

Materialien zur vergleichenden Sozialarbeitswissenschaft  
und zur interkulturellen/internationalen Sozialarbeit

Band 3

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Peter Erath / Brian Littlechild / Riitta Vornanen (Editors)

**Social Work in Europe – Descriptions, Analysis and Theories**

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Institut für vergleichende Sozialarbeitswissenschaft und interkulturelle/internationale  
Sozialarbeit (ISIS) e.V. Eichstätt

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Herausgeberausschuss:

Oldrich Chytil, Peter Erath, Juha Hämäläinen, Brian Littlechild, Horst Sing

Editor:

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Sozialarbeit (ISIS) e.V. Eichstätt

2004

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**ISBN**

Reihe: Materialien zur vergleichenden Sozialarbeitswissenschaft und zur  
interkulturellen/internationalen Sozialarbeit  
(Materials for Comparing Social Work Science and for intercultural/international  
Social Work)

Volume 3

First Edition

Address:

BK-Verlag Stassfurt

Dr. Eberlein

Prinzenberg 16

39418 Stassfurt

Fax: +49 / (0)3925 / 303276

E-Mail: [dr.eberlein@web.de](mailto:dr.eberlein@web.de)

*Printed in Czech Republic*

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# **PART 1**

## ***DESCRIPTIONS***

# **Social Policy in Russia: results of the period of the 1990s**

*Irina Grigoryeva*

This chapter outlines and analyses the major changes in Russian social policy at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Such an exposition can be broken down into seven main elements.

## **1. Social policy in the USSR is basically characterized by the principles of universality of protection and paternalism of the State.**

This construction of social policy in the USSR included an extensive social welfare system, pensions for the elderly and disabled, universal health care and access to education. The Soviet literature criticized the welfare systems of the Western states, but the actual spending levels, scope of social programmes and accumulated problems were comparable to those of many Western countries, even though the institutions were different.

That is when the ideas of renewed socialism became popular. A lot of articles on “Swedish socialism” were published, that compared social care experiences in different countries, discussed alternatives, for example, a liberal, continental, Scandinavian model to the Russian one. Taking into consideration the similarity of all socialist models, Eltsin and Gaidar’s team chose liberalism as a cheaper alternative for social policy. The Soviet social policy was supposed to be very expensive and too universal. The choice of liberalism was predictable because the state has targeted responsibilities for special interest groups. But the risks of liberalism were not taken into consideration.

## **2. Since 1991 the transition to a market economy has brought about a number of basic changes in social policy.**

These reforms have changed the tools used for determining social policy, and this has meant important consequences for the standard of living.

The policy of economic liberalization in the area of prices, which started in 1992, has led to the disappearance of subsidized prices for basic necessity products. In respect to the incomes of the population, the liberalization implies, on the one hand, the disappearance of planned salaries or its degradation. On the other hand, it has been considered necessary for incomes to be based exclusively on individual effort or good luck, therefore limiting the importance given to social policy as a complementary element in monetary income.

# Social Pedagogy – a Challenge to Social Work in Estonia

Inger Kraav

## Introduction

The history of social pedagogy as a domain of research and activity in Estonia is not long. Crucial changes that took place after the collapse of Soviet Union opened doors for many new disciplines, including social work and social pedagogy. Though social work was in lethargy during Soviet time it had had its development story and traditions in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term social pedagogy came into usage after Estonia had regained its independence, while some signs of social- pedagogical mentality and manner could be found in the farther past. Even though there is some concurrency in the goals and activity of social work and social pedagogy – the last 10 years represent the self-determination and appreciation of social pedagogy in Estonia. The aim of the present article is to outline the development path of social pedagogy as a separate domain, trying to distinguish it from developing field of social work.

The concept of social pedagogy is ambiguous and there are quite big discrepancies in its interpretation (*Hämäläinen* 1997: 13). In order to find social-pedagogical phenomena, it is essential to determine what we really mean by social pedagogy.

L. Kurki (2002: 37 f.) claims that in modern social pedagogy two basic meanings are accepted: In the first meaning a theoretical and practical trend is seen in order to support the welfare of childhood and youth, which first of all means exploring and preventing problems that might generate social exclusion. The other possibility is to treat social pedagogy as a science of social development of an individual into a social being. Still, social pedagogical thought is treating more than just work done with children and youth, covering the whole life curve of human being. It brings social pedagogical activity closer to social work. Consensus seems to be in the concept that the object of social pedagogical activity is people who are threatened by poverty, helplessness, solitude, exclusion and social deprivation. The means of assistance might differ, but emphasis in the activity is on pedagogical work (*Hämäläinen* 1997: 19 f.).

This is the way we have treated social pedagogy in the current case: when there is an orientation in the practice to relieve and prevent social problems by mean of pedagogy, we can talk about the social-pedagogical approach.

# Networking: institutional frame, conceptual basis and practical translation

*Sabina Frei, Rino Fasol*

## Introduction

Italy is now moving towards completion of a lengthy process of revising the training curriculum for certain categories of social work practitioner; in particular, about to come to fruition is the university-level training programme for social workers. At the same time the scenario of the services system has been repeatedly modified by legislative measures and governmental provisions that have sought to re-orient policies and redefine the working conditions of social service professionals. The debate that has accompanied these processes has obviously been wide-ranging and animated, and one of the most recurrent themes has been that of networking. This brief article will seek to reconstruct the origins of this concept and to frame it within the broader discussion on welfare models. It will then consider the assumptions on which the networking approach is based and its potential impact on professional practices.

## The origins of the concept of network

The concept of network as a “set of points (nodes) connected by lines (arcs)” (*Di Nicola* 1998: 13) is applied in numerous scientific disciplines, ranging from the natural to the social. Among the latter, the concept of network – more specifically that of social network – has attracted the interest of anthropology, sociology, social psychology and psychoanalysis, in which disciplines it has been incorporated into a variety of theoretical approaches but above all has been employed operationally in empirical research and social intervention (see *Sanicola* 1995).

