

INTRODUCTION TO THE TWO FICE 2020 SPECIAL ISSUES

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Guest Editors

Abstract: FICE International is an international organization focused on children and youth who are in need of out-of-home care. One of its major activities is organizing a world congress every three years. In these congresses, professionals from all over the world who are involved with out-of-home care can meet, exchange knowledge, and learn from each other. The most recent FICE congress, held in October 2019 in Tel Aviv, Israel, was dedicated to the theme “Better Future Opportunities for Children and Young People in Multicultural Societies”. The editor of this journal has been kind enough to offer this platform for the publication of selected material presented at the congress. FICE-International, and we as guest editors, are most thankful to Prof. Sibylle Artz, editor of the *IJCYFS*, for this opportunity. The richness and variety of the selected articles, coming from 10 countries, could not be accommodated in a single issue. The editors of the journal have therefore decided to divide the articles into two special issues, to be published one after the other. The first of these issues includes articles in three thematic categories: (a) Evidence-based research on effects of out-of-home care, (b) Historical and sociological perspectives on institutionalized child and youth care, and (c) Normalization — a challenge for foster care programs. Four further categories will provide the framework for the forthcoming second special issue: (d) Emotional and pedagogical considerations, (e) Refugee children and youth, (f) Residential staff, and (g) Care leavers.

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FICE International, founded in 1948, is an organization of child and youth care professionals from more than 35 countries around the globe. Its membership includes practitioners, university professors, and researchers in fields such as social pedagogy, social work, child and youth care work, psychology, and education. As the FICE website¹ explains, combining their efforts enhances the ability of these professionals to exert a positive influence on the quality of child and youth care:

FICE-International's vision is to create networks across continents worldwide to support actions and all those working with at-risk young people, children with special needs and children and youth in out-of-home care. All activities aim to respect the personality, interests, and needs of the child or the young person. (FICE International, 2017, para. 1)

A major and prestigious activity of the international organization is a world conference held every three years. The purpose of FICE conferences is to bring together experts from all over the world in order to share knowledge and programs and to assist in building supportive and sustainable professional networks to promote the rights of children and youth at risk. The conference serves as a platform for reviewing work involving at-risk children, children with special needs, and children and young people in out-of-home care, and as a forum for innovative ideas.

34th World Congress

The 34th World Congress of FICE International took place in Tel Aviv, Israel from October 29th to 31st, 2019. The theme of the congress, “Better Future Opportunities for Children and Young People in Multicultural Societies”, is timely, as most societies are becoming increasingly multicultural. The challenge of our era is to create a brighter future for children and young people in multicultural societies.

The conference participants included representatives of associations, organizations, and similar interested parties. The more than 520 professionals who attended from nearly 40 countries — principals, supervisors, teachers, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, academics, researchers, and others — represented various roles in residential schools, treatment residential centres, foster care, group homes, and other forms of out-of-home care. Also in attendance were decision makers at different levels from countries around the world. The attendees came together to share their knowledge and learn from each other, forming a genuine “educative community”.

The congress was held at the friendly campus of Ono Academic College, where Prof. Emmanuel Grupper, chair of the organizing committee, holds the position of Deputy Dean of Humanities. It was organized by the Israeli National Section of FICE, together with the main

¹ <https://www.ficeinter.net/>

governmental agencies in Israel that deal with residential education and care: the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services, and the Ministry of Education. Other important partners came from a large group of civil society organizations that are active in Israel in the field of education and care for children and young people who need specialized services, in both out-of-home care and community-based programs. The chairperson of the scientific committee was Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, whose contributions were instrumental to the high quality of the congress program. This large group of volunteers, all of them Israeli professionals and civil society activists, joined forces to meet the challenge of putting on such a large conference. Together, they made the 34th FICE International Congress a big success.

FICE Publications

After the 32th FICE International Congress in Bern, Switzerland in 2013, the editorial board of FICE International decided to no longer distribute edited congress proceedings, but instead to publish selected materials from the congress in the form of “special issues” in open access electronic journals. This became possible due to a generous invitation from the editor of this journal, Prof. Sibylle Artz of the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, to publish FICE special issues based on the congress material. This has already begun to emerge as a “FICE tradition”. Here we are now, applying this most successful model for the third time. The topic of the first special issue was *Inclusion* (Grupper et al., 2015), the theme of the Bern Congress. Guest editors were Emmanuel Grupper (Israel), James P. Anglin (Canada), and Anna Katharina Schmid (Switzerland). After the Vienna Congress in 2016, we published a special double issue with guest editors James P. Anglin (Canada), Silke Gahleitner (Germany), and Emmanuel Grupper (Israel). The first part was named after the congress theme, *Together Towards a Better World for Children, Adolescents and Families* (Anglin et al., 2018a). The theme of the second part was *Evaluation, Research, and Challenges in Residential, Foster, and Family Care* (Anglin et al., 2018b).

