Social work and individualized job activation: the need for a research agenda

WORK IN PROGRESS DON'T CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION[1]

Paul van der Aa
Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands
p.h.j.van.der.aa@hr.nl
https://www.hogeschoolrotterdam.nl/onderzoek/kenniscentra/talentontwikkeling/

Paper presented to the Rotterdam Espanet conference 2016, *stream 8 Relating Social Policy and Social Work*

Introduction

The shift from 'passive' to 'activating' welfare states has made labour market participation of citizens a core objective of contemporary active social policies (Bonoli, 2010; Gilbert, 2002). This shift is reflected in the nature of various social services for vulnerable groups and, by consequence, the roles and responsibilities of social workers. 'Activation work', consisting of services to promote labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups, has become a common aspect of social services. Nowadays, social workers in various public, private and non-governmental contexts deal with issues of labour market inclusion and exclusion of their clients, often with managerial and political imperatives to find the shortest pathway to work and to implement disciplinary policies such as financially sanctioning certain behaviours of their clientele (Lorenz, 2005).

Although social workers in practice have become engaged in various types of 'activation work', for the European context we know surprisingly little about their role, dilemmas and impact as social worker in this new field of practice (Nybom, 2011; Tabin & Perriard, 2016; Van Berkel & Van der Aa, 2012). This is even more so the case, when we, as will be done in this paper, confine the concept of social worker to those workers who actually have a formal educational background in social work.

On the one hand, in recent years a modest research tradition on European street-level practices in activation work has developed, following the example of earlier studies on US welfare to work policies (Marston, Elm Larsen, & McDonald, 2005; Martin & Knudsen, 2010; Nothdurfter, 2016; Nybom, 2011; Sainsbury, 2008; Tabin & Perriard, 2016; Thorén, 2008; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010; Wright, 2003). Generally, these studies from a social policy perspective do not pay specific attention to professional backgrounds of case workers and consider them as generic 'street-level bureaucrats', sometimes with the addition that they are doing 'social work'. This may be related to the fact that there is no consensus on the professional 'reference model' which is most adequate for this type of work and whether this model should be social work at all (Tabin & Perriard, 2016; Van

---

Berkel & Van der Aa, 2012). By consequence, workers doing activation work in Europe appear to have very diverse professional backgrounds, including social work.

Scholars of social work on the other hand, have extensively reflected on consequences for social work of two major interrelated trends in social policy and the delivery of social services (Healy, 2004; Kessl, 2009; Lorenz, 2005, 2016). The first trend concerns the consequences for social work of the rise of neo-liberalism with its general focus on 'less state', 'more market' and a greater emphasis on individual responsibility for dealing with social risks and vulnerabilities. The other trend refers to the impact on social work of new organisational and managerial models, 'new public management', introducing new forms of managerial control over workers. However, many of these studies tend to discuss policies as well as managerial models at the level of policies and models as intended, but not at the level of actual practice of activation work. By consequence, these studies do not really give insights in how social workers actually deal with these trends in various activation contexts and what this means for actual services they deliver as well as their outcomes.

Given this state of the art, we know quite little about the extent to which professional background of activation workers matters for understanding activation policies as practiced and their outcomes. This specifically holds true for workers with a formal social work education. This paper therefore proposes to develop a systematic agenda for comparative research, aimed at clarifying the role and impact of social workers in practices aimed at sustainable labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups. From an academic perspective, this agenda contributes to better insight into relations between professional backgrounds and the way individualized social policies translate into actual services. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to combine social policy and social work perspectives on active policies and their implementation. From a practitioner viewpoint, such research provides both social workers themselves as well educational institutions with better knowledge on how to prepare social workers for this line of work and how to contribute to development of activation work.

The remainder of this paper elaborates this argument in a number of sections. First of all, available insights from existing studies on the role of social workers in activation work are discussed. Secondly, the argument for a systematic research agenda on social work practice in this field is made and leading research questions are proposed. Thirdly, a few notes concerning research methodology are made, such as the need for comparative approaches as well as the potential of combining research and practice-based learning. The paper concludes with a short summary of the main argument as well as consequences for both scholars as well as practitioners.

Social workers doing activation work: a contested professional role?