The term ‘social network’ was first utilized by J. A. *Barnes*, a member of the (anthropological) School of Manchester, who in the early 1950s analysed the relationships among the members of a small community on a Norwegian island and identified, besides work relations and those of territorial belonging, a third type of bond which cut across the former two. With the term ‘network’, therefore, Barnes denoted that set of relationships – specific to each inhabitant because they were based largely on personal choice – “that has no boundaries and is neither unitary nor organized: this field consists of the bonds of friendship, kinship, neighbourhood, and acquaintance that every social actor (possesses)” (*Di Nicola* 1998: 16). For Barnes, therefore, in the final analysis it was a person’s social network that defined his/her membership of a particular social class.

# **Emergence of New Modes of Regulation as a Response to Risk: A brief note of concern**

*Steven M Shardlow*

## **Introduction**

If 'modernism' offered the possibility of unfettered social progress, then late modernist thinking offers a 'spoiled' vision of the future. Economic and social progress is accompanied by the social production of risk. These risks might, at the macro level, be amongst the most serious eventualities: war; economic downturn; social upheaval or environmental disaster (such arguments are exemplified in the work of writers such as *Giddens* 1990). Paradoxically, each of these phenomena may be the product of collective human activity, yet no individual or group of individuals may be able to prevent such potentially catastrophic events. Hence, *Beck* (1990) has suggested that we live in a 'risk society' – a society where levels of risk are increasing. Whether actual levels of risk are increasing or merely our sensitivity to the idea of risk is increased remains a matter of speculation. This sense of risk generates a desire to quantify, manage and control levels of risk. The influence of the 'risk society' upon welfare regimes, in general, and the profession of social work has been substantial. Yet, the lack of a model of risk that might be easily applied in social work has been identified (by for example *Gurney* 2000, *Parsloe* 1999). For example, in the United Kingdom, little was written about 'risk' until the pioneering work of *Brearley* (1982) who defined risk in terms of the various possible negative outcomes, now risk is the subject of intense interest (*Stalker* 2003).

The response to risk has been a contributory factor in the construction of a more regulated social welfare system, which relies a range of new forms of regulation.

## **Increasing levels of risk**

Within the field of social welfare, a number of changes have occurred that have exacerbated the sense of growing risk. For example, there has increased fragmentation in the delivery of services, such that it is no longer easy to understand or manage the organisational structure of the welfare services. For example, most economies have seen a proliferation of the number of service providers of social welfare services. In the UK, during the 1980s, most social work was provided by the state through the local authority. Following the legislative reforms (*National Health Service and Community Care Act (NHS & CC Act)* 1990) which greatly altered the way

**PART 2**

***ANALYSIS***

# **The unsolved problem of a “specific” scientific discipline of social work: Some remarks concerning the discussion in Germany.**

*Horst Sing*

## **Introduction**

The increasing demand for the improvement of theoretical reflection and scientific control of all kinds of practice led, after World War II, to a tremendous increase in efforts. It especially took place in professions which had already established, a long time before, relationships with scientific research in order to legitimize and to accredit the quality of their practical work, for instance the professional system of social work.

Whilst in the technical and technological sectors Universities of "applied sciences" - in Germany the "Technische Hochschulen" and in France the "Ecoles Polytechniques" - had already acquired, since the last decades of the 19th Century, a reputation which was comparable with the traditional Universities, this did not take place in the same way in the area of human sciences resp. social work. In many countries, for example Germany, due to a lack of a specific scientific discipline, there instead grew a more or less effective collaboration with scientific disciplines and institutions of which the material and subjects matters, the methods and theoretical frame, could provide helpful knowledge to them. The results of these collaborations were not without valuable results but they were not sufficient to provide, in the scientific community and in the practical community, the assumption that the theoretical control of social work in the shape of a specific scientific discipline had been established.

In the first instance, with the increasing awareness of the problems of inclusion/exclusion in highly developed and democratic societies after the first years of reconstruction after World War II, also on another level the countries of the so-called Third World with extreme mass-poverty and that of the People's Republics of the Eastern Block with their wide-spread deficiency of goods, the demand for scientific control in these sectors increased rapidly. Even in those countries where the structures of the scientific community had already led to a somewhat equal status of the scientific control of social work with other scientific disciplines, as in the USA, in the UK and the northern countries of Europe it became evident that previous gaps had not been overcome and new ones had begun to emerge.

For instance the scientific theoretical control of social work was felt in the practical community as well as in the scientific community. To have remained on a status of inferiority in comparison to other disciplines of human and social sciences, as new challenges of social exclusion arose, although many countries in Western Europe had spectacular growths of GNPs ("Wirtschaftswunder"), there was no convincing explanation on the side of the scientific community, which the social workers could use, to understand why they got more and more in the situation of a modern system. Thus the question arose, more frequently, if a "specific" scientific discipline of social work could help to overcome these unsatisfactory conditions of work?

Opinions concerning the necessity or the status of a specific scientific discipline might be different on the international as well as on the national level. However there are only a few authors who state that the development has already come to a level which is completely equal with other scientific disciplines or that is able to provide sufficient theoretical knowledge to resolve the professional challenges which social work has to face. Thus the discussion about a specific scientific discipline takes place in almost all countries, but nowhere is it so committed and even polemic as in Germany. For this reason, to understand the discussion in Germany it might be useful to determine some aspects of the problem, which are not yet or not so visible in the discussion of other countries.

I'll try to explain this in three steps: Firstly I'll give a short overview about the rise of some of the main issues of the discussion which might explain why the discussion is so intense and so often polemic in Germany. In the second step I'll try to elaborate on the main issues of the debate in Germany and why it has, in spite of some important performances, entered into the trap of an illusionary security. In the third step I'll try to show what might be the conditions in which this debate is able to leave the blind alley of illusionary security, how it will be possible to conceive a scientific discipline of social work and what the consequences will be for the understanding of it.

