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Book review

Hämäläinen, J., Littlechild, B., Chytil, O., Šramatá, M., Jovelin, E. (eds.) (2012): *Evolution of Child Protection and Child Welfare Policies in Selected European Countries.* Ostrava: ERIS with Albert Publisher. 300, – CZK

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Due to the increasing complexity of modern society, there is a permanent need for child protection. The complexity of this issue becomes manifest in the multiple reasons for the harassment of children. Because of the country-specific ways to deal with child protection, in account of the different social, cultural, economic, and political factors, the question of how to deal with the matter in an appropriate way arises, the answer to which varies from country to country.

The book focuses on the child protection systems in various European countries with the goal of finding similarities and differences between the countries. After an introduction to the topic by the editors of the publication, the following fifteen book chapters by authors from all over Europe (Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the United Kingdom/Wales, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden) describe their country's situation concerning child protection and child welfare policies. Comparative considerations have been taken into account, due to the importance of the international comparison of the development of child welfare.

The book focuses on the meta-analysis of country-specific studies as well as comparative research on the history of child protection. Therefore, a methodological challenge is the linguistic focus, as it is not possible to translate research and theory without changing the meanings of ideas (country-specific systems, traditions, and practice of child protection and social work). There is also not always a synonym for the term of 'child protection' (e.g. child welfare, child policy, youth care) because of differing connotations in different languages and welfare systems. The diversity also has to do with the existence of different philosophies, policies, and practices due to the varying national traditions. Child protection is governed by the welfare system and the legislative system. The authors discuss the children's places in the

family and in the society. The discussion about child protection is also connected to the debate on public child care, women's employment and socio-political changes.

The focus is not only on the situation of children and families, but also on the case workers' situation. Not only the current situation, also plans for the future in the area of child protection are taken into account. Families receive support even if their children are not in risk of being abused or neglected: There are many different examples of preventive efforts towards children and also efforts related to social work with families. Social workers have to give consideration to the country-specific social, political, economic, and cultural conditions. In a comparative analysis, the various social theories of dealing with ethical, political, and educational issues of child protection and the country-specific social order in general must be taken into account. Considering the cooperation with police and courts, in some countries the main focus is on measures of control, intervention, prevention, and support in families and for children in need, for example out-of-home placement. The various ways of dealing with child protection have to comply with legal regulations, for example concerning the regulation of the consultation of multiple persons and organizations during the assessment. There is also a difference in the people included, and the way the parents are included.

The historical aspects of child protection are especially interesting in connection with the shifts of borders after the Second World War and the independence of certain countries due to the fall of the 'Iron Curtain'. The organizational forms (youth welfare authorities) are, for historical reasons, responsible for the intervention in families whose children might be in danger. In some countries, these institutions are also responsible for the supervision of families with problems in the field of child protection or for the supervision of foster families.

The ethical perspective on child protection completes the information given in the book. "The status of a child in family is determined, influenced and dependent on the status of family in society. Societal, political and cultural changes have always had a direct influence on family circumstances" (page 258). The book also focuses on children's rights as a significant harmonizing factor, due to international declarations, constructs, and socio-ethical principles imposing obligations on governments. Knowledge is also an important factor for a better understanding of the mechanism of child development.

In the book, the authors also discuss the reasons for issuing an interim measure. There are various approaches to placements away from home, and different types of placement are used in the respective contexts. There are also differences in the development and quality improvement in the field of social work with children and families. The articles show the various educational activities, such as organizing substitute family care (overview of counseling services; who is eligible for providing surrogate family care and monitor children's development in foster families), deciding on the immediate placement of a child into care placement, and other activities. There are quality standards for the handling of child maltreatment. At last, there is a critical discussion of the conditions in its own country-specific system. Significant surveys prove the statements.

The book was issued by Hämäläinen, Littlechild, Chytil, Šramatá, and Jovelin, professors for Social Work from Finland, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and France, with a long-term cross-border background and experience in their national educational system concerning the subject. The evaluation of child protection and child welfare policies in selected European countries is very interesting. The publication should be present in the bookcases of researchers, teachers, as well as trainees, both for social work and pedagogy; it is also relevant to employees of the youth welfare services.

The book is well worth reading. The publication describes and discusses that there is not one way of thinking; therefore, there are many reasons to use an idiographic approach to understand the different traditions of the systems and philosophies of child protection. The book develops a common understanding of the idea and the outlines of a European concept of social work without losing sight of the fact that it is, of course, very important to look at the context. Considering the interaction of general, psychological, educational, juridical, and medical theories, there are differences across the single countries. According to the differing laws, regulations, and historical background, the focus on the situation is different as well. Not only does the book offer insights into contemporary trends, historical issues are never neglected because they help to explain established current trends of child protection. It also shows that the presentation of the particular point of view of child protection and child welfare policies, the major challenge for social work, requires a coherent analysis of the relevant issues.

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