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Research-based Profession in the Changing Context of the Finnish Welfare State

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Themes of Discussion

- ❖ Changing Context of the Finnish Welfare State
- ❖ What is different in Finland – General remarks of the Profession and Education
- ❖ Model of SW Education in Finland in a comparative perspective
- ❖ Characteristics of SW profession in Finland
- ❖ Doctoral Training and Specialisation in SW
- ❖ SosNET - The national University Network of SW
- ❖ Current and Future Challenges and Hopes



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Changing Context of Welfare State – never-ending story?

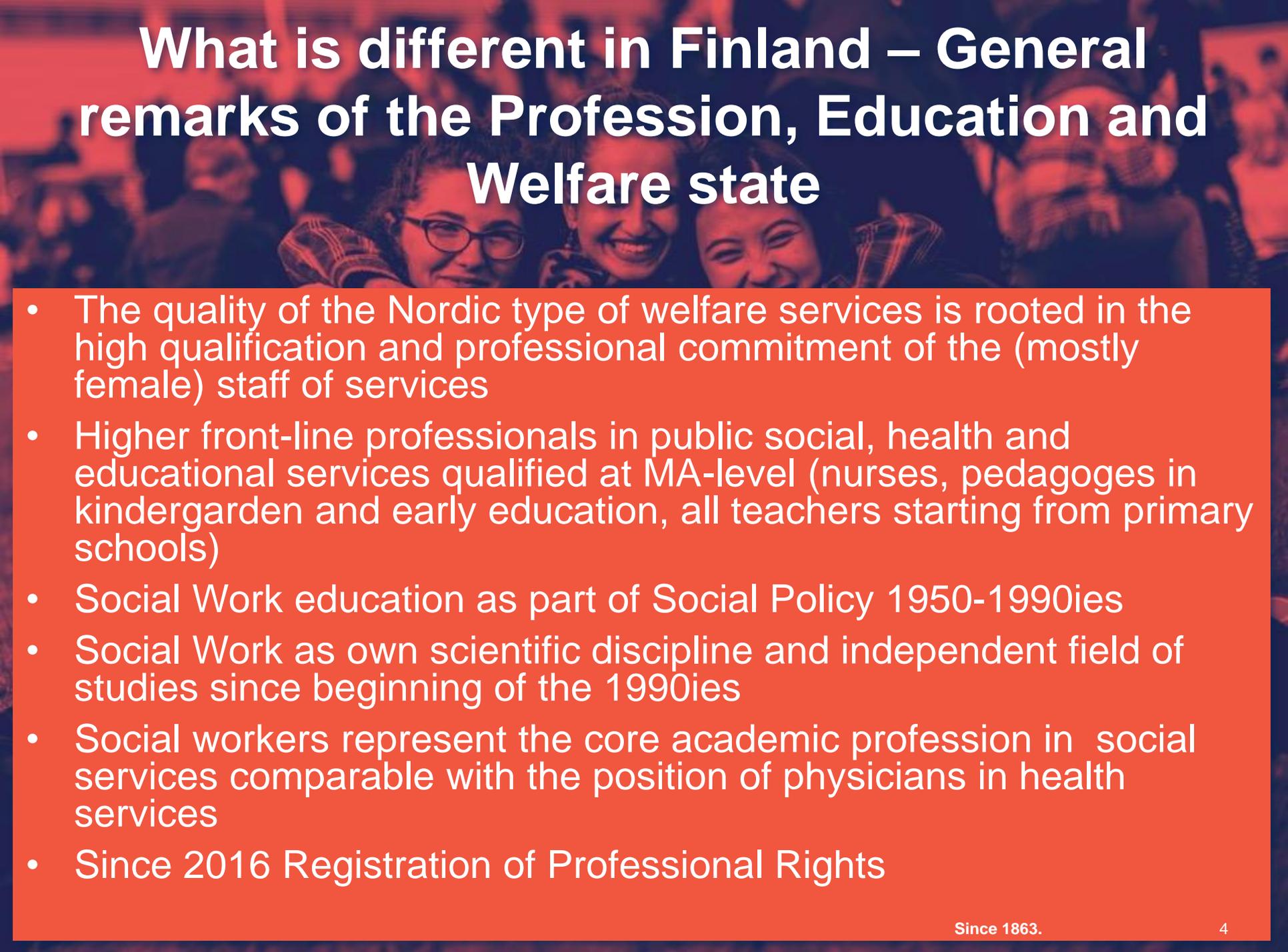
- SOTE - the most significant reform in Finland since its 100 years of independency: Reform of the social and health services and the local government
- The '*Finnish Schönefeld Airport*': Started in 2002 and should be completed 2019? 2020? 2022?