### **1 The rise of the specific discussion in Germany**

One of the most serious decisions in the development of a specific character in the German discussion took place long ago. When, in the wake of the introduction of the social security system by Bismarck, a professional social work began to emerge after World War I, the promoters of the new profession were confronted with the problem of how and where the education of social workers had to be managed.

The leading promoters of the education of social workers, and at the same time the leading experts of social work too, for example Alice Salomon, decided not to transfer the education of social workers to the universities, but to maintain the existing schools

# Models and Methods in Social Work in the UK: Between Theory and Practice<sup>1</sup>

*Adrian Adams*

## Introduction

The relationship between theory and practice in social work is both problematic and dynamic. On the one hand, it is expected that social workers in their everyday practice of reaching judgements, making decisions and taking action, can demonstrate the application of theory. On the other, it is expected that theory in social work, demonstrate its relevance and utility for practice, through the provision of abstractions and generalisations that explain social and psychological phenomena and so guide practice. Thus a relationship is established in which theory claims to offer a conceptual framework that reduces and in so doing explains aspects of the complex social world in which practice occurs; and where practice provides the site in which theory may be applied, tested and justified.

However at the experiential level, this relationship is often far from satisfying as theory, in the necessary reduction of complexity that it provides, often founders on the contingencies of practice; and practice fails to articulate the level of coherence and integration demanded by theory.

This paper offers some reflections on this uneasy relationship by reference to the critical theory of Jurgen *Habermas*<sup>2</sup>. In so doing it poses the questions of:

- To what purpose and in whose interests does social work operate?
- Can social work ever achieve the degree of certainty and uniformity demanded of a scientific endeavour?
- Does social work best attain legitimisation as a generic co-ordinating role or a technical specialist function?
- What is required of and should be emphasised in the behaviour, education and assessment of social workers: theoretical understanding or practical skills?

In its conclusion, the suggestion is that there is a need to establish some bridging devices between the universality of theory and the particularity of practice, that form the core methods and models appropriate to social work.

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<sup>1</sup> The essay is based on a paper first presented at European Social Work in Progress Seminar – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozialarbeit – at the Catholic University of Eichstätt

<sup>2</sup> It is not possible, or indeed necessary, to offer a full defence of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action here. I merely suggest that his arguments for the selection and adoption of a discursive, procedural method to reach consensus are a useful device for overcoming the theory-practice division in social work.

# The analysis of theoretical concepts and methods of social work presented in the Czech and Slovakian literature

Oldřich Chytil, Dana Nedělníková, Alice Příhodová

## The definition of social work in the Czech and Slovakian literature

In the Czech written literature about social work so far we find only a few attempts at the definition of social work. Some authors try to delimit the contents, conception and aims of social work.

For example *Navrátil* (*Matoušek*, 2001: 183) considers the delimitation of the professional field of social work as the aim of definitions. Since 1990 we have found some definitions of social work in the literature about social work without authors' delimitation of the aims for which they attempt to define social work.

*Řezníček* (1994: 21) states that "the mission of social work is to provide social services to individuals, families, groups or communities. The purpose of such services is to help the clients to deal with unchangeable problems, to limit or remove problems which can be changed or solved, possibly to contribute to the improvement of the situation where a correction of social circumstances is possible."

Another Czech writing author *Úlehla* (1999: 25) defines that "the mission of social work is to hold the dialogue between what the society wants in its norms and what a client wishes. The aim of social work is to develop the dialogue as collaboration and a cooperation of equivalent partners at the same time."

In 1999 *Musil* defines the subject of social work which is a support of clients (individuals, groups or communities) in dealing with their social situation. Main features of the social situation are:

- uniqueness requiring a specific approach to each client
- complexity – each situation has got many dimensions (subsistence, existential, social, legislative etc.) – which demands solution of the social situation from an economic, psychological, health, legal, sociological, pedagogical etc. point of view.

The use of the term "a social situation" according to *Musil* enables:

- to distinguish social work from other disciplines, especially from the counselling, psychotherapy etc., these subjects do not deal with the client's social situation but usually with a certain aspect of their situation. Therefore they do not deal with the client's situation comprehensively

- to give reasons for the necessity of at least three years' post graduation education
- to define disciplines whose graduates deal with activities which belong to the field of social work. These are disciplines dealing with one dimension of the client's situation (*Musil*, 1999: 105-113).

*Navrátil* offers another definition of social work. He states that

the aim of social work is a support of the client's social functioning in the situation where such need is perceived and expressed either in groups or individually. Professionally social work deals with human relationships referring to the performance of social roles. (2000: 15)

The latest definition of social work in the Czech written literature is one of *Matoušek* who points out that

Social work is a concerning social sciences discipline as well as a field of a practical activity whose aim is to reveal, explain, mitigate and solve social problems. On the one hand social work is based on the province of the social solidarity, on the other on the ideal of the filling up of an individual human potential. Social workers help individuals, families, groups and communities to achieve a competence for a social assertion or to recover it. Besides they help to create favourable social conditions for their assertion. In clients who cannot assert themselves socially any more, social work supports as worthy way of life as possible. (2003: 11)

In Slovakia *Strieženec* defined social work as follows:

The subject of social work is a synthesized generalized investigation of causes which result in social problems in individuals, groups and communities in concrete social circumstances, i.e. in economic, psychological, health, educational circumstances, in the concrete environment of the real life. (1999, p. 45)

In the discussion of social work as a science proceeding in Slovakia *Levická* defines the subject of social work as follows:

The main subject of an interest of social work is an individual, a group or a community in their everyday interaction with the society. Social work focuses on establishing causes of an individual's, groups' and communities' failure in the society and above all on possibilities of solutions of their clients' social clashes, on the possibility of an active help and development of forms and methods of work for the benefit of individuals, groups or communities in agreement of the demands of the society. (2002a: 51)

# The contribution of pedagogy to the further development of the theory and practice of social work<sup>1</sup>

Ulrich Bartosch

## Pedagogy is not suitable as a leading science for social work

Can it be taken for granted that pedagogy could contribute to the development of the theory and even the practice of social work? In the ongoing and unremittingly vehement discussion about the constitution of a social work science, the role of pedagogy is by no means indisputable. This could easily place it close to the traditional social-pedagogical paradigm. That would give it too narrow a focus on educational and personal questions, while at the same time making it seem clearly bound to academic social pedagogy.