Social workers have come to play a role in the delivery of various kinds of activation services as part of 'welfare to work' policies which have spread over Europe in the last decades. Systematic, quantitative insight into the way in which they are involved in various European countries is unavailable. The image is also blurred because the concept of social worker appears to be used loosely in the literature: even if scholars state that they are discussing social work practice, it is not always clear whether workers that have been studied actually have an educational background in social work. Some sources do illustrate more qualitatively how social workers in this field may be involved. Such studies allow for a tentative view on social workers' involvement in activation practice. Often they work together with workers who do not have a social work educational background: in most European countries activation work is not a 'protected' line of professional work, which can be claimed by one profession

Roughly speaking, social workers who are engaged in activation work may be found in public welfare agencies as well as private 'for profit' and 'not for profit' agencies delivering welfare to work services. The precise nature and mandate of their work is varied and context-specific.

Within public welfare agencies their role may consist of assessing needs related to employment, determining services, providing of individual coaching, monitoring progress and, sometimes delivering specific services such as training and job brokerage programs (Jewell, 2007; Van der Aa, 2012).

Especially Norway, Denmark and Sweden have been documented as countries where social workers play a pivotal – although not a monopolistic - role in the public delivery of activation work, in line with a strong and protected position that social workers have always had in delivery of welfare services in these countries (Kjørstad, 2005; Nybom, 2011; Thorén, 2008). In other countries such as the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Belgium and Germany professional backgrounds are more diverse (Roets et al., 2012; Tabin & Perriard, 2016; Van Berkel & Van der Aa, 2012). In the Netherlands for example, workers may have a social work background, but can also have a degree in administration, human resource management or various other types of education (Van der Aa, 2012). In Germany, public social assistance services were traditionally delivered by social workers, but since the Hartz-reform the workforce has become more diverse[2]. In Belgium social workers are explicitly charged with labour market programmes for people with mental health problems (Roets et al., 2012; Van Parys & Struyven, 2012).

In various European countries as a result of privatization and marketization, activation has been partially outsourced to private organisations, both for profit and not-for-profit, including NGO's. Moreover, NGO's may be involved in offering activation services independent of public welfare to work policies, as part of their overall mission. For example, in the Netherlands and Belgium we find social workers doing activation work in private organisations which target specific vulnerable groups such as youth at risk (NEETS), homeless people or unemployed with mental health problems. In Germany participation of social workers in outsourced services may be a mandatory requisite in certain tendering procedures.

So even though a systematic overview of social worker involvement in activation work is missing, based on these resources it is safe to state that there are various types of practices in which social workers are involved in activating or supporting vulnerable unemployed citizens towards work. Often, they will do so together with co-workers with other educational and professional backgrounds. The role of social workers in activation work appears to vary between national, local and organisational contexts.

Existing studies on these roles of social workers in activation work can roughly be divided into two categories.

The first category consists of papers which do not study actual practice, but which primarily reflect on the relationship between social work principles on the one hand and neo-liberal, often disciplining welfare to work policies implemented under new public management on the other hand (Dean,

---

[2] Based on personal communication by Prof. M. Knuth, Duisburg-Essen University.

2007; Hasenfeld, 1999; Jordan, 2000; Kessl, 2009; Liebenberg, Ungar, & Ikeda, 2015; Lorenz, 2005, 2016; Mitendorf & van Ewijk, 2016).

Papers in this category tend to be critical about welfare to work policies in general and the role of social workers in them specifically. Two stylized types of criticism can be found in these papers:

- Welfare to work policies focus on disciplining vulnerable groups to accept any kind of insecure job, by obligatory participation in work first programs and the threat of financial sanctions. This does not go well together with a social work ethic geared towards empowerment and wellbeing through client-centred, individualized services. Moreover, these supply side, 'blame the victim' policies tend to ignore structural labour market inequalities, labour market politics and hardly pay attention to employer responsibilities for realising inclusive labour markets;
- Social workers increasingly work under managerial control and organisational conditions (such as scarce resources, standardisation of working procedures and output steering) which decrease room for social workers to work according to their own professional standards and ethics. These developments may contribute to de-professionalization, in the sense that expert professional judgement is valued less and less.

Based on these criticisms, one might normatively conclude that social workers should better not get involved in activation work and remain in 'safer', therapeutic social work practices (Lorenz, 2005) or that the scholarly focus should be on critical social policy analysis.

However, this conclusion seems preliminary, because these papers run the risk of overlooking the active role of (social) workers as social policy actors, who co-construct the meaning of active policy during daily service delivery and influence policy making. Activation policies are often framed within a discourse of individualization. One consequence of this frame is that workers doing activation work usually have substantial discretion to individualize services and to find 'tailor-made' solutions. The way in which they individualize, influences what activation policy looks like in practice. This raises the question how workers deal with discretion, what this means for policy outcomes and whether their professional background influences this process.

