

Standardisation- the end of uncertainty?

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Background and purpose of the proposed presentation: The well-spread idea of evidence based practice has resulted in an increased use of manuals and standardised tools in social work. Manuals are associated with certainty, which is appealing to organisations as well as professionals in social work, since aiming for certainty is perceived as "good practice" today. Yet standardisation might be a threat to professionalism since social workers need reflexive uncertainty in order to make autonomous discretionary decisions.

A summary of the main points: With examples from core practices in social work, child protection and care for drug abusers, we show that: - Organisations implement manual based work in order to extinguish uncertainty and receive legitimacy. - Professions use manuals for claiming expertise and service orientation and to receive recognition. - Manual based work influence how client orientated work and professionalism are perceived. How the proposed presentation addresses one or more of the conference aims and themes This presentation is mainly and directly connected to theme 4) Evidence and uncertainty – pathways to accountable social work research and practice. It also relates to theme 1) as it concerns knowledge production and public accountability in social work. In a wide sense it could also be seen as associated to theme 3) Standing up to complexity, since it focuses multiple perspectives on social work practice.

Conclusions from and implications of your presentation for practice, policy, or subsequent research: This presentation points at possible ways to understand how manual based work influences social work practice, which provides understanding that could be useful in practice. It also gives perspectives that could promote research and understanding of the intersection of professions and organisations.

Keywords Uncertainty, professionalism, organisations, manual based work.