Strictly speaking, it is the question itself that requires differentiated substantiation, before the contribution of pedagogy as a whole to this theory and practice of social work can be precisely formulated. However, I will not provide such substantiation here; I even claim that at present it is not possible to do so.

Pedagogy as such is an extremely ramified conglomerate of regional pedagogies.<sup>2</sup> Since the point when the attempt, or even the need, to formulate a General Pedagogy, became questionable, that is, since the development of a sociologically oriented science of education, there is no longer any reason for assuming that social-scientific statements are immediately derivable from pedagogical theory. Pedagogy cannot even be partially (if such a relationship were at all possible) regarded as a leading science for social work.

It seems that the theory of social work still has to be evolved. It is true that the practice of social work exists, but it is precisely due to its diversity and to the lack of an established social work science that it borrows various methods from different theoretical domains. As yet, there is no coherent and unifying theoretical process of development.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, neither pedagogy nor social work can be defined unambiguously to a sufficient degree. However, this could be regarded as the implicit presupposition of the subject-matter in hand. The problems become more similar if the question of theory is given a

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<sup>1</sup> The text is based on a paper presented at the University of Eichstätt. I am very grateful to the professor of General Pedagogy University of Passau, Professor Guido *Pollak*, for his important suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> See *Rauschenbach* (1999: 157f.)

<sup>3</sup> See Cf. *Kleve* (1999: 23): "One glance at the neighbouring disciplines of social work shows that no 'central theories' are recognisable, which could guide scientific work".

# Social Work in the sociological theories of the professions

*Emmanuel Jovelin*

## Introduction

The way we think about social life and how we express and practiced has changed a lot in the 20th Century. In the last Century we have seen the creation and development of the social professions. Social workers have tried to legitimise their actions by looking at society, which is always changing, and educating people about the work social workers do. During the development of their work they have had to try and create rules and a framework, for social work, so that it can be defined legally, socially and symbolically (Sevron & Dchemin 1983: 10). It would be inconceivable to talk about a sector as fast growing as the social sector without looking at the profession's sociology and to ask the *Flexner's* eternal question: "Is social work a profession?" (title of *Flexner* 1915)

## 1. Social work compared to "profession's" sociological theories

Profession defines who a person is, like his surname or his age. C. Dubar highlights this as one of the reason why it is difficult to define "profession" and why more than one meaning can be derived from it (Dubar & Tripiet 1998). The word "profession" (Autes 1999: 285) comes from the Latin word "profession" which means "declaration". From the Latin we get the sense of "proclamation" and "belief". In a more modern meaning, "profession" symbolises activity that is carried out regularly with the purpose of gaining remuneration. It can also mean people who have the same job and the same interests. If we use this definition there would be no difference between a profession and a job. Nevertheless the word "job" (french: *métier*) comes from the Latin "ministerium" which means service. You can deliver a service for someone or something by being a volunteer, a militant, engaged or motivated, without being paid, but feel yourself to be a member of a group of people who are doing the same. The word "job" (*métier*) seems to make more reference to manual work – thus creating a distinction: profession/intellectual - job/manual.

Nevertheless, the concept of "job" and "profession" are very similar. "Profession" refers more too social position and to status; while "job" refers to a content of activities and the method to do it. "Job" makes reference to knowledge and level of competency acquired during the course of time and experience. The type of "profession" adds to the type of "job" social consequences such as remuneration, status, standing in society and identity.

# **Leadership and Knowledge in Social Service Organizations – The mechanism of social capital in the development of the activities of an organization**

*Vuokko Niiranen*

## **Introduction**

Knowledge management and organizational learning are attractive and fashionable concepts in developing and researching work communities. What is even more interesting is the fact that it is often said that expertise attracts experts. We know that is important for the knowledge created at work and the novel insights will be transmitted from one worker to the other, between the workers' groups. By which mechanisms does this occur? What kind of leadership does this demand?

In creating knowledge and in learning anew, trust and networking are emphasised. The mechanisms through which the individual worker's expertise and networks in the work community transform into common social capital requires thorough study. The networks can open doors or they can also close them.

Most commonly, the concept social capital is linked to trust, networks and knowledge, either as an individual or collective quality. In social and health services there is a strong need for renewal and new operations models: the need for workers' ongoing learning and job development. In addition, social capital has gained as a fashionable perspective to capture the contributions of social elements in explaining a wide variety of individual and collective behaviours, from political participation to organisational success and individual well-being.

It is my intention in this article, to examine how the workers' own learning and social networks stretch - if they actually do - to common networks of work communities, and furthermore, to networks between organisations, how trust is related to it and how this will be seen as social capital. Expertise, networking and mutual trust are called, as such, the elements of social capital, but we still know very little about the mechanisms within which this occurs in various contexts. What kinds of demands are made upon human service managers?

