

# *International Mobility and recognition of professionals with a social educational qualification earned abroad - the example of an job-and needs-oriented adaptation course*

HRK International conference on recognition  
MODUS – Mobilität und Durchlässigkeit stärken:  
Anerkennung und Anrechnung an Hochschulen

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# Social professionals

IASSW, 2014/2021: “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work“

ICEC/TALIS, 2018: “Early childhood staff use many practices to support and facilitate children’s learning, development and well being in both cognitive and socio-emotional learning. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) focuses on developing interpersonal and language skills.”

# Social professionals in a (specific) local context

University of Applied Sciences Potsdam, Day of study Pedagogy of Childhood, 2015, professional profile of early childhood educators: "...is focused on family and public education and care in childhood, daily life environments (Lebenswelten), cultures, living conditions of children and families, as well as cooperation with families. The profession has its focus on knowledge-generating research, conceptualization and didactical, organizational and socio-spatial support of education and care in childhood and family. This includes the scientifically based, critical reflection of social constructions and conditions of childhood and family as well as the participation in the social, political and cultural shaping and securing of a good and successful growing up of children."

# Transnational social professionals

*Social professionals who have gained their professional education in one nation and who relocate to practice (aspire to practice) in another (Barley/Beddoe, 2018)*

# Specificity of professional practices in a global profession

- Intensely interpersonal nature of work
- Central role of (socio-) culture and other forms of social identity in everyday context of professional interactions
  
- Academization - Specificity of Applied Social Sciences
  - practice profession and an academic discipline
  - interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary
  - research and theory are co-constructed with service users in an interactive, dialogic process, informed by specific practice environments

## Challenges for transnational social professionals

“There are substantial differences between the structural and cultural determinants of the environments within which social work is practiced. For instance, major differences are evident between Europe and the US in the [policies], organization and funding of various aspects of health and social care, affecting the role of social workers in these sectors”

(Bartley/Beddoe:25)

- Policies and interests (e.g. welfare system)
- Cultural practices of social and care work within family and communities
- National differences in vulnerable and minority population

→ affecting the role, the resources and recognition of social workers who were trained in one country and work in another

## Strengths of transnational social professionals

- Expertise and skills (professionalism)
- Knowledge and understanding of processes of migration, resettlement and adaptation
- Fresh perspectives and knowledge transfer for colleagues, teams and agencies: Different contexts, cultures and professional backgrounds
- Multilingual, (technical) language skills in at least two languages

## Challenges - Professional relocation, doorways and permeability

- Recognition of qualifications and experiences
- Professional induction and development in new professional context
- Access to regulated labor market and employment opportunities
- Negotiation in private and professional lives: complexity of new socio-political and cultural environment



# Challenges - Access to the regulated labor market

– Legal basis vary from state to state

Example: In childhood education, social professionals with a qualification earned abroad do not know that the daycare center laws of the federal states also provide special regulations for "partial access to the profession" on a case-by-case basis (OnTOP/TH Köln, 2021)

# Lisbon convention 1997

## Ratification in Germany 2007

Law on the Convention of April 11, 1997 on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region

- Regulation of recognition of higher education entrance qualifications, periods of study and degrees in EU member states
- Concept of substantial difference: all periods of study and degrees earned abroad will be recognized unless there is a substantial difference from those earned at the home institution
- Recognition becomes the norm
- Proving that particular achievement shows substantial difference rests with recognizing institution
- Applicant has a right of appeal against negative recognition decisions

# Process of recognition of social educational qualifications earned abroad in the federal state Berlin

In order to gain the recognition, the differences between skills and knowledge acquired abroad compared with the qualifications of the German reference profession must be compensated by an adaptation course or an aptitude test (§§ 9,10,11 BQFG Berlin).

Application: Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family of Berlin subject to the provisions of the Act on the Recognition of Social Professions (Sozialberufe-Anerkennungsgesetz, SozBAG).

# The Act on the recognition of social professions in the federal state Berlin

Social educational professions are regulated in Berlin and in Germany. This means that to perform such jobs one requires state approval. This approval can be granted, if one applies for the professional qualification to be reviewed to determine the equivalence. The review of equivalence takes place based on the provisions of the law regarding the recognition of qualifications in caring professions (*SozBAG*).

