

Challenges for Child and Youth Care: A German-Israeli Dialogue,

By Grupper, E., Koch, J. and Peters, F. (Eds.), (2009) Frankfurt/Main: IGfH-Eigenverlag

(ISBN 978-3-925146-72-5) 288 pages, €19

Review by James P. Anglin, PhD

Professor, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

This fascinating book grew out of two seminars, one held in Israel in 2007 and the other in Germany in 2008, bringing together leaders in child and youth care (the term used in Israel) and social pedagogy (the term used in Germany). On many levels, this is an important contribution to the international child and youth care literature. However, the title is somewhat misleading, as the book itself is a collection of papers on the German system and issues and on the Israeli system and issues, with only one article bringing a comparative perspective. While the two seminars would have featured dialogues between the two cultures, histories and traditions, regrettably this volume does not contain any of those. At the same time, the editors comment that they see these seminars “almost as a starting point for discussions”, and it is to be hoped that this historic initiative does continue and that it will produce more comparative and dialogic publications.

This volume runs almost 300 pages, and consists of 20 chapters divided into four parts. Part I includes two chapters on the wider context of social pedagogy in modern society by Michal Winkler and Friedhelm Peters which I shall review in some detail below. Part II has six chapters on the history and structures of services in Germany and Israel. Part III has nine chapters on current professional challenges, divided into three sub-sections on “practical approaches”, “multiculturalism and migration”, and “training”. Part IV includes three chapters examining innovative models and some future directions in both Germany and Israel.

Now, to cut to the chase, my favourite chapter, and worthy of the purchase of this text in itself, is the opening chapter by Michael Winkler. It is a challenging and erudite exploration of “Why modern societies need social pedagogy more than social work” – a “must read” for any serious child and youth care scholar. Winkler reflects on the fact that, after an apparent period of decline in the emphasis on social pedagogy as opposed to the more successful concept of social work, there seems to be a re-appreciation and resurgence of the concept of social pedagogy underway in Europe, and even in the UK where it has never before had more than a toehold.

In brief, Winkler suggests two primary reasons for this: first, the empirical evidence that social pedagogy leads to better child outcomes for young people in children’s homes and foster care; and second, that societies now need new competencies amongst their members which social pedagogy can provide. It is primarily the latter point which takes the author and reader through the evolution of social pedagogy in Europe, including references to the thinking and influence of Immanuel Kant, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Anton Makarenko, Herbert Marcuse, A.S. Neill, Zygmunt Bauman (and many others), and even up to the steps of the temple at Delphi!. I have already warned the reader it is challenging, but it is well

worth the effort. It may be helpful to first read/re-read one of the succinct histories of western philosophy; e.g. the multi-volume Charles Copleston (1946-1974), dual-volume Will Durrant (1926,1933) or single volume Bertrand Russell (1945).

One last point I will make about this chapter is the introduction of the important German notion of *Bildung*. As with many Germanic concepts, it is difficult to render this notion readily into English. In brief and rough translation, it refers to the process of spiritual formation of the person; that is, not only to the development of knowledge and skills, but also values, ethos, personality, authenticity and humanity. A reading and unpacking of this chapter is worthy of a graduate seminar all in itself.

The second chapter in Part I by Peters examines the “Impacts on child and youth care practice of modernising child welfare states by New Public Management”, and will be of interest especially to those involved in, or studying, the management of services. It highlights the neo-liberal wave of managerialism that treats child and youth care and education as commodities like any other, that (supposedly) require contracting for services, product control and technical expertise above all else. The juxtaposition of this perspective with the discussion of *Bildung* in the previous chapter could not be more stark. Peters sees hope in the “reflective practice” of experienced and expert social pedagogues, but it is evident from his analysis that it will be an uphill battle. Readers from around the world are sure to find echoes of their own bureaucratic realities and struggles.

Part II includes a number of very useful histories of child and youth care in Israel and Germany, including two on Israel by Aharoni and Grupper, and two on Germany by Hansbauer and Winkler that are worthy of special note. Together, these chapters offer complementary and in-depth overviews of the development of social pedagogy/child and youth care in the two countries. Grupper offers a succinct and informative perspective on the past, present and future of “residential care and education” in Israel. The concept of residential care and education as a unity is a hallmark of the Israeli approach, and is worthy of study by other countries around the world. The Winkler chapter is an intriguing analysis of an “Unfinished unity: child and youth care in eastern and western Germany”. This chapter will be especially interesting for those with a sociological and historical bent. It offers insights into the social pedagogical aspects of the re-unification of Germany and raises important questions about the profession’s future in Germany, and in eastern Germany especially.

Part III is a section with numerous and kaleidoscopic facets, including examinations of: physical activity and sport, leisure and day care, care leavers, recording and publications, integration of migrants, cultural diversity, the psychology of training, and fostering reflective skills. Chapter 11 by Zeller, Zeira, Königeter, Benbenishty and Schröer on “Care leavers and their transition to adulthood: Comparative perspectives in Israel and Germany” is worthy of special mention as it is the only contribution to this text that offers a comparative analysis of an aspect of the German and Israeli systems.

The final section, Part IV, includes several chapters on models of care, including three models in one Israeli village (Yosef), an innovative model in Germany called INTEGRA (Koch and Peters) and an approach to working with the Bedouin population in Israel (Kirschbaum). The INTEGRA model, standing for “integrated, flexible, regionalized, infrastructural oriented child and youth care”, represents a bold

attempt to develop and implement a new form of service structure based upon core social pedagogical principles. This model will be of great interest to those in the field of child and youth care looking for holistic models of practice combined with localized agency and service design.

Emmanuel Grupper, Josef Koch and Friedhelm Peters are to be congratulated for ensuring that these contributions towards a unique German-Israeli dialogue, many of which were originally shared in the 2007 and 2008 seminars, have been edited and published for broader access and use. On the level of child and youth care/social pedagogy, this is a source book of amazing ideas and valuable information. On the level of child welfare systems development and change, it is a text full of innovative principles and models. On the level of international understanding, it represents an inspirational discourse on world peace and human reconciliation.