

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN NORTHERN RURAL SWEDEN – PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

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SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN SWEDEN

Basic level/bachelor

210 Credits 3,5 years

“Socionom” Exam: Social worker

19 universities

Postgraduate level

Master program in social work

Master's Programme in Healthcare Counselling

Research and PhD education

Research discipline since 1977

PhD education – 240 Credits – 4 years



THE CONTEXT OF THE NORTHERN RURAL SWEDEN

Local authorities in northern rural Sweden are facing several challenges e.g. aging population, depopulation, receiving of refugees, large distances between municipalities, which put high demands on social work practice and education.

The municipalities in these areas have major difficulties to recruit and keep in employment qualified social workers.

University policy: to have both a national and regional responsibility

As a response to obligations and challenges, the department of social work has developed two parallel projects.



PROJECT 1

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS AND EMPLOYER AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

With the aim to establish a dialog and knowledge:

- about the field outside the cities
- who to turn to in case of interest about future work
- to create a better understanding for each other in terms of creating good interlocutions, work conditions and awakened a curiosity about the area.
- career development – dialog about courses on advanced level and tailored courses/training
- expert consulting, evolution projects and commissioned research



PROJECT 1

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS AND EMPLOYER AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Find ways for employer and students to come in contact with each other early during the education. Establish contact through:

- Labour market days
- Connect employers with students for summer work
- Lectures from the field for the students
- Lectures and research information from the department to the social workers in the field / the organisations
- Network dialog with managers in social services



PROJECT 2

CAMPUS AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Since spring semester 2019: One campus education and one fully as a distance education.

Today:

1 program, distributed through two different settings:

- on campus
- on distance, internet based

Umeå is the place/town to meet for exams and seminars, shorter stays.

Able students to stay in their hometowns, anywhere in Sweden.



PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES

Project 1

We can't solve rural areas problems with qualified social workers, can help with a pedagogical collaboration with local authorities.

Create space and opportunities in the education to be able to stay but also for others "to find their way" to the smaller towns.

Project 2

What are the differences between these two educational programs?

Campus: less flexible

Distance: fewer physical meetings, "good or bad" for a social work education?

Teachers working environment

Sustainability



RESULTS

- **Project 1**

- Closer connection
- Better interlocations
- Developed collaboration with stakeholders in the surrounding community

- **Project 2**

- More discussions about "do I have to be on Campus?"
- The boundaries between on-campus and distance education can blur
- Distance pedagogy enriches on-campus pedagogy
- The distance program has not resulted in the recruitment problems of smaller municipalities being solved