Aimed at

- *Centralisation*: To shift the responsibility for public social and health services from the more than 400 local municipalities to 18 new counties: '*Stronger shoulders*' (and less local democracy)
- *Integration* of social and health services
- *Privatisation*: Putting the services on the market and opening the competition, in particular the multinational big companies have increased their share.
- *Customer orientation*: NPM- chains of services
- *Cost-reduction* and efficiency

Current status: Political deadlock and constitutional conflicts

What is different in Finland – General remarks of the Profession, Education and Welfare state



- The quality of the Nordic type of welfare services is rooted in the high qualification and professional commitment of the (mostly female) staff of services
- Higher front-line professionals in public social, health and educational services qualified at MA-level (nurses, pedagogues in kindergarden and early education, all teachers starting from primary schools)
- Social Work education as part of Social Policy 1950-1990ies
- Social Work as own scientific discipline and independent field of studies since beginning of the 1990ies
- Social workers represent the core academic profession in social services comparable with the position of physicians in health services
- Since 2016 Registration of Professional Rights

Six universities with Social Work as Social Sciences – and the 18 Districts of Social and Health Services (in construction)



THE TWO EUROPEAN MODELS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

The Specialised Field Model	The Integrated Research Model
Profile of Education	Profile of Education
<p>Vocational BA at an applied School/university collage/FH, competence- and skills-based learning goals, training in practical tools and competences + extensive practice placements + smaller practise-focused research, level 5 – 6 in EQF, Teachers with minor research obligations</p>	<p>University degree – BA/MA/PhD, Academic and professional training, research- and competence-based learning goals, practical placements at several service levels, Scientific research thesis, EQF-level 6 – 8, Teacher-researcher –combination with obligation to scientific performance</p>
Profile at Labor Market	Profile at Labor market
<p>Practical front-line SW in specific fields of jobs, direct work with service-users, projects, employers' influence on the training contents</p>	<p>Generalistic enrollment into labor market, practical research-based SW orientation, management and development, expert positions, Academic autonomy and expertise</p>

Model of SW Education in Finland in a comparative perspective

- Qualification of Social Workers requires both BA (180 ECTS) and MA (120 ECTS) in Social Work = 5 years of training
- Includes min. 30 ECTS Practice Placement / In-service learning at different levels
- Includes a researcher – qualification: extensive part of MA- studies consist of research
- A particular type of Social Work Practise Research and a network of Practice Research Centers established
- Collaboration with the regional Centers of Competence for Social Services as well (Projects, Practise research, Knowledge productions)
- Current situation: Lack of qualified Social Workers in practise, (payment, team leading and professional authonomy need ot be improved)
- Demanding entrance examination as a selection of students to be enrolled, since the number of applicants to universities is high
- Drop-out rate is low, growing annual intake 1990: 175 and 2015: 527
- Government's extra investments in SW Education while Social Sciences generally are to be reduced

Joint Curricular Agenda of SW Education of the Universities

- “The curriculum is designed to prepare graduates for
- analyzing and understanding clients’ different life situations,
 - meeting clients and defending their social rights,
 - - raising social awareness and
 - influencing political decision-making,
 - writing reports and other documents,
 - planning and leading different projects,
 - multi-professional cooperation and for
 - the ways of legal argumentation of the field as well as
 - for application of legislation.” (SosNET)

