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# E.B.E. Meeting

## 14/10/2024

SEKEHE- Structural embedding of knowledge by experience in higher education  
through processes of co-creation

# What does it mean to you to be an EBE in a university? ostrava

- ▶ Supporting students in starting an open conversation with a stranger and reducing barriers to first contact.
- ▶ Sharing life experiences in a space of respect and confidentiality.
- ▶ Bringing experiential knowledge into teaching.
- ▶ Support in the application of students' knowledge into practice.
- ▶ Inspiring students to reflect on their relationship and communication skills.
- ▶ To be ourselves and allow students into our lives.
- ▶ Support the development of key skills in social work: listening and communication, relationships and trust, self-awareness, cooperation, respect for the client.
- ▶ Cooperate with the teacher to achieve student learning outcomes by subject.
- ▶ Openness and receptivity to students' curiosity and interest in their lives.
- ▶ Sharing experiences in social policy and social work practice.
- ▶ Approaching the "client" as a person and a collaborative partner.
- ▶ Reducing stereotypes, prejudices and breaking down stigmas.
- ▶ Be a living example of what students will encounter in practice.
- ▶ Promoting a strengths-based approach.
- ▶ To be a bearer of hope that even difficult situations can be overcome.

# What does it mean to you to be an EBE at university? Italy

Luca: Being an EBE/ESP means

- ▶ being a lecturer teaching in a university context and this is one of the most desirable jobs
- ▶ This job allows me to collaborate with other lecturers, deciding what topics to bring and how to work on them, with intellectual freedom.
- ▶ that I have the opportunity to keep putting myself out there, gaining experience and thus learning, confronting very challenging problems and being able to grow my profession as an ESP/EBE
- ▶ getting to know the EBE/ESP profession and how its work is carried out in practice: in its relationship with users, in its relationship with mental health services and with the other professionals with whom it deals
- ▶ teaching students by stimulating their interest is highly rewarding because it allows me to train and inspire the next generation of future men and women social workers

Paolo: Being an EBE/ESP means

- ▶ a new experience but not the first, although it is certainly the most structured and designed one, having to be part of a (university) teaching.
- ▶ offering an important training - careful, complete, drawing on the experiences and skills of those who have a direct experience of fragility - that otherwise would not be there.
- ▶ working so that this way of teaching (or this teaching practice) becomes practice.
- ▶ To be an EBE/ESP is to demonstrate - to oneself and to others - that despite everything (despite having been 'in care' at the services) one can contribute to one's own wellbeing, to that of others, and to the collective wellbeing ('you go out the door and come in through the front door. In a different guise'). We are 'forerunners' for others

## What does it mean for me to work as an expert by experience at a college or university? Norway

- ▶ **Personal Relevance:** I work with people I can relate to, both in terms of addiction and mental health challenges, and as a former student in the same program.
- ▶ **Engagement:** This is a job I am passionate about, where I get to contribute with my thoughts, ideas, and solutions in both the study program and projects like CHIME, which I hope will create positive development in municipal addiction treatment.
- ▶ **Opportunities for Growth:** Working at KBT Fagskole provides me with enormous opportunities for personal and professional growth, with increased knowledge, deeper understanding, and continuous development of my competences.
- ▶ **Responsibility and Trust:** This also comes with a lot of responsibility and trust, which can sometimes lead to stress and uncertainty about whether I am meeting the expectations of my colleagues and the institution.
- ▶ **Empowerment:** Helping students who are now in the same position I once was in gives me a great sense of purpose. At the same time, support, guidance, and trust from colleagues are crucial for my own empowerment and development



# What does it mean for me to work as an expert by experience at a college or university? Belgium

Search, pioneering work (on the one hand it offers opportunities to work innovatively, on the other hand we experience resistance to the unknown among some colleagues). creating opportunities for better embedding of experiential knowledge in order to train care providers in a “future-proof” way, requires a lot of patience, steps for sustainable implementation are slow but sure, sometimes it feels like we are making slow progress, but we have already achieved a lot in 3 years, continue to be aware (looking back) at the road we are taking



# What does it mean for me to work as an expert by experience at a college or university? Belgium

## **In teaching:**

The practice is messy, and so are our examples.

