

“Quality features of educational and social work” collaborative research training group

Social work provides various forms of support to people and social groups who are affected or threatened by social exclusion. Following a long phase of relative economic prosperity and welfare integration throughout Germany and Europe, the “social issue” has returned once again in full force. The term “precarity” was coined during the social science debate to describe the high degree of social inequality prevalent today. Precarity research has revealed that adolescents and young adults in particular are affected by this new form of social inequality. The collaborative research training group thus systematically addresses the aims, structures, concepts, methods and impacts of educational and social work for young people between the ages of 14 and 27 in precarious situations.

The empirical determination of the quality features of educational and social work for this group of people is paramount to the research programme. For the first time, the theoretical and methodological expertise as well as the methodical instruments of education (University of Hamburg) and social work sciences (Hamburg University of Applied Sciences) are brought together in a systematic and interdisciplinary way in order to empirically investigate a very important field of activity in social work.

As part of the “Quality features of educational and social work” collaborative research training group, twelve scholarship students have been pursuing a doctorate since January 2015. They’re supervised by eight professors at the University of Hamburg (UHH) and Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW).

The twelve doctoral projects examine the collaborative research training group’s extensive field of research from a variety of perspectives. Studies are carried out with the aim of analysing the educational concepts, processes and opportunities of/for adolescents in urban and transnational environments. Target group-specific studies also address the situations and educational biographies and requirements of adolescent parents, young people with a migration background and disability, unaccompanied refugee minors, young people in psychiatric institutions for children and adolescents, and heavily indebted young people. The situation of young people transitioning from school to work is also academically analysed, based on career initiatives at schools and employment agencies for young adults.

A variety of methodical approaches in qualitative research are addressed and discussed at the events. The research topic “educational work” is also theoretically examined from the perspective of education and social work sciences. The scholarship students maintain regular contact with their supervisors regarding their doctoral projects and present their projects and any questions they may have for discussion in colloquiums.