PAP is presented in light of two current social work paradigms that shape the field – the conservative and the structural ones. The PAP paradigm is based on an Israeli program which the author is the founder and director of. How the proposed presentation addresses one or more of the conference aims and themes: The presentation addresses issues of knowledge production and, specifically, the use of human rights as a guiding model for social work practice with people in poverty.

Keywords: poverty, people in poverty, practice