It is a challenge for colleagues and students to learn to deal with the complexity of people's lives.

There are no uniform solutions because every client has their own background, experiences and goals.

School education often teaches tools that focus on 1 aspect of a person's being, without taking into account the total perspective of that person. Help should not be uniform.

Both colleagues and students indicate that this is sometimes difficult, but see the added value of hearing experiences that match with the lifeworld of clients.

## **In research:**

It is quite new to do participatory action research, in which the expert by experience is given a central place.

In participatory action research respondents not only provide data (input) but help determine the research question and method.

# What positive reactions do students give? Czech Republic

- We register positive feedbacks from students.  
Some citations:

*„I was glad for the EBEs in practice, I remembered it well for the exam afterwards and it made more sense to me.“*

*„EBEs are a useful tool to develop learners' empathy and more. They are stories full of motivation that will not be forgotten when delivered by consultants. I think it would be useful to include more of them in the curriculum.“*

*„Thanks to the consultants we were able to verify/confirm the theory on a practical example of a person from life, including self-discovery.“*

- Positive feedback represents presence of teachers at the annual meeting of EBEs and teachers interested in cooperation. This academic year 2024/25 we have 13 cooperating teachers.

Some citations:

*„Through the stories, students deepen their reflective skills. The story prompts them to think about deeper meaning and context within the studied subject.“*

# Positive feedback students Norway

- **Appreciation for Support:** They value it when I reach out to check on them during difficult times.
- **Clarity in Explanations:** They find my explanations of exam tasks helpful, as it clarifies what is truly being asked for in the assignments.
- **Normalization of Challenges:** They appreciate that I use my own experiences to normalize their challenges, openly discussing that there is nothing wrong with being who they are.
  - ❖ Emphasizing that making mistakes is part of the process.
  - ❖ Relating to their struggles as students with ADHD, dyslexia, and previous negative experiences with school.
- **Genuine Care:** Students appreciate that I demonstrate, through my actions, that I genuinely care and want the best for them.
- **Feeling Seen and Heard:** They feel acknowledged and understood, without feeling judged or inadequate due to their challenges and diagnoses.
- **Gratitude for Guidance:** They express gratitude for having me as a mentor.





# Positive reactions students Italy

Luca

Among the students' reactions, I found attention in the classroom and care and focus in the questions I was asked. Especially in group work, I found coherence with what I told them about my personal experience, services and my profession as ESP/EBE.

In view of the (positive) reactions of the students, I found confirmation of my being communicative and informative and of being able to relate to students, future social work professionals.

Paolo

In this project (but also all the times I have been at Bicocca University) I have always brought home positive experiences (positive reactions from the students). In fact, I do not remember any incident where there was no feeling with anyone. I met students eager for knowledge, suggestions, useful information for their own professional growth, and not a morbid attention to a single story (mine or that of other ESPs) - and thus a confirmation of the purpose of this course (*conditio sine qua non* for me) Students who have chosen Education Sciences are perhaps more attentive than others on these issues... What happens in other countries?



# What positive reactions do students give? Belgium

- ▶ Connects to the realities of work
- ▶ Insight into the world of clients
- ▶ Feel better prepared for internship and job
- ▶ Makes self-disclosure dicussable
- ▶ Lived, authentic experiences stick much more than “theory”.
- ▶ Makes them think about distance and nearness

# Positive reactions teachers: Czeck Republic

- ▶ Positive feedback represents presence of teachers at the annual meeting of EBEs and teachers interested in cooperation. This academic year 2024/25 we have 13 cooperating teachers.