This question is partially covered by the second category of studies, which study actual welfare to work practice by (social) workers, often inspired by a street-level bureaucracy perspective (Lipsky, 2010). These studies recognize a large diversity in actual activation contexts as well as differences between 'policy as written' and 'policy as practiced' (Kjørstad, 2005; Liljegren, 2012; I. Malmberg-Heimonen, Natland, Tøge, & Hansen, 2015; Marston et al., 2005; Nothdurfter, 2016; Nybom, 2011; Sainsbury, 2008; Tabin & Perriard, 2016; Thorén, 2008; Van der Aa & Van Berkel, 2015) .

Such studies sometimes confirm a problematic relation between social work and welfare to work policy. But they also show the diversity in decentralised activation policies, in actual organisational conditions as well as in the ways in which (social) workers deal with these conditions.

Many of these studies focus on how organisational characteristics as well as social policy choices shape how social workers 'do' activation work (Brodkin, 1997; Jewell, 2007; Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2012; Røysum, 2013). These studies are important in showing how professional background and expertise may be only one factor amongst others to influence the nature of public service and its outcome.

Several authors for example distinguish between work first-type policies (indeed geared towards quick reconnection with the labour market in any job) and human capital policies, meant to stimulate and support development of relevant capacities for successful labour market inclusion (Bonoli, 2010; Dingeldey, 2007). The same goes for variation in organisational context which for example may influence the room workers have for discretionary decision making (van Berkel & Knies, 2016). Some studies document examples of organisations where trust in professional expertise has declined and various forms of 'non-professional' steering have been introduced (Jørgensen, Nørup, & Baadsgaard, 2010). But other studies give examples where the professional nature of activation work is more or less acknowledged and a certain level of professional autonomy is available (Kjørstad, 2005; Van Berkel et al., 2010).

These studies suggest that varied contexts may be more or less supportive of applying social work principles to activation work. Few of these studies however shed light on the question how a social work background itself may influence the nature and outcome of this work through worker agency. Some do identify aspects of the work which apparently require a social work perspective, such as attention for multiple problems and the ability to provide individualized coaching and motivation (Røysum, 2013; Van Parys & Struyven, 2012). But explicit relations between activation practice, outcomes and social work competences or methods are hardly explored. May be this can be explained by the 'loose' social work definition which many authors appear to use.

The same goes for ethical dilemmas which workers may face when delivering activation policies that include sanctioning or obligatory program participation. Kjørstad appears to be one of the few scholars to address this issue, presenting a precise account on the dilemma's and the varied ways in which social workers deal with them (Kjørstad, 2005).

Based on this short review of available studies, we can conclude that social workers are involved in diverse activation work practices. But we know little about the way in which they (can) use their professional social work background to construct activation practice and outcomes in diverse contexts shaped by policy and managerial choices. The next section will argue why it is important to dedicate more scholarly attention to this lack of knowledge.

The case for systematic research on social workers' contributions to activation practice

Professional backgrounds of workers are likely to influence how activation policy translates into policy practice, which in turn is contingent on diverse political and organisational choices regarding activation work. As was argued in the former section however, we still know little about how workers' professional backgrounds in general and a social work background in particular relate to activation policy development, delivery and outcome.

For various reasons it makes sense to devote more scholarly attention to this issue, both from a social policy perspective as well as from a social work perspective.

First of all, from a social policy perspective, it is relevant to gain a better general insight into the impact of professional backgrounds of workers on the ways in which individualized social policies are being delivered and translated into certain outcomes. Activation policies provide a good case to study this relation, given the fact that professional backgrounds of activation workers vary. Such research would clarify to what extent professional background indeed matters for the delivery and

outcomes of activation policies and what relevance a social work background has vis-à-vis other professional backgrounds.

Secondly, despite variety in professional backgrounds, in many countries social workers can be considered important agents of modern welfare states (Jewell, 2007). Social workers do not confine themselves to mere policy implementation. In certain contexts they may also influence policy making, for example by interest representation or by influencing political debates. From a policy-actor centred perspective on social policy, it therefore makes sense to specifically dedicate more scholarly attention to the roles of social workers in both policy making as well as delivery.

