Swedish literature review on service users' participation in social work practice and education

This paper address participation of service users in social work practice in Sweden and give an overview of educational projects concerning participation of service users in social work education. But first an overview of the development of social work education in Sweden.

1. Social work education - Historical overview

Soydan (2001) have outlined the historical trajectory of the Swedish social work education and conclude that the development of a strong welfare state is of importance for the development of social work education. The part of the here presented historical overview is based on Soydan`s article.

Sweden has prepared personnel for welfare reforms since the beginning of the twentieth century. The Central Association for Social Work (Centralförbundet för socialt arbete, CSA) gathered and organized people who were interested in social reforms and social betterment and was a major initial influence over education of social workers in the beginning of 1900. The first school of social work started in Stockholm in 1921. Initially it was a small-scale program approximately 20 students per year and by the end of the 1930s was over 100 students enrolled per year. Social work curriculum was strongly influenced by case work. The expansion of the welfare state, social reforms and implementation of ideas of the welfare state was framing social work during 1930s and 1940s. The need for trained social workers increased leading to the establishment of new schools of social work in Lund, Gothenburg, and Stockholm during 1940s. The rapid expansion of the welfare state after the second World War led to further increased needs of social workers and more established schools of social work in Sweden (Soydan 2001).

In 1964, education programs for social workers were given the status of higher education. A new social work program included seven semesters of studies (3.5 years) was introduced. Resulting in a (by the state) centralized and standardized syllabus for social work education. By the early 1970s schools of social work in Sweden was ether state-

owned or private-owned but state-controlled. In 1977 the six state-owned schools of social work were integrated into the university structure of the country. Through this reform social work was also given the status of a research discipline (Soydan 2001).

The period from 1977 and onwards (to mid1990s) is also characterized as period of rapid professionalization of social work in Sweden (Righard and Montesino, 2012). During the last decade of the twentieth century Swedish social work education was strongly driven by a special investigator of the then existing national syllabus and the reformation of the Swedish higher education system in 1993-1994. The education of social workers (Socionomutbildningen) was impacted by the national syllabus through which the government and the parliament could steer details of higher education programs. The reformation of the Swedish higher education system gave universities and higher education institutions the authority to form their local syllabus and curricula. Educational profiles diversification of programs was established throughout the country. According to Soydan (2001) are the Swedish social work programs having more similarities than dissimilarities.

Soydan (2001) also highlight that the national syllabus from 1990 is very similar to the sylabys formulated in the late 1970s. The national syllabus from 1990 is described as follows by Soydan (2001:113):

> … the education of social workers should, from a holistic view of social needs and prospects, give theoretical and practical knowledge and practical ability, required for social work practice on individual, group and societal levels. The educational program should also prepare students for assessment and development of social work approaches as well as to qualify for doctoral programs in social work. The educational program should provide knowledge about the dynamics of social problems and approaches to handle social problems.

In 1997 a reform of higher education start. The social care program was integrated in the social work program and the number of universities offering social work education increased. The number of social work students enrolled at Swedish universities more than doubled in ten years (Righard and Montesino, 2012).

Education of social workers in Sweden has evolved from being non-academic and practice oriented to an educational program based on research-driven knowledge (Soydan 2001). Based on written materials about Swedish social work education Righard and Montesino (2012) explore changes of conceptions of knowledge during three developmental phases of the Swedish social work education: the establishment of the

first social worker programme, the establishment of social work as an academic discipline and the current situation.

Two conceptions of knowledge within Swedish social work education are discussed. First, the dualistic approach referring to the division between theory and practice. According to this approach, theory is perceived as something created by scientists and practice as the place where theory is applied. Secondly, the reflexive approach referring knowledge production as generated in and through practice. In other is it not possible to separate knowledge production from the practice context.

Righard and Montesino (2012) analysis show that the dualistic approach was dominant from the first establishment in 1921 until social work education was incorporated into the university structure in 1977. The 1977 reform did not only address education but also development of a research discipline in social work. The number of lecturers with both practical and research experience of social work increased (Righard and Montesino, 2012).

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The Bachelor of Science Programme in Social Work (Socionomprogrammet) offered by universities and colleges in Sweden today consists of 7 semesters (210 ECTS). Student graduation leads to a professional qualification with the title 'Socionom`

I later years, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket) repeatedly evaluate Swedish socialwork education. In the evaluation from 1999/2000 was a dualistic approach between theory and practice, education and the professional work identified (Righard & Montesino 2012). In the evaluation from 2003 it was stated that social work education still has two parallel tracks, the theoretical and the practical. Even if the dualistic approach has lessened. According to Righard and Montesino (2012) are the reflexive approach more and more recognized within social work education in Swdeden.