Some citations:

*„Through the stories, students deepen their reflective skills. The story prompts them to think about deeper meaning and context within the studied subject. “*



# Positive reactions teachers: Norway

**Positive and Engaged:** They appreciate my positive attitude and high level of engagement.

**Willingness to Help:** I am willing to contribute and almost always say yes when asked to take on a task.

**Humor:** I bring a bit of humor and lightheartedness to the team—maybe even a little more than Vebjørn!

*I don't have instructors, but I have colleagues,  
like Vebjørn, from whom I learn a great deal  
and truly appreciate.*



# Positive reactions teachers: Italy

## **Luca**

The teachers have been role models for me in orienting myself (in this first time) in the university context, in the work group and within a teaching

And absolutely not excluding the importance of the human side (e.g. welcome, willingness to listen)

The experience with the lecturers was positive and enriching

All these ingredients turned out to be winners

## **Paolo**

With all the teachers (whom I already knew) a very good working relationship was established from the outset, and this meant that the classroom lessons, but also the planning meetings, went smoothly. The mutual respect for each person and their skills made it possible to work to build lessons together, without any conflict.



# Positive reactions teachers: Belgium

- ▶ Experiential input makes it more impactful for students
- ▶ Client perspective comes much more into the picture (not just care worker's glasses)
- ▶ Realise that we have strengths/qualities. Experience workers/clients are people like everyone else, not just people in need of support
- ▶ Appreciation for students' positive responses to our input
- ▶ Lessons become richer and with more depth
- ▶ Help is not uniform. Both colleagues and students indicate that this is sometimes difficult but see the added value of hearing experiences that connect to clients' lifeworlds.



# What negative reactions do students give ?Czeck Republic

- ▶ Students don't know what to ask, there is no discussion, they don't ask questions.
- ▶ Insensitive statements by students towards EBEs or stereotypical or judgmental questions or comments.
- ▶ No support from teachers in the class.
- ▶ Inappropriate teacher intervention in the discussion.

## What negative reactions do students give ? Italy

- ▶ It may have happened that, on occasion, some students were less attentive for reasons, however, not related to the course/lesson, and overall this was therefore of little consequence. The students never asked inappropriate or disrespectful questions, I do not recall any negative reactions or, at least, not so important as to remember them.

# What negative reactions do students give ? Norway

*Not directly, but I came to understand my role when a student with ADHD requested additional help with the exam. Initially, I was a bit surprised but:*

- ❖ **Boundary Issues:** I stepped out of the professional role without intention when we entered a more "friendly" tone. This led to confusion about the expectations of the guidance provided and resulted in frustration for the student. I realized that she had misunderstood what the mandatory responsibility of the school and me just giving more support because I had room for it timewise
- ❖ **What I did:** After reflecting on my role, I acknowledged the issue, took responsibility, and apologized and Explained.
  - ❖ **Resolution.** This was very well-received, she saw me as a friend but felt angry when I couldn't provide the same support because of confusion about the expectations , we were able to restore a professional and supportive relationship.
- ❖ **Other negative feedback:** *Where is my access to Lifter, my student App code do not work, I cant find Lifter, the volume on zoom is too low again,*



# What negative reactions do students give ? Belgium

- ▶ Sometimes tough to hear how someone's life can run
- ▶ Complex and complicated
- ▶ Feelings of discomfort/impotence when other students bring their personal (difficult) story
- ▶ Confrontational which sometimes makes them look away
- ▶ No ready-made solutions as a handhold is difficult
- ▶ Difficult to empathise with other perspectives, sometimes resulting in judgements about someone



## What negative reactions do teachers give? Czeck Republic

- ▶ No support from teachers in the class.
- ▶ Inappropriate teacher intervention in the discussion.

