Questions, dilemmas and challenges of practices in Housing First program in Barcelona

Marta Llobet, Jordi Sancho, Joan Uribe, Laura Guijarro and Susana Batle Cladera

- *Primer la llar*: Housing First in Barcelona
- Analyzing professional practice
- Dilemmas and challenges

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Primer la llar

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The project

- *Primer la llar*: a Housing First project set up by the City Council of Barcelona.
- A pilot project with 50 participants.
- 3 years, starting June 1, 2015
- 2 NGOs actually run the project:
  - Sant Joan de Dèu
  - Suara-Garbet and Fundación Sant Pere Claver
- Each with housing and a support team for 25 participants

- Two other NGOs (RAIS and Arrels) run independent HF projects in Barcelona

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Teams

- «Social» teams (1 per NGO and 25 participants):
  - 1 team leader
  - 2 social workers
  - 2 social educators
  - 2 social integrators
  - 1 peer-expert
- Mental health team:
  - 1 psychiatric team leader
  - 2 psychiatrists
  - 1 nurse
  - PSI

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Evaluation

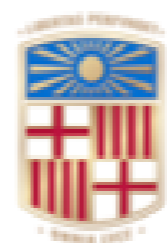Evaluation research

| Implementation evaluation | Impact evaluation | Effects on participants | Egocentric networks | Professional practice |

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Evaluation

Why?

- Lots of research on Housing First, but

- Little research on professional practice in Housing First.

- Housing First brings about a paradigm change in professional practice

- Professional practice research is useful for:

  - A better understanding of change processes, and of the impact of programs

  - To improve professional practice

  - Training and professional development

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Aims

- To help transform professional practice along Housing First lines

- To create an analysis and reflection mechanism for professional practice

- To understand better of the context and conditions in which the HF model is being implemented

- To identify problems and responses

- To compare with other similar HF projects (Montréal, Lisbon and Marseille)

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Some risks

Risks and problems of practice analysis (Barbier)

- Describing practice, then not knowing what to do.

- A mix of description and prescription with value judgement of limited use.

- Practice usually has unique elements that may go unnoticed if the analysis framework doesn't foresee them

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How?

- A theoretical approach based on reflexivity and professional practice analysis
  (Barbier, Marcel et al, Escartin, Perrenoud, Campanale).

- A learning process that:

  - Develops individual and collective knowledge.

  - Conceptualizes practice inductively

  - Deepens practice knowledge and understanding through discussion and reflection.

  - Compares previous and present practice

  - Identifies challenges, contradictions and tensions

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Methods

- Grounded Theory, reflexive approaches and professional practice analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, Corbin & Strauss, Shön, Argyris, Barbier, Marcel et al.)

- Research conducted by Roch Hurtubise, Marie-Claude Rose and Pierre-Olivier Babin (Université de Sherbrooke & CREMIS-Montreal) using *récit de pratique* and experts' consensus.

- Individual and group interviews to build *récit de pratique,* a tool often used in education (Hurtubise & Laaroussi, St-Arnaud, Audet, Bertaux, Desgagné, Gervais & Larouche)

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Methods

- Having the practitioner or peer-worker tell the story of how they are working, to identify practices and innovations, but tensions, contradictions and ambiguities as well (Desgagné). This way they bring out their specific knowledge (Schön, Argyris and St- Arnaud)

- We will analyze data from each team and across teams

- We will feed the results back to the teams. This should allow a second shared reflection (Bergier)

- This will allow modelling and conceptualizing practice.

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Work in progress…

- We're now in the 1st phase:
  - 3 interviews with agency managers
  - 2 interviews with team leaders
  - 3 group interviews with the teams (mental health team pending)
- Meeting with teams in Montréal, Lisbon and Marseille to know their experience.
- Transcriptions under way, next step analysis and feedback.

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Some key dimensions for the analysis

- Organizational context

- Organizational mandate

- Training and experience (related to homelessness) of the practitioners

- Team organization

- The Housing first concept and its adaptations

- How teams view participants and their needs

- The implementation process

- Action logics and practice innovation

- Tools and techniques

- Theories and methods in use.

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Dilemmas and challenges

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Dilemmas and challenges

- Building a new model with no previous experience
- Entitlements, motivation, professional practice empowerment
- Roles of practitioners teams, peers

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Building a new model with no previous experience

- How do practitioners learn to work to accompany people moving into housing and to support them there?

- A new model that must build on previous experience —which has little to do with the new model. Trial by error

- Innovation and creativity are important, but they bring uncertainty, insecurity, doubts and contradictions

- How are crisis managed?

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Entitlement, empowerment and motivation

- Little experience in working in a rights- and entitlement-based model.

- Long tradition of conditionality. Practitioners used to set goals, require compliance.

- Intrinsic motivation becomes more relevant than extrinsic motivation (Miller & Rollnick).

- What if people accept the home but not social support?

- How do we empower people? How do we build on people's strengths?

- Does empowerment make professional practice harder?

- How can you intervene in people's private-intimate space? What does «home» mean to people?

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Roles in teams: practitioners, peers

- Separate health and social teams may hinder the integration of knowledge and practice.

- What's the role of each practitioner and how is hierarchy managed?

- Peer workers bring in experience-based knowledge that may conflict with professional practitioners. How do we integrate both? (Godrie)

- Recovery orientation requires practitioners to respect the rhytms of each person as he/she rediscovers his/her self and context (Provencher)

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Context and community

- Work must be done in the immediate environment — neighbors, doormen, the community. How do we do this?

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Concluding remarks

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Things to discuss

- We know a lot more about Housing First than about the Staircase of Transition, which was never researched so thoroughly.
- We know little about professional practice in either model.
- This seems to have been neglected, in favor of «evidence-based» approaches.
- We are somewhere in the middle of two models. An opportunity to learn, but research is badly needed.
- Homeless people face complex situations that require flexible and custom responses.
- Teams have their own peculiar ways to face the same challenges.
- Implicit references, strategies and knowledge must come out to reflect on them.

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Thanks for your attention