In the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education evaluation from 2009, highlight the tension between competing conceptions of knowledge in terms of academisation vs.

EBP. Academisation refers to scientific knowledge produced at universities and EBP to how this knowledge, service user's perspective and experience-based knowledge, is turned into professional knowledge (Righard & Montesino, 2012).

Even if it is commonly recognized that evidence-based practice in social work is based on scientific knowledge, professional expertise, and service user experiences, involvement of service users is still in defining suitable interventions in social service practice (Denvall & Johansson, 2012; Kjellberg &French, 2011). Service users are also still not integrated on a national level in social work education.

2. Service user participation in social work education

Since the 1990s, the Swedish social work education has included course literature on social mobilization and service users' perspectives (Denvall, et al. 2016). Giving Social work students the possibility to learn about service users' perspectives.

The Higher Education Ordinance (SFS1993:100) has regulated requirements for collaboration between researchers and the surrounding society since the end of the 1990s. In the subject of social work, there is a pronounced responsibility to promote the development of knowledge that increases the understanding of the difficulty's vulnerable groups' face in their everyday life (Denvall et al. 2016).

In 2003 National Board of Health and Welfare, highlighted the importance for service user participation in educational development within social services (2003a; 2003b) A survey was conducted by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen 2003a) in 2003 to map the way in which the social services and social work education acknowledge service users' perspective in their knowledge development (Socialstyrelsen 2003a). The report asserted that service users' experiences, and perspectives seldom was utilized in a continuous manner in the ongoing quality work in ether social work practice or education. However, it was stated that the service user perspectives were acknowledged, in social work education, at most universities. Especially by lectures given by people with disabilities or experiences of substance abuse (Socialstyrelsen 2003a: 80). It was also reported that social work students read only sporadically about service users' problems and experience at Swedish universities. Since

then, a demand for service users' participation has been highlighted in various publications from the National Board of Health and Welfare (e.g. 2012).

Despite this, Kjellberg and French (2011) highlight there is no national requirement on service user involvement in social work higher education in the country, although 'an increased influence from service users is in agreement with political intentions as well as a wish from the service users and their organizations' Högskoleverket* (2009, p. 42) [Swedish National Agency for Higher Education]). Swedish schools of social work have courses about service users and invite them to share experiences with Social work students. But rarely involve them as partners in planning or development of the curriculum (Askheim, Beresford & Heule 2017).

(*From 1 January 2013, the National Agency for Higher Education will be called the University Chancellor`s office (UKÄ)).

According to Denvall et al (2016) is the expert role common among social workers. The image of the social worker as an expert and the service user as a carrier of a problem is often becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy in social work. Resulting that social work students tend to distance themselves from the target groups of social work. In order to reduce this image Denvall and colleges address the importance of involving service users more strategically in the social work education and started an educational development project in the beginning of the 2000s. This project was med possible through EU founding and was located at the School of Social Work, Lund University. The intention of the project was for social work students to learn about sustainable integration and social change through encounters with service users on equal terms in an educational setting (Denvall et al., 2006).

> The approach used on this project was meant to promote a deeper understanding of how service users are actors in their own social change process, not just passive subjects exposed to various procedures carried out through social workers (Kjellberg & French, 2011: 951).

The mobilization course

The practice of service user participation has been developed in the School of Social work at Lund University since 2005, which has involved around 300 service users and over 50 service user organizations in the region. The so-called Mobilization Course focuses on community planning and change and is given both to social work students in

their last semester and to students who have been recruited from different service user organizations in the neighborhood.

Pedagogically, the Mobilization Course is based on methods which assume that learning and development are social processes that require action, interaction, and reflection and in which students have influence over the educational situation. A goal is to transcend the problem-based perspective, which dominates in social work (Heule and Kristiansen, 2018).

The mobilization course sprung from the educational development project described above. This course was based on a pedagogical approach aimed at integrating service users with social work students in the classroom. (Denvall et al., 2006; Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2017; Kjellberg & French, 2011). The innovative nature of this course was that service users were enrolled as students alongside the social work students.

The inclusive character of the course can according to Denvall (2006) be considered as controversial. By involving service users as participants and experts oppose the professional as expert thinking that is common within the social work profession. The inclusive framework implemented in the mobilization course and other similar educational project rests, according to Denvall and Vinnerljung (2006) on two arguments; The first argument refers to the need of integration of service users in the mobilization of social services as a *rights issue* on the part of the service user. The second argument is about the *quality* of education and how service users` experiences of exclusion and discrimination provide important knowledge to implement in professional social work.

The mobilization course, according to Denvall et al (2016) and Heule et al (2017) was made possible through trusting relationships between the course teachers and about fifty different service user organizations representing people with experience of crime, addiction, homelessness, mental illness and disabilities, and ethnic minorities.