## What negative reactions do teachers give? Norway

- ▶ It's possible, but I haven't picked up on or been aware of any subtle hints, so I can't recall anything that felt significant enough to take to heart or address seriously 😊





## What negative reactions do teachers give? Italy

I don't think there were.  
Teamwork worked well

# What negative reactions do teachers give? Belgium

- ▶ Sometimes comes across as threatening towards own position
- ▶ Requires effort and time
- ▶ Feels like an extra workload
- ▶ Uncertainty and uneasiness about how to cooperate with expert by experience, fear of doing something 'wrong'
- ▶ Searching for cooperation with expert by experience that goes beyond an illustration or testimony

## Do you have tips for dealing with these reactions? Czech Republic

- ▶ Interactive learning formats - e.g., participation of multiple EBEs- peer support, students actively participate within a given interactive technique.
- ▶ Meeting of EBEs with teachers before and after teaching - clarification of mutual expectations and subsequent reflection.
- ▶ Relationship with teachers -support of mutual knowledge, communication.
- ▶ Teacher support of EBEs in teaching - active participation, asking questions, stimulating discussion, giving guiding questions.
- ▶ Strengthening the teaching competencies of EBEs and teachers - e.g. trauma-informed approach - to avoid retraumatization in teaching, facilitation training.
- ▶ Longer-term collaboration of EBEs with a group of students and a teacher - re-entry into the same collective.
- ▶ Taking boundary questions as a challenge or setting rules in advance? Prepare experts for the possibility of inappropriate questions and the right to define themselves.
- ▶ Supervision of EBEs work.
- ▶ Strengthening the identity of the EBEs group and developing relationships between them - space for sharing, clear job role.
- ▶ Involvement of EBEs in adaptation courses for first year students.
- ▶ Workshop for teachers and EBEs - developing new teaching techniques.

# Do you have tips for dealing with these reactions? Italy

Expect more questions from students, stimulate them if they feel intimidated in any way.

Stimulate conversation to imagine a multi-voice dialogue.

Make them realize that the helping relationship can be useful and effective. Although the modalities are different (and in some cases questionable in my opinion), for addiction and alcohol abuse in Italy we have considerable experience

I don't know how possible, but what if there were exchanges between EBE/ESP Italians spending a short period in Norway and vice versa (I took two countries at random). This is to touch upon the way others operate.

In Italy we have some publications on the figure of the ESP, what about the other countries? What if there was an exchange (perhaps translated)?

The RUL website hosts about 800 videos on mental health. They are all or almost all filmed by me, in some cases self-shot. But apart from that, I don't remember well but there might be some interesting videos to which one could put English subtitles for the other partners, or suggest their viewing to Italian students.

The students who ask questions do so mostly 'hot on the heels', if you provided a space of, say, 45 minutes or so to answer questions worked out at home? At a later stage.

# Do you have tips for dealing with these reactions? Norway

- **Don't Take everything Personally:** Understand that feedback is often about a specific action or situation, not your personal value as a human being.
- **Apologize Sincerely:** If you realize that you acted in a way that didn't align with your values, acknowledge it and apologize. This shows integrity and respect.
- **Apologize to Students:** Apologizing for mistakes helps students see that even with a power imbalance, mutual respect and responsibility are essential. Everyone makes mistakes, but relationships can survive when you take responsibility.
- **Work on Self-Worth:** Building your self-esteem helps you accept constructive criticism as an opportunity for growth. It also empowers you to assertively address unacceptable behavior from others.
- **Embrace Differences:** Remember that we all have different perspectives, values, and experiences. Accept this instead of insisting on your own viewpoint.
- **Never Stop Learning:** Learn from everyone—whether it's a lesson you want to integrate or something you'd never endorse. It's all valuable.

# Do you have tips for dealing with these reactions? Belgium

- ▶ Talk through the content well and clarify why experiential knowledge is an important source of knowledge.
- ▶ Find a consensus in the different forms of knowledge everyone brings in (academic, practice and experiential knowledge). Find a way to communicate this together
- ▶ Name the discomfort and make it discussable
- ▶ Invest in getting to know each other, also informally
- ▶ Humour
- ▶ Make it clear that you are not a greenhouse plant
- ▶ Be open in how you experience the cooperation and what questions/suggestions this raises in your mind
- ▶ By bringing your own experiences as an experience worker, colleagues and students also tell more about themselves. Make time for this and handle it carefully. It is often the first time that people show their own vulnerability.