

Employers' Views on Desirable Theoretical Knowledge Qualities of Newly Qualified Social Workers: A Qualitative Exploration

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Employers' views on desirable theoretical knowledge qualities of newly qualified social workers: A qualitative exploration.

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This study is a qualitative exploration of Dutch social work employers' views on desirable theoretical knowledge qualities of recently qualified bachelors of social work and how these qualities are weighed in hiring decisions. Participants ($n = 18$) from sixteen social work organisations were interviewed about descriptions of four *personas*, fictitious but life-like job applicants. These personas were created based on outcomes of earlier investigations revealing patterns of different knowledge qualities and personal attributes such as learning motivation, epistemological views, language use, personal and professional identity. Qualitative analysis was performed by pre-structured and open coding. Results showed that employers see well-developed theoretical knowledge as necessary for addressing current requirements and ambitions in Dutch social work practice. Demands on new entrants' knowledge qualities have been raised accordingly. However, in hiring decisions, applicants' personal attributes pertaining to skills and attitude appeared more decisive than knowledge qualities. Employers assumed that personal attributes are difficult to alter, while knowledge can be learned more easily. Furthermore, excellent theoretical knowledge qualities and ambitions, though highly valued, were associated with fewer abilities for and lasting interest in daily work with clients.

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