The mobilization course includes two groups of student's social work students (SWS) and service user students (SUS). The SWSs who attend the Mobilization course, participated in the course as part of their university studies. The students from the service user organizations have different educational background, very few have qualifications to study at university. The SUSs have to meet two basic requirements. Firstly, they should have personal experiences of being marginalized and discriminated in the society.

Secondly should their participation in the course be voluntarily (Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2017).

The course aims for mutual learning where all students are engaged with the same lectures and tasks. The course structure includes lectures, presentations by students, workshops, and project development work in joint student groups. In smaller groups student work on projects and develop project proposals which in turn hey present to an external project panel (politicians and researchers) that provide feedback. The course ends by students making personal reflections and work individually and discuss exam questions during seminars (For more detail information see Denvall et al. 2006; Heule et al 2017; Angelin 2015; Kjellberg & French, 2011)

Based on evaluations and communicated experiences from students has the mobilization course developed over time. An important lesson learnt from the first year of implementing the mobilization course was tensions between the two student groups. During the first year's focus was put on the experiences of service user students and their organizations (Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen 2017) this focus resulted in negative experiences among social work students (Kjellberg & French, 2011). Social work student experienced that SUS achieved a higher status in the classroom since they got to tell their stories and share their experiences.

In an attempt to foster mutual learning between the two student groups the course was then reframed so it gives all participating students the opportunity to tell their life story, through joint lessons and through workshops (future workshops). Kjellberg and French, (2011) has explored the changes made to the course based on the theory of the gift economy and gift exchange – give, receive, and return.

The theoretical framework gift economy/exchange was also introduced to the students as part of the changes made to the course. Lecture and role-play based on the gift economy was included and was shown to be a valuable in order to equalize the imbalance between the student groups. The new reciprocal sharing of experiences with in the course strengthened the course and had been an important step in the development of the mobilization course (Kjellberg & French 2011).

The two groups of students tended to appreciate and valued the Mobilization course differently. Börjesson et al (2009) have shown that the service user students emphasized their personal development and extended network while social work students valued the

increased understanding developed during the course had on their professional development.

The Mobilization Course aims to show that experiences matter by focusing on mutual sharing between the two groups of student groups (Heule, Kristiansen & Knutagård, 2021).

> One of the main goals with the course is to give the students from service user organizations and the university students the opportunity to study together on as equal terms as possible, according to the goal of gap-mending. (Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2017: 401)

The gap-mending approach

The gap mending approach aims to mend gaps between policies, services, and professionals—as well as service users. The gap mending approach originated at Lund University in Sweden in 2005; it was then taken up by Lillehammer University Norway 2009, and in 2012 a partnership with Shaping Our Lives (UK) was established as a new international network called PowerUs (Heule, Kristiansen & Knutagård, 2021). PowerUs consisting of teachers and researchers from schools of social work and representatives from service user organizations in nine European countries (www.powerus.se). This network started through an EU funded project consisting social work teachers and service users from Sweden, Norway and UK, (Askheim, Beresford & Heule 2017) PowerUs has a growing membership currently consisting of 19 countries (Heule, Kristiansen & Knutagård, 2021). PowerUs is an informal network promoting people's rights to be included and is committed to supporting new groups who wish to take forward a gap mending approach (Heule et al. 2021).

Participants within the PowerUs have developed 'gap-mending strategies' in order to reduce the gaps between the declared aims and the experienced realities:

> The gap-mending concept can be characterized as a reflective tool that helps teachers and researchers to consider what, in their practices increases, maintains or mends gaps between policies, services and professionals—as well as service users. Gaps always exist in a context (Askheim, Beresford & Heule 2017: 130).

Askheim, Beresford & Heule (2017) describing co-production as an important component of the gap-mending concept:

> Co-production is defined as a particular form of partnership between people who use social care services and the people and agencies who provide them (Hunter & Ritchie, 2007, p. 9). (Askheim, Beresford & Heule 2017: 130).

Askheim and colleges refer to Needham and Carrs distinction between three levels of co-production. The lowest level, *description* refer to that services relying on some productive input from service users. The next level *recognition* refers to processes when care givers acknowledging service users' input, valuing, and harnessing the power of existing informal support networks and creating better channels for people to shape services. The highest level of coproduction, *transformative* co-production requires a relocation of power and control. This form av coproduction include development of new user-led mechanisms of planning, delivery management and governance.

Gap mending strategies are located within the transformative type of coproduction (Askheim, Beresford & Heule, 2017). Empowerment is also an important concept for understanding transformative co-production and gap-mending strategies. Angelin (2015) describe empowering processes as crucial for reducing the gap between service providers, service users and education.