## **The contexts of management in social services**

In Finland, the government, in other words, the state and municipalities ensure equal educational-, social- and health services for all citizens. The task of a municipality is to try to promote the welfare of the residents of the municipality and the sustainable development in its area (*Finnish Local Government Act 1995: 1§*). The municipalities

# CHALLENGES OF CHILD ORIENTATION IN CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Pirjo Pölkki

## Introduction

In many respects the bounteous Finnish society, child and youth care is under pressure. It is connected with the rising number of children and families in distress that stems from the deep economic depression that took the country by storm in the beginning of the 1990s (e.g. *Bardy, Salmi & Heino* 2001). There are also many stakeholders who have huge expectations of child welfare. Child and youth care is no longer judged on its good intentions, but more and more on its quality and effectiveness. The aim of child welfare and concern of the UN conventions on the rights of the child (under 18 years of age) is not only to minimise the danger to children but to maximise their welfare and promote their development, also when they are taken away from their birth home and placed in a foster home or elsewhere. The public as well as the employers expect high standards from child protection workers in safeguarding children, even from their parents. In the USA and Europe, there is a demand for evidence-based practice with different interpretations and emphases.

Also, child welfare services should show what works and helps their clients. There is a need to make child welfare work more systematic, visible and client-centred. The questions concerning children's position in this process and children as informants of their wellbeing and expectations have consequences also on social work research and education. According to Eileen *Munro* (2002, 1 f.), child protection inevitably involves uncertainty, ambiguity, fallibility, limited knowledge base, time pressures, conflicting values and high emotions. Predictions about child's future welfare are not conclusive. There is no definitive way of balancing the conflicting rights of parents and children. The privacy of the family and the rights of the individual adult are highly valued. Child welfare and child protection services include both support and control.

The researchers and actors in child welfare should be aware of the different meanings of the concepts child, childhood and competence of children. This has led to critical discussions and evaluations in social sciences (e.g. *Qvortrup, Bardy, Sritta and Wintersberger* 1994), psychology (e.g. *Woodhead and Foulkner* 2000) and education (e.g. *Tauriainen* 2000). The concepts such as children as subjects, participants and clients have been used and welfare services have been described, e.g. as child-centred, child-based or child oriented.

In this article, I have given preference to the concept “child-orientation”, unlike my previous work where I have highlighted the concepts “child-based child welfare” or children’s participation. Since the concept is vague, I have presented more questions than answers. On the basis of child welfare studies carried out by my colleagues, our students and me, I will analyse, with children as informants, what the challenges of child orientation are in child welfare research and education of social workers, i.e. when messages of children and children’s position are taken seriously. The study is connected with preventive childcare and the early phases of registering a child protection client. The studies and discussions illuminate if the help given to children is adequately focused and constructive.

After first presenting some features of the Finnish child welfare system I will scrutinize the findings from our longitudinal study and qualitative investigations on risk factors, support and resilience of children living in challenging life situations, e.g. in the midst of family violence or with a mentally ill parent. I will also discuss some ethical and practical aspects of research with children and consequences of child orientation on social work education.

### **Finnish welfare services for families with children in need**

Child welfare services including social work with children and families are influenced by cultural, legal, economic and political system of each country. The Nordic welfare states have been characterized e.g. by broad universal public services and citizenship rights (*Pringle* 1998). The Finnish family policy aims to create a safe environment for children to grow up in and to provide parents with the material and psychological means to have and raise children. Finland began to construct its family policy support system soon after the Second World War by introducing child allowance, which was a considerable addition to the income of families. It took almost two decades of the post-war era to revive family policy again: the slump in child allowance was improved and childcare systems were developed in the first half of the 1970s.

Since 1996, families have had unconditional entitlement to municipal daycare for their children under school age (in the seventies for small children), either in daycare centre or in a family. Parents may also receive child home care allowance if they care for their child at home. In Finland, both parents of the vast majority of families with children below school age go to work fulltime, in spite of having the right to stay at home with their under 3-year-old children or lessen their weekly working hours. There are also support services for families with children, e.g. mother-child clinics, child and family

## **Risk assessment and social work values – problems and possibilities**

*Brian Littlechild*

### **Introduction**

Concepts of Risk and of the 'risk society' (*Beck* 1992, *Giddens* 1990, 1991), have had a major impact on the practice and management of social work in the UK. Risk assessment and risk management processes are increasing features of social work practice and management.

This increased emphasis on quantifying, assessing, and managing identified risk poses challenges to traditional social work values, theories and methods. This chapter will examine the place of individual rights and how these relate to utilitarian principles in relation to partner/family rights, and the rights of those in the client's informal networks and communities, and professional and managerialist and legalistically based decision-making, where there are pressures for agencies to protect themselves in an increasingly legalistic, compensation-based system.

Such issues arising from the risk society then have to be located within social work's values base, a crucial element within the development and maintenance of social work practice. The International Federation of Social Workers draft working definition of Social Work is:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. ([www.ifsw.org](http://www.ifsw.org))

This highlights two key features for social work; the rights of individuals and the rights of others in the community and society; and social work's role in the interstitial areas where individual interact with their environments – including those others who have rights too.

Surrounding all of these matters of values are issues of how much we should rely on such approaches- not only from a rights based perspective, but also from a basis of how certain we can be of our predictive capabilities- does the validity of it in any way justify the effects there are on service users rights?

Examples of how such issues might impact upon particular practice scenarios are given, in relation to work with children at risk of abuse, and mental health service users.

# **PART 3**

## ***THEORIES***

# **THEORY OF HUMAN ACTION – Basis to Analyse Social Work Theoretically**

*Pauli Niemelä*

## **Introduction**

During the course of time there have been galaxies of variations in the answers to the question of what Man is. As elusive as the question may be, it has yearned for clarity but has never been adequately satisfied. The philosophical study of Man known as philosophical anthropology, however, provides a base for understanding to some extent Man and the concept. It conceptualises Man so that 'he' can be discussed more easily. Philosophical anthropology attempts at identifying those various problem-types that can be used to study Man. Nowadays, the basic dimensions of Man are still generally seen three-dimensionally. At the same time, the core idea is that there can be no separate existing sides of Man, without others. Thus, there is a unity in the diversity. A Finnish philosopher and psychologist Lauri *Rauhala* (1989: 22), more than others, has emphasised this trend of thought.