## Pre-requisites

- ✓ Foreign comparable professional qualification
- ✓ Application for determination of equivalence
- ✓ Personal suitability (proofed by an extended certificate of good conduct)
- ✓ German language skills (to receive state recognition, one's German skills must be at least at level C1 of the common European framework of reference for languages.)

# Process of recognition in the federal state Berlin

1. Checked for completeness of application
2. Checked for correct reference qualification + equivalence (e. g. via Diploma Supplement)
3. Foreign skilled worker received a recognition notice on the result:
  - a) The professional qualification is fully comparable.
  - b) There are substantial differences compared to the reference occupation.
  - c) The professional qualification is not comparable.
4. If result b) → substantial differences can be compensated for by participating in training

## If b) training – Adaption course ApaLe

- Adaption course for professionals with a social education qualification earned abroad
- Qualification
  - Oriented towards requirements of the recognition authority
  - In accordance to higher education curriculum for the qualification in each social profession
  - Oriented towards needs of target group (adult education, expert knowledge, technical language learning, migration, work-live- balance and gender)

# Curriculum of ApaLe

## Modul 1 (Theory)

Overview of organizational, historical, theoretical, propaedeutic, ethical, and diversity aspects of social sciences and practice in Germany.

## Modul 2 (Law)

German law system: benefits, obligation and rights etc., which are needed in the professional field

## Modul 3 (professional practices)

- education/pedagogics
- self-organization
- peculiarities and similarities of German practice in relation to job/professional experiences gained abroad

# Curriculum of ApaLe

## Supervision

Supervision and reflection of work in the field

## Coaching

Professional advice and clarification of requirements by the Senate

## Learning support

Discussion to clarify organizational, content-related and learning-related questions, monitoring questionnaire, evaluation

## Tutorial assistance

FAQ support for the law modules

## Inclusion

### Structural

Higher Education Habitus and German professionalism

### Social

Contact with peers and teachers  
Cooperation with stakeholders from science-practice transfer



# What ApaLe does not offer

## Language

Language course  
C1 academic

## Professional practices

Social professionals must provide evidence of 100 days supervised professional practice

## “Social Counselling”

- Residence
- Unemployment and financial support & benefits
- Job application training
- professional networks outside institutional networks

# Participant

## 122 Social Professionals

- Age  $\bar{x}$  34,5 years (1963-1996)
- 18% male
- 12% German passport
- 39 nationalities
- 27% with children (only data for 91 TN)
- Qualification (BA, Master, Diploma) abroad 1992-2019 (61% between 2009-2019)
- 47,5 % language course C1 and 15,6% native speakers
- 40,2% recognition for Early Childhood Education, 53,3% Social Work and 6,6 Special Needs Education

# Monitoring – Data

- Learning support
- Coaching
- Supervision
- Questionnaire: satisfaction, learning experiences (N=30)

# Monitoring – Results – Coaching

- Support of self-efficacy
- Enhancing knowledge about career paths
- Empowerment:
  - belief in skills and expertise
  - strategic knowledge of how to adapt to a German based professionalism
- Challenges for participants on the labor market
  - Information gaps at employment agencies, on the job, social welfare and education institutions