Coproduction is also addressed by Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen (2017) who also explore the gap-mending processes with Swedish social work education.

> The gap-mending concept is an analytical tool that helps teachers and researchers in social work to reflect upon what, in their practice, increases, maintains or mends gaps between professionals and service user groups. (Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen 2017:396/397)

Heule, Knutagård and Kristiansen (2017) explore practices within social work education and research, where groups that have used different social services have been included in mutual learning processes together with SWS. The mobility course (from Lund) is used as an example in this article as well. Another example is a research project aiming to combat homelessness through implementing a housing first project in collaboration between homeless groups, politicians, and social workers. Askheim, Beresford and Heule (2017) conclude that alliances between educational institutions and service user organizations is of importance for a fuller understanding of what gaps we are facing and how they best could be

mended**.**

Education project influence social work practice

> The Mobilization Course has developed into an action research-oriented platform for gap-mendingbased networking and development of co-production solutions to social problems (Heule et al 2017: 403).

Some of the project students developed and present to politicians and researchers within the Mobilization Course has been realized in different services (Heule et al. 2017). Former student in the mobility course has also been engaged in developing projects including service users and new service user organizations have developed based on ideas emerged during the course.

In Sweden has two projects connected to social work education including service users contributed to concrete developments of social work practice: the mobilization course and the implementation of a Housing first project (Heule et al 2017). Heule et al (2017:404) writes the following about how these tow project has been linked in an attempt to and nourish each other:

> During the introduction of a Housing First pilot in the city of Helsingborg, we used the Mobilization Course as a tool for finding out how the Housing First service could be optimized. This became the theme of the course for two semesters where social work students together with students from different service user organizations could shape gap-mending solutions (Heule et al 2017: 404)

Target prejudices

According to Ghazanfareeon Karlsson (2020) Swedish social workers are generally not trained to reflect on their own cultural background, their own basic values and social status. She also addresses that social workers tend to simplicity social problems ignore diversity within groups of service uses. Social problems of elderly persons are for example often reduces to be matter of their aging. Ghazanfareeon Karlsson (2020) study highlight the potential of working with pedagogical exercises including critical reflection in social work education in order to increase students' awareness of prejudice and taken for granted assumptions toward elderly service users. Results show that the exercise made students aware that they were more prejudiced than they imagined and that they intend to include critical reflections a part of their future practices.

User movies and web-based education

Johnson (2013) has combined videos, so called user movies, and discussions as part of web-based course aimed for professionals working in addiction treatment or the social services at Malmö University, Sweden. The course intends to "help the students develop

a fundamental knowledge of various theoretical and practical aspects of maintenance treatment." (Johnson 2013: 470)

The user movies were produced in cooperation with several patients with experiences of maintenance treatment and provide a forum for patents to communicate their perspective of practical or ethical issues within maintenance treatment. All participating patients were members of The Swedish Drug Users Union (Svenska brukarföreningen). Scripts of the patents own life stories was drafted by the patients and later filmed. Patients played themselves in the movie.

User movies is according to Johnson (2013) one way of combining theory and practice in web-based professional education when face-to-face interaction is not possible. After students have view the movies, they are encouraged to work on suggestions for how to improve the scenarios presented and to discuss these strategies with their fellow students.

Participation of service users in the social work program at JU

Historically have the participation of service user's ben quite strong in our program. Some years ago, we had a special course about the participation of service users. For example, did all students have continues face to face contact with one service user for one year. All meetings between students and service users were followed up by teachers and the student's communication with service users was included in their examinations. We faced some challenges when individual meetings between service users and students was included as part of our teaching activity. Some students found their activities to be problematic sine service users sometimes had expectations on them and that their role in relation to the service sometime became confused. Were they a friend, a student or soon becoming a professional? We do not have this special course anymore. Teaching focused on students learning about how to be able to understand and embrace the perspective of service users are now more included in our social work program as a whole.

The perspective of service users is at the moment mainly included in the program by lectures and course literature focusing on the perspective of service users. The participation of service users in our teaching has on the other side been reduced in later years. Service user are still included in some courses where they as individuals or as representants for a service user organization share their experiences with our students.

We are reworking and developing our social work program now. Finding new ways of including service users in our social work programme is one of the challenges we face in this process. We do not have a clear formulated action plan. We are rather in the phase of recognizing what we have and how we can improve the inclusion of the perspective of service users as well as how we can include service users in our education.

New challenges have been noted since we started to include the service user's perspective throughout our social work program instead of having a special course. The integration of service users in our program become more instable and depending on interests and established contact with service users of the teachers in a certain course. We therefore need to develop new ways of including service users mor strategically in our program.

3. Participation of service users in social work – in practice and research

In Swedish social science research, citizens and service user's participation is a relatively well studied phenomenon. This chapter is organized after some of the themes delt with in this research.

