

CO-TEACHING AT “STRENGTH BASED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS”

How does this course work?

Students gain knowledge of and practice skills in the use of strength-based change processes, which are based on theory, frameworks of understanding and strategies in the action research approach Appreciative Inquiry. Furthermore, this is linked to similar approaches in work with management of teams, in departments, staff groups, school classes and organizations. Particular emphasis is placed on developing skills in leading and facilitating change processes and in being able to plan and implement various training programs (workshop design) for smaller groups. Especially, the target group is young people socially excluded and living with mental health problems. Strengths-based approaches can be understood as a process of change that begins "from the bottom up". Major changes in organizations and in society can be created based on employees being genuinely involved in developing a common understanding of what works, so that you can do more of it and create the desired future. It also means not continuing with actions that seem counterproductive. Skills in thinking innovatively are emphasized.

One of the most important things we can do in the work of creating positive change is to strengthen relationships by making use of each employee's strengths, skills and experiences. The programme will therefore focus on identifying the students' own strengths and training on how they can use these strengths in their leadership, and how to map strengths in teams - or in students in a school class - and make these strengths productive.

The course will provide an in-depth introduction to the use of the strengths-based approach Appreciative Inquiry as an action research method and the application of the process model (5D) in creating high-performing teams and to experiment with co-creating learning communities that release the potential of a team, collegium, school class, organization.

Lessons learned:

- Students are encouraged to challenge their (negative) preconceptions of individuals facing mental health problems and addiction.
- Students are encouraged to use their own lived experience from their background to be part of the teaching and understanding of their professional development.
- Experiencing and understanding lived knowledge supports future professionals in grasping the impact of their work and work with more policy issues:
- Co-teaching takes time but has a great impact on student's learning experiences.
- The learning process is reciprocal; not only do students learn, but co-teachers also learn from each other.
- Co-teaching involves finding compatibility in teaching styles and cooperative approaches.

Challenges

- To encourage young people as experts by experience needs trust building
- - The absence of a common understanding of experiential knowledge poses a challenge to the role of the expert by experience.
- - Institutional fragmentation hinders the allocation of time for exchange and relationship building.
- - Acquainting oneself with the institution, navigating its dynamics, and feeling truly integrated require a significant investment of time.
- - The basis for co-teaching is unclear—is it a deliberate choice or a consequence of institutional structures?
- - The project challenges existing practices and people's beliefs.

How does this course involve experiential knowledge?

1. Lived experiences are an important part of the theoretical component, cfr. researchers with lived experience of mental health, addiction and poverty present their research and experiences.
2. Every assignment relates back to things that matter to people with people with different life experiences (mental health, substance abuse, poverty): actions have a direct impact on their lives. Additionally, ways are sought in which people with lived experience of mental health, addiction and poverty and/or their networks can guide these exercises.
3. People with lived experience of mental health problems, addiction and poverty are actively invited to participate in the course. The larger group of students observes the interactions between the lecturer and the persons with lived experience of mental health problems, addiction and poverty, making them part of the learning experience.

Data:

- Year: master level
- Number of students: 50
- Number of staff:
 - Lead instructors: 3
 - Other involved staff member: 4
- ECTS: 15