From a social work perspective, thirdly, the fact that social workers are present in this line of work implies that activation work provides a relevant domain for better understanding contemporary social work practice. Such understanding is important for social work scholars and activation analysists, but of course also for social work practitioners and social work schools, who may use research based insights to strengthen their curricula concerning the topic of activation work and issues related to social inclusion through labour.

Fourthly, there is hardly consensus on the kind of professional skills and ethics needed to effectively support vulnerable groups on the labour market. This may even explain the relatively modest effectiveness of many activation programs. This means that there may be a world to win for social work, by investigating at the micro level of service delivery how and under which conditions social work methods could contribute to dealing with labour market exclusion. Activation of vulnerable groups into work may actually become more successful when it can be based upon social work principles and competence, like individual casework, integrated attention for multiple problems as well as proficiency in empowering methods and inter-professional cooperation. Normative professionalism may be a valuable social work framework to be able to professionally deal with the many ethical issues which result from tensions and conflicts of interests which activation policies often bring along. However, this expectation of course needs empirical substantiation.

Finally, social work methods may need further refinement and development to be able to successfully deliver activation work. For example, social workers may not have been trained to deal adequately with the employer perspectives and interests which ultimately determine whether labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups is attainable. Professionalization processes in this field are sometimes initiated by state agencies (I. E. Malmberg-Heimonen, 2015). It would make sense however if (organized) professional social workers themselves would organize and support such processes, precisely to safeguard social work principles along the way. A better research-based insight in actual social work practices and their activation outcomes could facilitate the development of such learning processes.

Taking these arguments together leads to the conclusion that more systematic research on social workers doing activation work, can both clarify as well as strengthen the role of social workers in the field of activation work. The final part of this paper is dedicated to outlining a research agenda on this issue.

Central topics for a research agenda
The central objective of the proposed research agenda is to gain a better insight into the roles which social workers (defined as workers with an educational background in social work) play in processes

of social inclusion of vulnerable citizens through work, taking into account the conditions under which these contributions are made.

Secondly, by advancing knowledge on these issues, the agenda aims to provide social workers and social work schools with knowledge to further strengthen and develop professional competence and curricula concerning activation work.

These objectives translate into four interrelated research topics for this research agenda.

The first topic concerns **studying relations between professional background, street-level practice and outcomes of activation work in various contexts**. Both within as well as across activation contexts (activation policy and organisation) where workers have different professional backgrounds it is relevant to gain more knowledge about how possible differences in practice and impact relate to professional education and experience, including of course social work. How is individualized activation work 'being done' and how does this influence various outcomes, including of course an improved labour market position of vulnerable groups? Such research sheds light on relevant professional competence for successful activation work, but it would also demonstrate how different contexts relate to possibilities for working according to professional social work principles.

The second topic focusses on gaining more detailed insight into **how social work methods as practiced in a given context, influence processes of social inclusion through work of vulnerable citizens**. This topic serves to further 'open the black box' of activation work delivery, by looking at how workers use social work methods in daily practice.

The third topic concerns specifically **how social workers deal with the dilemmas and tensions they encounter given the organisational context, political imperatives, citizens' needs as well as employers' expectations.** The way in which social workers do this 'normative work' is likely to have a large impact on how general political ideas on activation translate into possibilities or obstacles for vulnerable citizens on their trajectory towards inclusive labour. At the same time, research on this topic can help to identify aspects requiring further training to empower social workers to deal witch such dilemma's.

The fourth topic focusses on effective ways of **practice learning in relation to using new insights from research in daily work.** Continuous learning from practice and research 'evidence' is not a typical aspect of activation work, but supposedly a part of general social work practice. However, job activation is a field of practice were still a lot of learning remains to be done. Moreover, dealing with labour market inclusion is not a standard topic in social work curricula. Therefore, it is relevant to gain more insight into the ways learning processes dedicated to this topic are organized and how these influence learning, practices and outcomes.

Methodological notes
The suggested research agenda contains topics requiring both explanatory as well as exploratory research. As such it would require both quantitative as well as qualitative research designs. The argument in the first section of this paper furthermore leads to a number of specific notes concerning research designs within this agenda.

First of all, all four topics require research on actual street-level practice by social workers with vulnerable unemployed citizens, taking into account the specific context of policy and organisation in

which they work. Only this kind of research allows to go beyond (too) general statements about welfare to work policy and social work.