From voice to service

Service users' organizations and other non-profit organizations had a significant effect on the political development in Sweden as well as the publicly funded welfare system and paid professional social work (Starrin 2000). Historically Sweden has a long tradition of strong social/folk/popular movements where individuals from civil society organize themselves with the aim of changing politics or social conditions perceived as incorrect or unjust (Eriksson, 2018a).

Socially vulnerable groups have organized themselves to advocate for their interests and claimed and gained more authority. During the 1960s and 1970s social mobilization grew among users of welfare services (hereafter called service users). Service user's organization became more political by pursing political issues, creating public opinion, questioning, and challenging the state (Markström and Karlsson, 2013). Service users'

organizations had a strong voice and fulfilled an important function as both opinion-formation and as communicators of their unique knowledge. The service user organization gained influence and strengthened position did not automatically make them into a real counter force where they convey their opinion and their perspective on matters concerning social work practice. Service users risked being reduced to be a group of experts on their own situation (Meeuwisse & Sunesson, 1998).

During the 1990s, developments of organizations within civil society and the non-profit sector turned in another direction. The role of service users' organizations shifted from "voice" - creators of public opinion through getting their voices hear to "service" - producers of services in both health care and social welfare. Service user organizations have gained more influence over social work during the gradual transition from "voice" to "service" (Lundström & Wijkström, 1995; Wijkström & Einarsson, 2006)

The strengthened alignment between the Swedish state and service users' organizations can be characterized as the government working in consensus and harmony with the service user movement. Together they work towards the shared goal of better services and social conditions for vulnerable groups (Hultqvist & Salonen 2016; Eriksson, 2015; Eriksson 2018a). Service users are not only given a voice in political matters they are also providers of services that municipality grants (Johansson, Kassman & Scaramuzzino, 2011).

As providers of services, service users' organizations exercise influence on social work practice. Their services can target both service users as well as professionals and policy makers. Service user organizations manage support groups for service users, educate municipality`s employees, they shape opinions and act as the referral body in government investigations (Eriksson 2018a; Johansson et al 2011). For example, two nationwide pensioners' associations submitted a consultation response to the proposal for new social services legislation on January 29th 2021 (SOU 2020: 47). Service users' organizations are often major players in processes concerning issues for the group of service users they represent. Groups of organized service users are often invited to discuss the content of the policy and political issues (Johansson & Meeuwisse, 2017). For example, do the national association of pensioners in Sweden (PRO) describes themselves as giving voice to pensioners` in political matters. And as having influence decisionmakers on issues of importance to the elderly in the development of the proposal for new social legislation

SOU 2020:47. But when decisions are to be made, service users' organizations often lack mandate (Johansson & Meeuwisse, 2017).

Service user groups in Sweden have gained greater influence over the design of various care. This applies to people in elderly care and people with physical or intellectual disabilities. However, Heule et.al (2021) address that the increased influence is not the case for all service user groups. When it comes to people with substance abuse, people in poverty or people suffering from mental illness, influence has diminished in recent decades.

The service user concept

Terms used to refer to people who use welfare services have differed in the Swedish context and are under continuous debate (Mossberg 2020). The most broadly used term in social work is service user and client. The term client refers to persons in need of support from social services and is well rooted and still used among social worker even if it is not the frequently used term today. Being defined as a client indicate dependence on professional helpers (Skau, 2007). In the 1990s, the concept of client was replaced by the term service user as the commonly used concept in social work and social services. It is usually claimed that the term service user reflects a larger dimension of influence compared to the term client:

> The term service user refers to a person who does not have the opportunity to choose an alternative producer, but who, on the other hand, can influence the current one in different ways. (Socialstyrelsen 2003a:18)

The term service user was first used within the public sector where service users were involved in how welfare activities or servicers was designed (Heule et al. 2016). The term service user refers to individuals who belong to one of the social services' target groups, who are in need of support with various problems. In other words, users of welfare services.

The National board of Health and Welfare defines service user as follows:

> [Service] Users are a collective term for everyone who receives individually means-tested interventions from the social services, regardless of the type of interventions in question. The efforts can range from support and service to more comprehensive assistance, and a service user can be anything from a newborn child to a very old person. The word service user indicates that a person takes a welfare service in use, regardless of whether it is voluntarily received or given by force. (Socialstyrelsen 2013)

The service user term has been problematized for lacking to refer to the relationship between the professional and the person who use services. It is for example Beresford (2005) deems that the term service user can contribute to stigmatization since it provides a problem focused and simplified picture of the people who are subjects of various social services. The National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen 2013) address that the term should be used sparingly and that it is not appropriate to use service user when referring to a particular group or individual as it can then be perceived as a kind of distancing (Socialstyrelsen, 2013). Others have addressed that the service user concept can contribute to stigma, especially if a person's entire identity is attributed as a user of welfare services in professional contexts (Heule & Kristiansen, 2013). After all, a person has several identity-creating roles such as: parent, professional affiliation, nationality, religious affiliation, etc. To get around the problem of categorization and stigmatization is it of importance to clarify which services an individual or group of individuals use. The term is therefore often used to emphasize that a person is the subject of different types of social services (Heule & Kristiansen, 2013). Depending on the context, therefore, other, more precise terms may be suitable to use instead, for example assistance users, children placed in foster care, clients.