Doctoral Studies and Researcher Training

- Each of the 6 SW university units offer doctoral training
- Doctor of Social Sciences in the discipline of Social Work 240 ECTS (60 ECTS longer than in most European countries)
- Either in full-time with a grant /as paid part of a research project or as part-time studies while working in the practice or in teaching SW
- Free choice of reseach theme or according to the special field of research of the supervisor
- An individual curriculum designed according to the different regulations at different universities, mainly consisting out of
 - compulsory general studies: philosophy, theory of science, research methodology and ethics, communication and further working life skills (20 – 30 ECTS)
 - studies in the own discipline which consist of research seminars, conferences, literature etc. (20 – 30 ECTS)
 - Doctoral Thesis:
 - A) Article based cumulative thesis (3- 5 peer-reviewed articles)
 - B) Monography

Profession of SW and its fields of involvement

Main fields:

CHILD WELFARE AND FAMILY SERVICES: case work on child protection, school social work

SOCIAL WORK WITH ADULTS: includes income and labor market issues, addictions, migrations, mental health issues, housing services

DISABILITIES AND GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK mostly in multiprofessional teams

FURTHER AREAS: School SW, Hospital SW, forensic SW,

SosNET - The national University Network of SW

- Established in 1999 by the 6 SW university units, to promote the collaboration between the universities and to present to discipline in the national university policies, social policies and at international forums
- **Joint doctoral training network** has been big success: funded by the national research Council Academy of Finland (doctoral students positions, supervision and training courses), 1998 – 2016: 65 doctoral degrees completed
- Several joint MA courses annually available on-line for all SW students (currently 9 thematic courses offered, from Roma people, Technology in SW and Domestic Violence to Process Management of changes)
- Support for SW teachers (Learning material, joint training, thematic sub-groups)
- International project: Finnish-Chinese collaboration for Doctoral Studies and Teachers' training in SW
- Novelty since 2016: New post-graduated **Specialised Social Worker** –program to reply to the increased demands in the SOTE- frame of Social Services and the diversity of social challenges in society

<http://www.sosnet.fi/In-English>

Further Specialisation in SW - new offer since 2016

National-wide joint offer of the six universities:

SPECIALISATION of SW (70 ECTS) after MA and practice experience, in following fields:

- Welfare Services (management, evaluation, innovations)
- Rehabilitative Social Work in challenging situations (capability approach)
- Child, Youth and Family Social Work (Child protection, multicultural SW)
- Structural Social Work (Public relationships and media, political work, community work)

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Challenges of the Finnish SW education and profession in the next Future

- **POLITICAL CHALLENGE:** To keep the Social Agenda strong and resilient in the SOTE reform against the tendencies of medicalisation, marketisation and technocratic management – new wave of multi-professional settings
- **CHALLENGE OF DE-PROFESSIONALISATION** due to the lack of qualified Social Workers tasks of SW moving to practitioners with lower qualification
- **ACADEMIC CHALLENGES:** To keep the high level of combining academic demands of performance and training of capable reflective research-based professionals
- **SOCIETAL CHALLENGES:** Increasing polarisation of the society, diversity of new social problems where the professional knowledge and research-based is always delayed
- **THE RISK OF THE PROFESSION ITSELF:** diverse levels of professional awareness, competence and courage, pressure in daily working conditions, burn-out is a serious risk

... and the hopeful perspectives

- Increasing recognition of Social Work in the society and university policies
- Growing interest of collaboration from other scientific fields
- Increasing numbers of applicants interested to study Social Work
- Results of SW research as increasing co-created knowledge-base of SW practice
- Growing space for experience-based knowledge as epistemological growth of knowledge
- New social-media-based networks of powerful and critical young social workers



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KIITOS!



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