Secondly, the argument presented in this paper calls for comparative research designs. Several types of comparison are relevant:

- Between various professional groups (including of course social workers) doing activation work;
- Between services for various vulnerable groups attended by social workers;
- Between various public as well as private organisational contexts;
- Between various policy contexts, both within as well as between welfare states.

These comparisons allow for a much more precise insight into conditions and contexts which promote (or hinder) social workers' contributions to inclusion into labour markets.

Thirdly, especially research on the topic of practice learning could very well be combined with action-research designs, in which feedback loops between research, social work schools and practice are organised at the level of specific practices. Such action research can directly support social workers' learning processes, facilitates making explicit of practice based knowledge and delivers insight into effective learning processes.

Conclusion and follow-up

Given the precarious labour market position of vulnerable citizens in contemporary welfare states, as well as the precarious 'inclusionary' potential of paid work in future labour markets, activation work can be expected to remain a relevant field of practice for social workers in the years to come. At the same time, we hardly know whether and how social workers, using social work methods and applying social work ethics, can have a positive impact on processes of inclusion of vulnerable citizens through work.

This paper has therefore presented an argument for more systematic research into the roles which social workers (can) play in activation work practices against the background of varied welfare-to-work policies and organisational contexts. Besides academic relevance, such research could support the development of social workers' competence in this field as well as their possibilities to influence both political as well as organisational choices concerning activation work.

Four main topics for this agenda have been proposed:

- relations between professional backgrounds including social work, street-level practice and outcomes of activation work in various contexts;
- the impact of social work methods as practiced on processes of social inclusion through work of vulnerable citizens;
- the ways in which social workers deal with the ethical dilemmas and tensions they encounter given organisational context, political imperatives, citizens' needs as well as employers' expectations.
- effective ways of practice learning in in daily activation work.

Hopefully this paper stimulates social work researchers as well as practitioners to address these questions systematically and to start exchanging answers to them, whenever possible through

collaborative and comparative projects. By doing so the empowering potential of activation policies may be enforced and social workers may contribute to actually realizing this potential.

References

Bonoli, G. (2010). The Political Economy of Active Labor-Market Policy. *Politics & Society, 38*(4), 435-457. doi: 10.1177/0032329210381235

Brodkin, E. Z. (1997). Inside the Welfare Contract: Discretion and Accountability in State Welfare Administration. *Social Service Review, 71*(1), 1-33.

Dean, H. (2007). The ethics of welfare-to-work. *Policy & Politics, 35*(4), 573-589.

Dingeldey, I. (2007). Between workfare and enablement ? The different paths to transformation of the welfare state: A comparative analysis of activating labour market policies. *European Journal of Political Research, 46*(6), 823-851. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2007.00712.x

Gilbert, N. (2002). *Transformation of the welfare state: The silent surrender of public responsibility*: Oxford University Press, USA.

Hasenfeld, Y. (1999). Social Services and Welfare-to-Work. *Administration in Social Work, 23*(3-4), 185-199. doi: 10.1300/J147v23n03_11

Healy, K. (2004). The Reprofessionalization of Social Work: Collaborative Approaches for Achieving Professional Recognition. *British Journal of Social Work, 34*(2), 243-260. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bch024

Jewell, C. J. (2007). Assessing need in the United States, Germany, and Sweden: The organization of welfare casework and the potential for responsiveness in the "three worlds". *Law & Policy, 29*(3), 380-406.

Jordan, B. (2000). *Social Work and the Third Way: Tough love as social policy*: Sage.

Jørgensen, H., Nørup, I., & Baadsgaard, K. (2010). *Employment policy restructuring and the" de-professionalization" question-Do recent Danish developments give an answer?* Paper presented at the RESQ International research conference.

Kessl, F. (2009). Critical reflexivity, social work, and the emerging European post-welfare states. *European Journal of Social Work, 12*(3), 305-317. doi: 10.1080/13691450902930746

Kjørstad, M. (2005). Between professional ethics and bureaucratic rationality: the challenging ethical position of social workers who are faced with implementing a workfare policy Mellom profesjonsetikk og byråkratisk rasjonalitet: Sosialarbeideres utfordrende etiske posisjon ved iverksetting av arbeidslinjen. *European Journal of Social Work, 8*(4), 381-398. doi: 10.1080/13691450500314459

Liebenberg, L., Ungar, M., & Ikeda, J. (2015). Neo-Liberalism and Responsibilisation in the Discourse of Social Service Workers. *British Journal of Social Work, 45*(3), 1006-1021.

