

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL WORK

Coordinator: Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Partners: University of Tampere, Finland; Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique

Study areas: Education, Teacher Training, Social Sciences

What are the main aims of your network?

The main aim of the network cooperation is to support higher education in social work and human capacity building in Mozambique in order to promote social development and well-being of people. The cooperation focuses on the professional and pedagogical capacity building of the teachers as well as students – the basis for sustainable development. The cooperation supports the development of qualifications of future social workers in both countries by enhancing knowledge and skills in global social work, social development and intercultural communication. The development of social and health care services is thus supported by educational cooperation and reciprocal learning with affluent countries.

The main objectives for partners in Mozambique are:

1. Joint curriculum development and intensified capacity building for the implementation of a new Bachelor Programme in social work at the University of Eduardo Mondlane.
2. Developing teacher and student exchange and reciprocal learning models in social work and student exchange in education between higher education institutions of Mozambique and Finland.
3. Support for creating connections and cooperation with the higher education institutions in Maputo and the international network of social work educations.

The main objectives for Finnish partners are:

1. Increase the knowledge and competence in development cooperation in social work practice and training.
2. Increase the knowledge in global social development, in international social policy and social work.
3. Promote and develop skills in intercultural social work.

From the point of view of development policy we also aim to promote the reduction of poverty and enhance human rights and social inclusion, e.g. by developing community work approach in social work education and practice.

What kind of activities are there in your network?

The development cooperation between Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences and Ministerio da Mulher e Cooperacao de Accao Social has a history in curriculum development



and support for social work training at the vocational level since 1995. When the North–South programme began, the relationship between the partners in Finland and in Mozambique was already created. The Universidade Eduardo Mondlane and University of Tampere were logical new counterparts. Each year the cooperation has enlarged and the collaboration deepened. At present there is a regular collaborative team in charge of the network and a keen interest from the students and teachers in both countries to continue collaborating.

The activities in the network are teacher exchange, student exchange and intensive courses. The student exchange (6–8 students/year) has included studies in Portuguese/Finnish, social work and practical training. Teacher exchange has included 4–5 exchanges annually. The incoming teachers from Mozambique have participated in teaching in Finland, made study visits to social work fields and studied the pedagogy and curriculums. Furthermore, the PhD studies of teachers from Universidade Eduardo Mondlane have been supported and supervised. The Finnish teachers have likewise participated and lectured in Mozambique, e.g. giving courses in applied research and action research. They have also collaborated in joint planning of the new curriculum for Bachelor of Social Work education at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, which was finalized in 2007.

The first intensive course is going to be organized in January–February 2009 under the theme of "Community based social work and social development". For networking, besides meetings and emails, a virtual learning space in Moodle has been established for orientation, exchange of experiences and documentation.

What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

All in all, the networking and networking structures have been developing year after year. The success in teacher and student exchanges lies heavily on the cooperation of coordinating team of teachers both in Finland and in Mozambique. One of the successes of the project is that the inter-sectoral cooperation between universities and ministry has been enhanced through it.

The network has provided an excellent opportunity for social work and social service students to have work experience from a Third world country and study its culture and socio-economy. For Mozambiquan partners the network has supported their capacity building in social work education and developing social services.

The challenges have been related to communication and information flow between partners. After the first teacher exchanges the procedure has been discussed and improved but there are still some challenges. The importance of language training for students before and during the exchange period, especially for outgoing students to Mozambique, is essential and has needed special attention from all the partners.

Your advice to forthcoming networks

New networks should proceed slowly, build up trust and confidence first and respect equality between partners. We are all learners.