Representatives from the service users' organizations disavow being labeled. Within Swedish service user organizations are members mostly referred to as 'people who/with ...', and more seldom or not at all as 'service users', 'clients', or 'patients´. (Mossberg 2020)

In Sweden are professionals and service users using different terms (Mossberg 2020) Mossberg (2020) has studied the construction of service users within mental health in Sweden. The most common terms used by professionals in Swedish are 'service user', 'client', and 'patient'. Service users themselves mostly use members', followed by 'people', and 'persons´. Expressions like 'many of us who ...' or simply 'many', 'we', or 'us' are used.

Mossberg (2020) concludes that service user views themselves as a person, not all that different from everybody else, that had difficulties. Professionals on the other hand focus on the individual and its needs. To them the service user was a patient or a client in need of social service. From the professional's perspective did the service user have the same

rights and responsibilities as everybody else, just limited capability to understand the welfare system or norms and societal expectations.

Service user participation

In recent decades have increased attention and interest been paid towards service users' participation in social work. Legislation and social welfare policy explicate, as described and quoted a bow, the importance of participation. Service user participation (SUP) is a complex concept fostering many types of interpretations and understandings. Kvarnström et al. (2012) have explored how service users perceive the concept of participation in interprofessional social work practice. Five variations of service user's perceptions of SUP were explored: 1) information transmission; (2) choices and decisions among resources; 3) comfortable relationship and communication; 4) interaction for increased understanding; and 5) conditions for service user participation. Kvarnström et al. (2012) conclude that participation can be experienced differently among service users.

Service user's participation has also been studied from the social workers perspective in an interprofessional context by Kvarnström et al. (2013). SUP was mainly described in terms of opportunities for participation. The following categories where identified: 1) inclusion in activities and social events, 2) obtaining guidance, 3) having self-determination and choice, 4) getting confirmation from and contact with professionals, 5) negotiating for adjustment, 6) personal responsibility through insight, and 7) circumstance surrounding SUP.

Dahlberg and Vedung (2010) present seven arguments for service users influence in social services. Service users influence: 1) promote citizenship, 2) is a means of participating in societal development; 3) promote self-knowledge, 4) enhance legitimacy, among its users and the broader community, 5), increases the effectiveness of the organization, 6) reduce power differentials, and 7) services become more tailored to the needs of users.

Practical guides for SUP acknowledge that participation can come in many forms and on different levels. Participation and influence are regularly visualized in the form of staircase models. In the strategy for Region Jönköping County has, for example, a combination of, adapted to the region's needs (Jönköping County Region, 2017).

For example are well-known models for participation use such as Hart et al. (1997) theory of children's participation and Shier classification model called Pathway to participation The last one includes the following levels of participation: service user 1) is listened to, 2) get support and can communicate their opinion, 3) get their opinions considered 4) are involved in the decision-making process 5) shares power and responsibility for decision-making (see Jenneteg, Svensson, Wåhlstedt 2020).

Service user as customer

Swedish policy on user's participation is based on both a democratic and managerialist approach. Logics of new public management (NPM), in terms of measuring and improving efficiency and service quality incuse the Swedish social policy (Jäkerstig Berggren, 2015; Eriksson 2018a) In lines with NPM service users are considered as customers and free to choose among various options. Different possibilities to choose from both providers within the municipalities or the private sector. According to Swedish legislation are municipalities allowed to contract private providers of publicly founded elderly care since the 1990s, (Szebehely & Trydegård, 2012).

The opportunity for service users to choose between various private and public providers are presented in the Act of Free Choice Systems (LOV) that became effective in January (SFS 2008:962). The Act created a legal framework for private providers and service user's ability to choose. Swedish policy in the field of eldercare is largely individualized with an emphasis on the service users as a consumer free to choose among different options. For example, can older people in need of support choose what care and services, who should provide the service and care as well as how the care and services should be performed (Dunér, Bjälkebring & Johansson, 2019a) A study by Dunér, Bjälkebring & Johansson (2019b) show that possibilities for elderly to choose home care is hard to accomplish. Their results show that freedom to choose can range between being active and enable to choose between providers and services to being depending on decisions made by family and staff.