Liljegren, A. (2012). Pragmatic professionalism: micro-level discourse in social work. *European Journal of Social Work, 15*(3), 295-312. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2010.543888

Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-Level Bureaucracy, 30th Ann. Ed.: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lorenz, W. (2005). Social work and a new social order-challenging neo-liberalism's erosion of solidarity. *Social work & society, 3*(1), 93-101.

Lorenz, W. (2016). Rediscovering the social question. *European Journal of Social Work, 19*(1), 4-17. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2015.1082984

Malmberg-Heimonen, I., Natland, S., Tøge, A. G., & Hansen, H. C. (2015). The Effects of Skill Training on Social Workers' Professional Competences in Norway: Results of a Cluster-Randomised Study. *British Journal of Social Work*, bcv073.

Malmberg-Heimonen, I. E. (2015). Social Workers' Training Evaluated by a Cluster-Randomized Study: Reemployment for Welfare Recipients? *Research on Social Work Practice*. doi: 10.1177/1049731515569357

Marston, G., Elm Larsen, J., & McDonald, C. (2005). The active subjects of welfare reform: a street-level comparison of employment services in Australia and Denmark. *Social Work & Society, 3*(2), 141-157.

Martin, C. J., & Knudsen, J. S. (2010). Scenes from a mall: Retail training and the social exclusion of low-skilled workers. *Regulation & Governance, 4*(3), 345-364. doi: 10.1111/j.1748-5991.2010.01085.x

Mitendorf, A., & van Ewijk, H. (2016). Working with social complexity in a neoliberal society: challenges for social work in Estonia. *European Journal of Social Work, 19*(1), 78-91. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2015.1025711

Nothdurfter, U. (2016). The street-level delivery of activation policies: constraints and possibilities for a practice of citizenship. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1-21. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2015.1137869

Nybom, J. (2011). Activation in social work with social assistance claimants in four Swedish municipalities. *European Journal of Social Work, 14*(3), 339-361. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2010.501021

Raeymaeckers, P., & Dierckx, D. (2012). To Work or Not to Work? The Role of the Organisational Context for Social Workers' Perceptions on Activation. *British Journal of Social Work, 43*(6), 1170-1189. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcs048

Roets, G., Roose, R., Claes, L., Vandekinderen, C., Van Hove, G., & Vanderplasschen, W. (2012). Reinventing the Employable Citizen: A Perspective for Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work, 42*(1), 94-110. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcr037

Røysum, A. (2013). The reform of the welfare services in Norway: one office – one way of thinking? *European Journal of Social Work, 16*(5), 708-723. doi: doi:10.1080/13691457.2012.722982

Sainsbury, R. (2008). Administrative justice, discretion and the 'welfare to work' project. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law, 30*(4), 323-338. doi: 10.1080/09649060802580995

Tabin, J.-P., & Perriard, A. (2016). Active social policies revisited by social workers. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1-14. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2015.1131147

Thorén, K. H. (2008). *Activation Policy in Action: A Street-level Study of Social Assistance in the Swedish Welfare State*: ProQuest.

van Berkel, R., & Knies, E. (2016). Performance Management, Caseloads and the Frontline Provision of Social Services. *Social Policy & Administration, 50*(1), 59-78. doi: 10.1111/spol.12150

Van Berkel, R., & Van der Aa, P. (2012). Activation work: policy programme administration or professional service provision? *Journal of Social Policy, 41*(03), 493-510.

Van Berkel, R., Van der Aa, P., & Van Gestel, N. (2010). Professionals without a profession? Redesigning case management in Dutch local welfare agencies. *European Journal of Social Work, 13*(4), 447-463. doi: 10.1080/13691451003603455

Van der Aa, P. (2012). *Activeringswerk in uitvoering. Bureaucratische en professionele dienstverlening in drie sociale diensten.* Utrecht University - USG.

Van der Aa, P., & Van Berkel, R. (2015). Fulfilling the promise of professionalism in street-level practice. In P. Hupe, M. Hill & A. Buffat (Eds.), *Understanding Street-level Bureaucracy* (pp. 263-278). Old Park Hill: Policy Press.

Van Parys, L., & Struyven, L. (2012). Withdrawal from the public employment service by young unemployed: a matter of non-take-up or of non-compliance? How non-profit social work initiatives may inspire public services. *European Journal of Social Work, 16*(4), 451-469. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2012.724387

Wright, S. E. (2003). Confronting unemployment in a street-level bureaucracy: Jobcentre staff and client perspectives.