In this analysis, I will not harp on each dimension of Man in detail, but will give a brief overview of the theory of the concept of Man. Contrary to that, I will focus on discussing the basics of the theory of human action and structures of action. I will systematically describe what human action is and how it is constructed: What are its levels and dimensions? Finally, I will comprehensively outline, what social work is against the background of the theory of human action and how it can be analysed in this context.

My aim is to proceed with a clear respect for the crux of human sciences, i.e. the theory of human action and its significance in the theoretical study of the basics of social work. The study is an initial sketch of the systematic analysis of human action.

## **1 BASIC DIMENSIONS OF MAN – Structure of Man**

Man can realise, first, as a physical, bodily being, second, as a psychic, conscious being and, third, as a social, functional being. These three basic dimensions of Man realize in three different ways and forms. Thus, Man can realize as a natural physical being, a psychic cultural being and 'social' social being. Slightly varied terms are used, but they mean much the same. According to *Rauhala* (1989: 27), for example, the physical dimension manifests itself as body, the psychic one as consciousness and the social as situationality. At the same time, equal importance is attached to each of these existing sides of Man. In their own way, they are all equally fundamental in quality. None of them will go back to the other.

## **Decision for an Open Society – Ethics of responsibility and moral (self-) obligation**

*Claus Mühlfeld*

The project “Open Society” is not only closely linked with *Popper’s* philosophy of democracy, it also articulates in itself the draft for a concept of society determined by decision-making, as well as an ethic of discourse which refers to methodological individualism and fallibilism. A stringent division cannot be made between the methodology of (pan)critical rationalism and that of a social philosophy, since a polarisation in *Popper’s* scientific-theoretical interests and his advocacy of a concept for an open society characterised by individualism and autonomy, as well as the corresponding norm- and value systems, distort their conditional interdependencies. “*Popper’s* moral-political commitment in the sense of a person's open-minded self-determination” (*Schäfer* 1988: 90), incorporates his scientific concept of rationality, which is documented particularly and emphatically in the statements on the ‘taming of political power’, and in dealing with the phenomenon of violence. It is also worth noting that, to all intents and purposes, *Popper* connects the effectiveness of theories with the search for a better world: ‘Life is problem-solving’ (*Popper* 1989: 90), in which the instruments of the discourse on theory are put into practice.

In the reconstruction of decision-making structures and options for the ‘Open Society’ project, it is not alone the components which are critical of ideology that should be emphasised, but rather *Popper’s* statements on understanding the significance of rational argumentation, as a principle for dealing with political ideas, social regulations and the social composition of action structures, that are based on a conscious decision-making process, a decision which, according to its own perception, absolutely bears irrational features, as the rational attitude is based on a faith in reason which in itself is an irrational conclusion. *Popper* negates a dogmatic recourse to a concept of rationality and admits:

My rationalism is not dogmatic. I fully admit that I cannot rationally prove it. I frankly confess that I choose rationalism because I hate violence, and I do not deceive myself into believing that this hatred has any rational grounds. Or to put it another way, my rationalism is not self-contained, but rests on an irrational faith in the attitude of reasonableness. (p. 357)(*Popper* 1997:518)

# A spiritual dimension in social work

Mari-Anne Zahl

## Introduction

Social care has evolved from churches and monasteries over time. Applying knowledge from social sciences to solve social problems can be traced back to the 17th century but more so to the 18th century. *Saint Simon's* (1760-1825) ideas of wanting to apply science to better the social conditions for people in France are central (*Soydan* 1993). We see the idea 'from theory to practice' in action today. The interplay between theory and practice is central in social work. Professional social work heritage can briefly be said to rest on European ideas transformed by and for Europeans settling on what to them was new land in the USA, subsequently to return with new impulses. From the turn of the 20th century and onwards we see an active form of internationalization. Mobility was high. People and ideas travelled between continents and were formed by the society where they struck root.

This chapter will briefly tie religion and spirituality to social work heritage and to social work education, and open up for a discussion on the place of religion and spirituality in people's life and in social work theory and practice. Some results from an empirical international study will be referred to, focusing on Norway.

## Heritage

When we look back in history we can search for names, ideas, movements. By mentioning a few names, we can encompass all three areas: Octavia *Hill* and the Charity Organization Society, Samuel and Henriette *Barnett* and the Settlement movement at Toynbee Hall, UK (*Younghusband* 1981), Mary *Richmond* and the Charity Organization Society, and Jane *Addams* and the Settlement Movement at Hull House, USA.

These movements can be contrasted but we can also look for common components. Among these can be mentioned promoting democratic ideas, research, and reform. Democratic ideas that were underlined were participation for all and room for diversity. Research promoted insight and knowledge for understanding and developing practice. Reform was used as an instrument in changing social conditions. Another aspect found in both movements is tied to religion.

Social work is in interplay with its time related to knowledge, social problems, social policies, and financial standing. This indicates a time lag, an after-the-fact position.

# **Does Social Work need a Social Science? Arguments from the debate in the German-speaking countries<sup>1</sup>**

*Hans-Jürgen Göppner*

## **Introduction**

Social work needs scientific foundations to encounter its challenges in the modern democratic societies - there is great agreement on this all over the world. This book too is dedicated to “constructing and developing theories within social work”. Throughout the literature we can find numerous claims to scientific social work, the necessity and usefulness of “theories” and “knowledge” for practice seems to be generally accepted.