The notion of service users acting as consumers is grounded in the assumption that choices will lead to enhanced quality. This assumption and its logics have also been questioned (Moberg, Blomqvist and Winblad, 2016). Informed choices where service users have access to relevant information is a necessary condition. Moberg, Blomqvist

and Winblad (2016) case study within Swedish home-based elderly care show that information to the elderly is deficient in order to make informed choices.

Evidence and knowledge based practice

During the last decade have social service organization moved away from authority-based social work towards knowledge-based social work (Denvall, Granlöf & Karlsson, 2008). This shift assumes that service users are supposed to be able to exercise influence over the provided services (Jäkerstig Berggren, 2015).

The Swedish public social welfare sector has, over a decade, implemented EBP into the local welfare practice (Bergmark, Bergmark & Lundström 2012). In the State government investigation (SOU 2008:18) from 2008 it is stated that that EBP includes practices based on the service users' experiences. January 2011, the government and Sweden's Municipalities and County Councils signed a first agreement on supporting evidence-based practice (EBP) in the field of social services. User participation and influence is one among three (research and practice) important part of evidence-based practice. As part of this work, the National Board of Health and Welfare was commissioned to map methods for user participation in social services and health care. The purpose was to produce a knowledge-based suggestion for activities.

In 2013 The National Board of Health and Welfare published a national guide for service user's involvement in social service, psychiatry, and substance- and addiction care. Service user are here clearly expressed as experts on their own situation and needs.

> To achieve user participation requires a structure and a long-term strategy. It involves a process of planning, implementation, and follow-up. This applies both at the individual level and at the more general levels. It is important that the users are involved from the beginning. It is also important to systematically monitor and evaluate the services provided in order make a difference for the individual and groups of service users. (Socialstyrelsen, 2013: 8).

As addressed in this quote are service users supposed to influence initiatives and activities of which they are a part of.

On one hand are evidence-based practice and knowledge viewed as the safe path to solve social problems within social work in Sweden. On the other is EBP contested in the Swedish discourse. Mainly based on two interpretations of what constitute real and acceptable evidence. One acknowledges only randomized controlled trials to provide real

evidence while the other consider evidence to be a combination of research and experiences of practitioners and service users (Johansson, Denvall and Vedung 2015).

Co-production is a used concept for understanding when public service agents/providers and citizens/consumers jointly contribute to the provision of public services (Pestoff, 2009; Fotaki, 2011). "Co-production facilitates consumer voice, especially when it involves collective rather than individual consumer participation in the provision of welfare services." (Pestoff, 2009: 202-203) The co-production concept is also used within social work education as described in Report 2.

Rosenberga and Hillborg (2016) has conducted a survey with participants from both service users and professionals as well as interviews with key actors at the national level involved in a national implementation project of evidence-based knowledge including service users influence in Sweden. The results show an overall positive attitude towards implementation of experience-based knowledge. Service users and professionals communicated common target areas such as: addressing power relations, establishing legitimacy, assigning resources, investing in sustainability, and planning for real participation. Service users and professionals were also relatively united according to what strategies would be needed in order to move from ideology to action.

EBP is also a debated matter. Based on analysis of policy documents, interviews with actors within social welfare, and observations during seminars, workshops, conferences and meeting on local, regional, and national level Johansson, Denvall and Vedung (2015) argue that service users' perspectives and participation tend to be ignored during the implementation of EBP. The authors argue that this is notable since service users' experiences are a vital ingredient in EBP. Despite thein policy documents explicated ambition of integrating service users Johansson, Denvall and Vedung (2015: 81) writes: "… user participation has become an issue about the user rather than an issue with the user." According to Denvall (2006), the target groups of social work, the service users, need to be treated as actors rather than as passive recipients of interventions.

Today when evidence bases practice and knowledge are highlighted as the safe path for professional social work Denvall et al. (2016) addresses the importance for future social workers to acknowledge service users' voices and perspectives. The social worker should, if advocating service user participation, support self-organization and initiatives from service users Beresford et al. (2004). Heule och Kristiansen (2013) highlight

contexts specific experiences as relevant. They promote extensive use of experience-based knowledge from different groups of service users within the social work.

Incorporation within welfare administration

Historically service users' involvement within Swedish welfare was formulated by grassroots movement from outside public administration. "Today user involvement is largely a political and organizational concept managed from above and within the Swedish well-fare administration" (Eriksson 2018a: 834)

Eriksson (2017) explains that the initiatives for service user's influence and participation to a large extent come from the welfare administration. A relationship between the public sector and the service user movement gives actors from civil society the opportunity to influence how social work is conducted. Eriksson (2018a) has shown that service users' involvement in social welfare can have negative effects on the service users' movements. He has explored this based on co-optation theory focusing on processes of incorporation of service users' movements within the logics of the welfare organization. Cooperation can be described as the process in which a larger and more powerful actor (eg the state) attaches a smaller, actor (eg a voluntary organisation) in order to thereby avoid opposition and create a mandate for its activities.

