

**Assignment to the Dibyabhumi Multiple College in Lalitpur, Nepal from 15<sup>th</sup> of August till 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2019**

The objectives of the assignment were to support and advice the college to further develop and professionalize its educational program for the Bachelor Degree in Social Work. As professor emeritus of the Department of Social Work of the University of Applied Sciences Zürich I tried to fulfill this sophisticated challenge knowing that Social Work education in particular is highly sensitive on local and cultural traditions and I know that there is an intense discussion about conflicting western influence on social work education.

During my stay in the college I had the opportunity to give lectures to students, to take part at two roundtable discussions with Social Work practitioners and lecturers as well. I could exchange in detail and extensive with the director and founder of the college, Pramod Shah and with the full time lecturer Trishna Acharya. Pramod Shah had also been organizing an exchange and a lecture of mine at the first and until now only Master Program in Social Work in Nepal at the Tribhuvan University. This university is insofar very important for Social Work education as it carries out the final exams and the certification of the Bachelor degree for most Social Work Students in Nepal.

Social work is a young but growing academic discipline and profession in Nepal and it faces some remarkable challenges: there are more than 120 sometimes very small private colleges with SW Bachelor programs, what leads to a lot of competition and quality differences. Even though there are curriculum requirements by the Tribhuvan University they are perhaps not sufficiently selective. A qualitative match may be important.

Another challenge are the ambitions of the students: many of them are looking for a job in local or international NGO's, where they can start an office career or they go abroad for further studies. Only a minority will start their professional life in classical Social Work fields. The reason of course has to do with a certain lack of job opportunities due to a social welfare system which is just developing.

A third point affects the importance of qualified professional social workers in the practice fields, who support and promote social work students in their field placements and in the everyday challenges they have to face there. In other words, they have to be able to transfer and connect theoretical thinking with practical applications and vice versa. This last point is a crucial need for the whole social work community, be it in Switzerland or in Nepal or elsewhere.

I have made the encouraging experience that social work in Nepal is a still emerging but also passionate and self confident academic discipline and profession, which will have a bright future in this lovely country and will have an eminent impact for a flourishing, self-determined and even compassionate society.

I thank all the persons I had the chance to exchange ideas and becoming a broad insight into the Nepalese society and its Social Work education during my stay!

Prof. Hanspeter Hongler