But is it enough to have “theories”? Some questions do arise, for example: What are the criteria that should be applied in selecting a theory? Or: Which theories are useful for social work? And the core question: How does social work know that it is good? It seems that the discourse about social work requires a meta-theoretical base - is a social work science the solution? Is it sufficient just to have theories or does social work need a social work science? Is it enough to have a collection of theories for it to be a science? How does one get theories relevant to practice and able to guide the practitioner’s actions?

In this contribution a) an attempt is made to make plausible the necessity of a social work science, b) arguments for doing without social work science and counterpositions are presented and c) argumentation patterns in the social work science-debate in the German-speaking countries are described which might be of use as constructive elements in the formation of a social work science.

## **Why science, are theories not enough? Or: Scientification without a social work science?**

The term science has hardly played a role in the discourse about the reflexive bases of social work (apart from the German-speaking countries in the last fifteen years): Maybe one is content to have some theories and is convinced that having theories automatically means having a science. Or one relies on the judgement of experts of practice: theories considered to be relevant for the reflexion of practice by social workers and social work academics, who “know the practice”, provide the necessary

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<sup>1</sup> This contribution is based on a cooperative research project with Juha *Hämäläinen* (Göppner/Hämäläinen 2003, 2004); the subject was “The debate about a social work science (“Sozial-arbeitswissenschaft”) in the German-speaking countries: argumentation lines and conflict areas, epistemological foundations and opportunities for development”

# Social work theory, social work dilemmas and social work in Germany

*Peter Erath*

## **Introduction**

Social work in Germany is at the moment situated not only in a tricky theoretical but also a tricky practical situation. The reason for this is that social work is struggling to present its own capability within the context of the present historical-social challenges (e.g. modernisation, globalisation, economic restraint in public services, etc.) both internally and with the public (*Erath 2002*). The consequences are not least increasing cutbacks of money and staff, conflicts within the different generations of social workers in the agencies and more and more harsh public criticism about the performance of social work practice.

The reasons for this situation can be found on one side in a general lack of ability to properly handle and communicate the inherent dilemmas contained within social work. On the other side, they may be rooted in the specific nature of German social work that has neglected a rational and transparent discussion of theories and practice, and led to a more philosophical or ideological approach. There is no doubt about the fact that Germany has to overcome both problems.

To identify the fundamental dilemmas of social work first of all a general theory of social work has to be developed (Chapter 1). On the basis of such a fundamental structure it is then possible to identify different dilemmas of, and consequences for, social work in general (Chapter 2). In chapter 3, the problems of German social work will then be discussed. An examination of European tendencies will then follow these discussions in order to identify the challenges for social work in Germany both as an academic discipline, and in practice (Chapter 4).

## **1 A general theory of social work**

The fundamental proposition for any underpinning discussions of social work, concerning different theories and examinations of practice etc, was clearly formulated by *Soydan*: social work must find "its own set of ideas and concepts" (1999: 4) and has to look for existing "traditions of thought in which we can find the roots of social work (...) as discipline and as practice" (11). According to *Soydan* social work is not only a mechanistic activity, but a reflected practice within which theories and thoughts could be interpreted as a complex attempt to understand individual or social needs and

# **Attachments**

***NOTES TO THE EDITORS***

***AND***

***NOTES TO THE AUTHORS***

## TO THE EDITORS OF THE BOOK

**Peter Erath** is Professor for Social Work Theories, teaching at the faculty for Social Work at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. He is the director of the Master's programme "Social Work in Europe" and has published widely on social work theories and methodologies, and social work management.

*Contact: Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt  
Fakultät für Soziale Arbeit (FH)  
85071 Eichstätt, Germany, Deutschland  
E-mail: peter.erath@ku-eichstaett.de*

**Brian Littlechild** is Associate Head of Department. He has published widely on youth justice, violence against staff, child protection, and vulnerable groups held by the police. His background is in practice and management within Social Services Departments and Youth Justice, and in mental health work. He is a committee member of the British Association of Social Workers.

*Contact: University of Hertfordshire  
Faculty of Health and Social Science  
College Lane  
Hatfield  
Hertfordshire AL10 9AB, England, UK  
E-mail: b.littlechild@herts.ac.uk*

**Riitta Vornanen** is Professor of social work (especially social work with children and young people). She works at the Department of Social work and social pedagogy, in University of Kuopio, Finland. Since the year 2000, she has taught in a new post-graduate education in Finland. The professional licentiate education in social work is organised by the National University Network for Education in Social work ("SOSNET"), in which six universities are represented. Her special interests in research are: children's security and well-being, social work with children and young people, security, insecurity and risks, and cooperation and organizations.

*Contact: Univerisity of Kuopio  
Department of Social work and social pedagogy  
P.O.Box 1627  
70211 Kuopio, Finland, Suomi  
E-mail: Riitta.Vornanen@uku.fi*

## TO THE AUTHORS OF THE BOOK

**Adrian Adams** is Principal Lecturer in the Department of Health and Social Welfare and Programme Director of the MSc. Interprofessional Health and Social Care and MSc.

Contact: *Canterbury Christ Church University College*  
*European Social Work*  
*Canterbury Kent CT11QU*  
*United Kingdom*  
*E-mail: ada1@cant.ac.uk*

**Ulrich Bartosch** is Professor of Pedagogy, teaching at the faculty for Social Work at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

Contact: *Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt*  
*Fakultät für Soziale Arbeit (FH)*  
*85071 Eichstätt, Germany, Deutschland*  
*E-mail: ulrich.bartosch@ku-eichstaett.de*

**Oldřich Chytil** is Director of Social Work Studies at the Medico-Social Faculty, Ostrava University, Czech Republic.

Contact: *University of Ostrava*  
*Medico-Social Faculty*  
*Syllabova 19*  
*703 00 Ostrava - Zábřeh*  
*E-mail: oldrich.chytil@osu.cz*

**Rino Fasol** is Professor of „Organization of Social Servicees“ at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Trento.