In other words, can service user involvement create an opportunity for the public administration and social services to influence how the service user associations act and pursue their agenda (Eriksson 2018a).

The incorporation of service users' movements within the social welfare system is clearly exemplified when service users' organizations receive state funding for providing services (Kunosson, 2019). In Sweden, for example, the voluntary women's emergency movement has been gradually integrated into the public welfare administration. Their activities are largely financed by state and municipal grants which in turn has resulted in more expectations and demands on the service users' organizations from the state (Enander, Holmberg & Lindgren, 2013).

Meeuwisse och Sunesson (1998) address the balancing act between, on the one hand, consensus and recognition between service user organizations and the social welfare system, on the other hand, service user's independence for the social welfare system.

Close ties between service user organizations and governmental actors as well as a consensus-oriented approach complicates the recognition of conflicts and radical controversial matters (Näslund, Sjöström, Markström 2020b).

By implying that service users are partners sharing the same goal and objectives the conflicting position and the counter power in relation to the state of the service users' movement risks being neutralized (co-optation) (se also Eriksson 2018a). Therefore, Meeuwisse and Sunesson (1998) address the importance for service user's organization to maintaining a certain distance towards the welfare organizations.

Salonen (1998) argues similarly and addressing the need of independence from a democratic point of view. Service users conflicting perspectives are defined as crucial in order to enable service users to be a counterforce towards public social welfare.

The policy discourse and increase individualization

Based on analysis of Swedish national policy on user involvement Eriksson (2018b) identify three distinctive features of the policy discourse. Firstly, that the policy is open and imprecise formulated, secondly, the consensus perspective is dominating, and thirdly, the tendency the focus on service users as individuals, rather than the service users as a collective. He concludes that the policy has several discursive consequences, such as constructing the service users as subjects responsible for their own well-being and that service users' ambitions to influence are directed towards welfare organizations rather than political decision-making.

The by Ericsson (2015) identified tendency to focus on service users as individuals is not an exclusive phenomenon within the policy discourse. Experiential knowledge has been shared collectively within the service uses moment. Lately, experiential knowledge has taken more individualizes forms. In order to understand this Näslund, Sjöström and Markström (2020a) introduce the concept of service users' entrepreneurs (SUEs) which refer to individual service users who make a career based on their own experiences as service users (Näslund, Sjöström and Markström 2020a) Results show that SUEs legitimize their voice and influence by personal narratives, collective and institutional perspectives as well as by balancing individual and collective narratives.

Increased individualization is also event in the recruitment of service users involved in issues conserving change in social services. It is common for individual users to be recruited for the activities, and instead of acting as a collective more politically driven voice, it is their individual experiences that are requested (Eriksson 2016).

When targeting individual experience trough engaged service user representatives, the collective attention of service users and diverted from the political dimensions of the issues, which can be seen as a depoliticization of the service users influence and participation (Hasselbladh, Bejerot & Gustafsson 2008: 59).

Participation as a challenge

Based on governmental regulations municipalities are obligate to ensure that older people have influence over their own lives and that they can maintain independence as they grow older (Socialstyrelsen, 2002). However, the government has quite little influence over actions at the local level since the municipal authorities have considerable freedom in how to interpret the obligation to ensure service users influence (Trydegård & Thorslund 2001).

Swedish municipalities have provided complaint forms as a formal channel for dealing with complaints from their older citizens living in nursing homes. Based on examining formal voice channels on a municipal level Persson and Berg (2008) have analyzed the gap between national policies on influence and local practice. Formal voice channels were shown to be lacking. For example, was the information to the elderly about their possibility to complain deficient.

According to Johansson et al (2020) were the elderly deprived of the right to self-determination during the pandemic 2020. The decision to ban visits for those living in elderly homes reflects paternalism and a view of older people as unable to take responsibility. The decision to ban visits is in direct opposition to the Social Services Act (SFS 2001:453), where self-determination, integrity and equal value are key words.

Despite many directives for service user influence and participation in various policy documents, is it according to Eriksson (2016) unusual for social workers to work jointly with service users' organizations for change work. Many social workers express that they want to work more together with service users but that they are hindered to do so.

Eriksson refers to Lipsky (2010) theocratization of the dilemmas for street-level bureaucrats. Increased workload and increased demands for standardization make initiatives from service users' involvement more difficult.

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