The special issue — again a double issue — that we introduce here is based on materials presented during the Tel Aviv Congress in October 2019, with the theme “Better Future Opportunities for Children and Young People in Multicultural Societies”. The guest editors are Emmanuel Grupper and Alexander Schneider, both from Israel, and Friedhelm Peters from Germany. The issue includes 16 contributions from 10 countries: Austria (2), Croatia (1), Germany (2), Hungary (1), India (1), Israel (4), Italy (1), Japan (1), Lithuania (1), and Switzerland (2). We have divided this material into seven thematic categories.

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Evidence-based research on effects of out-of-home care: The first category includes four contributions, all of which are evidence-based research dealing with the effects and outcomes of out-of-home care on children and young people. The first paper, by Rosalind Willi and Douglas Reed from the SOS International Research Centre in Austria, measures the long-term impacts of family-like child care and family-strengthening social services. The second, by Anna Schmid of Switzerland, presents the first results from an original Swiss–Hungarian project, “Creating

Futures”, that promotes the self-empowerment of youth in residential care, enlisting them as experts in the research process. In the third paper, from Croatia, Lucija Vejmelka, Roberta Matković, and Davorka Kovačić Borković present their research about online activities in dormitories in residential care programs. The fourth article deals with assessing the association between care quality and household chore rules for children in Japanese residential care institutions. This research was carried out and written by four scholars from Japan: Rie Mizuki, Mamiko Kyuzen, Satoru Nishizawa, and Shigeyuki Mori.

Historical and sociological perspectives on institutionalized child and youth care: There are two papers in this second category. The first is by Patricia Lannen, Clara Bombach, and Oskar G. Jenni, all based in Switzerland. This team is involved in a research project about institutionalized care in Switzerland during the late 1950s and early 1960s. They involved former residents in these institutions as partners for developing the interview guides for the project; this paper presents their preliminary results. The other paper in this section comes from Vilnius, Lithuania. Jolanta Pivorienė analyses the process of deinstitutionalization of the child care system in her country.

Normalization — a challenge for foster care programs: The single paper in this section, by Friedegard Föltz, analyzes how foster care programs in Germany cope with the challenge of creating normalcy for children and youth in their care who have disabilities or medical fragility.

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Emotional and pedagogical considerations: The fourth section opens with a paper by Gabriella Kulcsár, Judit Zeller, and Beáta Korinek. It describes the Students for Children volunteer program, in which university students in Hungary mentor children in foster care, with benefits for both groups. The second paper, by Revital Sela-Shayovitz and Michal Levy from Israel, deals with the rather new phenomenon of cyberaggression. Their paper focuses on the effects of parental mediation on specific bystanders’ roles. It is followed by a paper by Alexander Schneider and Einat Yitzhak Monsonogo, also from Israel. They present an original point of view about the changing role of pedagogy in school principalship that recognizes the importance of emotional literacy. The paper that closes this section, by Ameen Azmy, presents an evaluation of a police studies program in “youth villages” (residential care institutions) in Israel. The program’s rationale was to develop police legitimacy among youth at risk who had been placed in residential care institutions, and thus change their perceptions regarding law enforcement officers.

Refugee children and youth: The fifth section deals with a widespread and troubling phenomenon of our era — “children on the move”, or refugee children and youth. The one paper in this section, written by Norbert Struck, deals with residential care in Germany for refugee young people.

Residential staff: The sixth section is dedicated to a crucial element of training: empowering and developing competences among residential educators. The first paper is by Anna Reznikovski-

Kuras and Anna Gerasimenko, both from Israel. Their paper identifies six best-practice strategies for residential caregivers working with children at risk. The final article is part of a collaborative project by five European Union countries to empower and develop competences among residential care workers. Project members Laura Formenti and Alessandra Rigamonti of Italy write about enhancing reflective competences among care workers practising in residential child care, who are frequently confronted by complex situations.

Care leavers: The seventh and final section of this special double issue includes two papers about care leavers. Over the last decade, this has been one of the most important developments in out-of-home facilities in many countries. A lot of activities and research were done during that decade on the transition from care to independent living. The first paper is by Stephan Sting and Maria Groinig of Austria, who write about the interesting perspectives care leavers have on their families during the transition from out-of-home care to independent living. The second paper, by Indian researchers Kiran Modi, Lakshmi Madhavan, Leena Prasad, Suman Kasana, and Sanya Kapoor, presents a synopsis of *Beyond 18: Leaving Child Care Institutions*, a report that described a research study of support systems for youth leaving care in India and made recommendations for policy reforms in that area.

Taken together, these 16 articles give the real flavour of multiculturalism and its implications. Although educators and caregivers who are working with children and youth in out-of-home care facilities in these 10 countries face the same basic challenges, they are addressed differently in each cultural context. For example, the transition from care to independent living looks completely different in India than it does in a Western culture like Austria. The same is true for all other issues described in these articles. For example, measurement of outcomes, and issues in staff-related areas such as training and professional status, look quite different in the Israeli cultural context than in European countries like Italy. The different ways challenges are addressed in different cultural contexts demonstrates the multicultural dimension of our professional field. This is part of the multicultural celebration that the participants in the FICE 34th World Congress experienced during the four days of the congress in Israel. We do hope that readers will feel this cultural diversity while reading the interesting papers in these two special issues.

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