Contact: *Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale*  
*Via Verdi, 26*  
*I 38100 Trento, Italy, Italia*  
*E-mail: rino.fasol@soc.unitn.it*

**Sabina Frei** is Social Worker and Head of the section „Family“ of „Südtiroler Kinderdorf“ in Northern Italy.

**Hans-Jürgen Göppner** is Professor of Psychology and Methods of Social Science Research at the faculty of Social Work at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

Contact: *Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt*  
*Fakultät für Soziale Arbeit (FH)*  
*85071 Eichstätt, Germany, Deutschland*  
*E-mail: hans.goepfner@ku-eichstaett.de*

**Irina Grigoryeva** teaches at the Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University.

Contact: *Russia 193060*  
*St. Petersburg*  
*ul. Smolnogo 1/3, podjesd 9*  
*E-mail: dvs@mailbox.alkor.ru*

**Emmanuel Jovelin** is Professor at the Social Institute Lille-Vauban at the Catholic University of Lille.

Contact: *Catholic University of Lille  
Social Institute Lille-Vauban  
Campus St. Raphaël  
83 Bd. Vauban  
59004 Lille, France  
E-mail: gama@fupl.asso.fr*

**Inger Kraav** is Associate Professor at the University of Tartu.

Contact: *University of Tartu  
Department of General Education  
Ülikooli 18  
50090 Tartu, Estonia, Eesti  
E-mail: inger@loss.ut.ee*

**Claus Mühlfeld** is Professor of Social Pedagogy at the Faculty for Social Pedagogy, Otto-Friedrich-University in Bamberg.

Contact: *Otto-Friedrich-Universität  
Lehrstuhl für Sozialpädagogik  
96045 Bamberg, Germany, Deutschland  
E-mail: gudrun.hanft@ppp.uni-bamberg.de*

**Dana Nedělníková** is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Social Work Studies at the Medico-Social Faculty, Ostrava University, Czech Republic.

Contact: *University of Ostrava  
Medico-Social Faculty  
Syllabova 19  
703 00 Ostrava - Zábřeh  
E-mail: dana.nedelnikova@osu.cz*

**Pauli Niemelä** is Professor in Social Policy, at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at the University of Kuopio.

Contact: *University of Kuopio  
Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
P.O.Box 1627  
FIN-70211 Kuopio, Finland, Suomi  
E-mail: pauli.niemela@uku.fi*

**Vuokko Niiranen** is Professor of Social Administration and Leadership at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at the University of Kuopio.

Contact: *University of Kuopio  
Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
P.O.Box 1627  
FIN-70211 Kuopio, Finland, Suomi  
E-mail: vuokko.niiranen@uku.fi*

**Pirjo Pölkki** is Professor of Child Welfare at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at the University of Kuopio.

Contact: *University of Kuopio*  
*Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy*  
*P.O.Box 1627*  
*FIN-70211 Kuopio, Finland, Suomi*  
*E-mail: pirjo.polkki@uku.fi*

**Alice Přihodová** is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Social Work Studies at the Medico-Social Faculty, Ostrava University, Czech Republic.

Contact: *University of Ostrava*  
*Medico-Social Faculty*  
*Syllabova 19*  
*703 00 Ostrava - Zábřeh*  
*E-mail: alice.prihodova@osu.cz*

**Steven M. Shardlow** is Professor of Social Work at the University of Salford.

Contact: *University of Salford*  
*Faculty of Health and Social Care*  
*School of Community, Health Sciences and Social Care*  
*Allerton Building, Frederick Road Campus*  
*Salford*  
*Greater Manchester M6 6PU, UK*  
*E-mail: s.m.shardlow@salford.ac.uk*

**Horst Sing** is Professor of Political Science at the faculty of Social Work at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. He retired 2003.

Contact: *Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt*  
*Fakultät für Soziale Arbeit (FH)*  
*85071 Eichstätt, Germany, Deutschland*  
*E-mail: horst.sing@ku-eichstaett.de*

**Mari-Anne Zahl** is Associate Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim.

Contact: *Norwegian University of Science and Technology*  
*Department of Social Work and Health Science*  
*Dragvoll*  
*7491 Trondheim, Norway, Norge*  
*E-mail: mari.zahl@svt.ntnu.no*

**Also published by ISIS:**

- Vol. 1 **Thiele**, C.: Zur Rezeption des Empowerment-Ansatzes in Deutschland, England und den USA – Ein Vergleich. (The Reception of the Empowerment-Theory in Germany, England and the USA – A comparing study. Only in german), 2002.
- Vol. 2 **Adams**, A.: The Modernisation of Social Work Practice and Management in England. 2003.
- Vol. 3 **Erath**, P./**Littlechild**, B./**Vornanen**, R. (eds.): Social Work in Europe – Descriptions, Analysis and Theories. 2004.

To examine the state of the theoretical debate in social work in different European countries in times when the emphasis is on pragmatism and cost-effectiveness may be seen as totally distant from practice and therefore fruitless. Nevertheless, we have to consider that a meaningful contribution of social work towards human society can only be a result of the difference between its social function or contemporary attributions and its (theoretical or ideological) self –construction based on the development of its own internal history of ideas and theories.

Within this book which is dedicated to Professor Juha Hämäläinen (University of Kuopio, Finland) on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday National and European colleagues who are working and collaborating with him in different ways since many years want to reflect on the development of, and importance given to, the aspects of building up and discussing theoretical aspects of social work within the academic debate in their countries.

In getting an overview on this subject from different national perspectives – on an analytical, descriptive and theoretical level – the book will at the same time aid students and lecturers not only to familiarise themselves with common and/or diverse trends in the field of social work theories in different parts of Europe but also to recognize the importance of a theoretical debate for a better understanding of social work practice.

All contributors to this book are friends and colleagues from Juha Hämäläinen, This shows that he is not only well-known within Finland and the Nordic countries but also within the whole of Europe.