# Monitoring – Results – Supervision

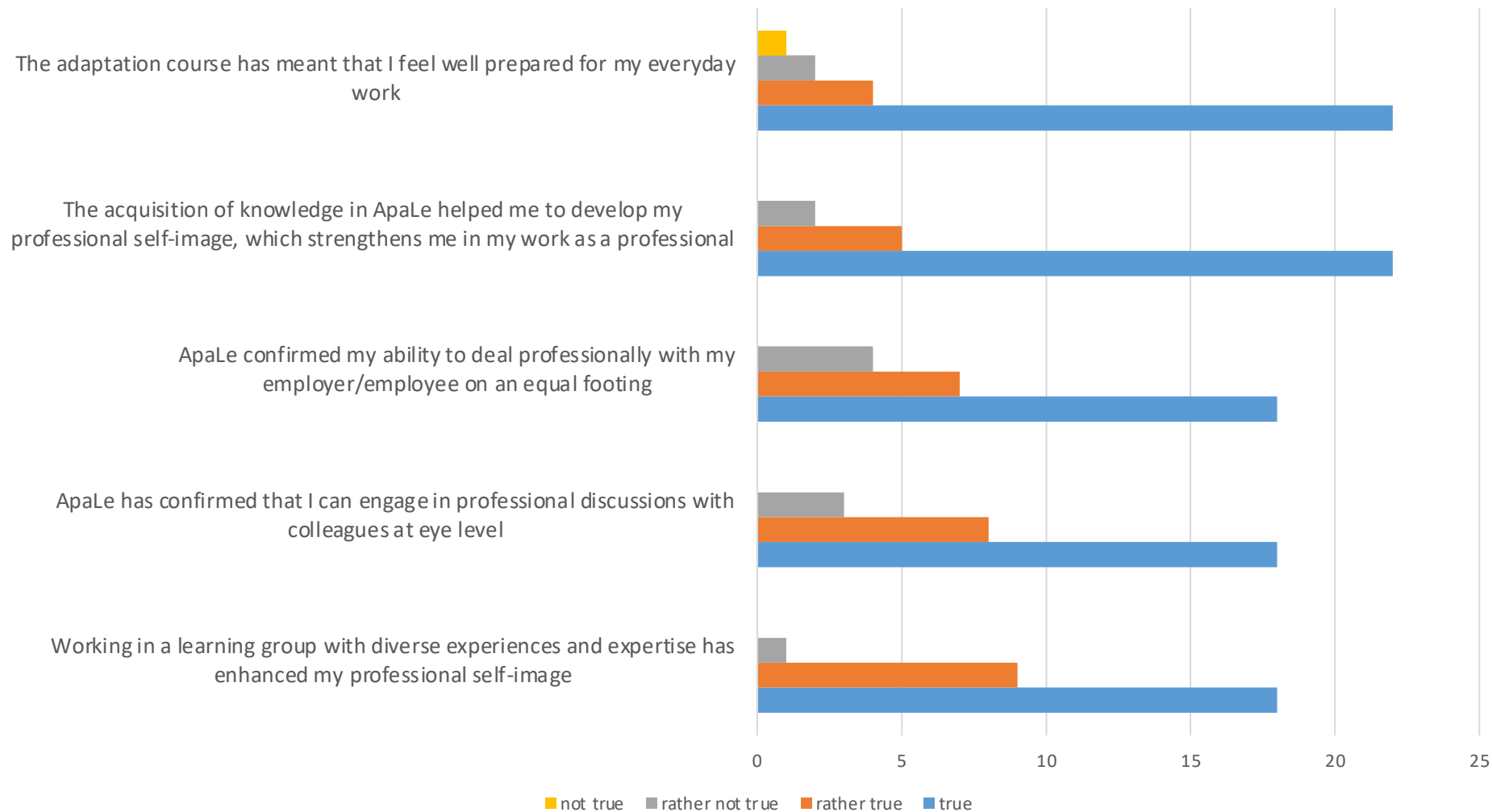
- Informed exchange about professional practice and biographical situation in the process of recognition, challenge of language training
- Topic discrimination and racism
- Profession specific multi-perspectivity: diversified adult learner group from different social professions

# Monitoring – Results Questionnaire – overall satisfaction

Participants were satisfied to very satisfied with

- organizational support
- fostering technical language skills
- transfer science to praxis in the field

# Monitoring – Results Questionnaire – Professional self-image and identity



# Future Perspectives/Discussion

- Only a few programs of this kind exist worldwide, which are usually not firmly established at universities
- Without such programs, the permeability in adult education for obtaining the equivalence of qualifications is lacking and mobility is thus severely restricted



# Future Perspectives/Discussion

- Importance of such programs for international mobility of highly qualified professionals (qualification and career paths)
- Instrument to decrease shortage of skilled workers in field of social professions (Human Resources, Labor Market)
- Instrument to increase diversity in welfare system and society (socio-political dimension, institutional and structural level of inclusion)

**THANK YOU for your attention!**

**<https://www.khsb-berlin.de/de/ApaLe>**



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