



## **ERIS Web Journal 2/2013**

### **Book review**

**Littlechild, B. & Roger, S. eds., 2012.** *A Handbook for Inter-Professional Practice in the Human Services: Learning to Work Together*. Pearson Education Limited.

Reviewed by: Prof. (FH) Doris Boehler, MA, Fachhochschule Vorarlberg, Department of Social and Organisational Sciences, Austria

### **Subject**

This book provides a diverse account and analysis of key issues of interprofessional work including the viewpoints of service users and carers and thus provides one of the initial books addressing various perspectives in this area.

Extensive changes in society lead to different educational needs in order to enable effective interagency and interprofessional working arrangements. This book aims to show “not only that we need to be able to work better across professional and agency boundaries for the benefit of service users and carers, but also that there are ways and means of putting in place mechanisms and skills and promoting values which will result in improved provision and outcomes in jointly provided social and health care services” (8).

### **Content**

332 pages of text provide the reader with an introduction, 3 main sections comprising of the book’s core content and a particularly useful index at the close. The three main sections cover:

Part 1: Key issues in interprofessional and interagency working in health and social care (key generic issues). This section provides an overview of the subject of interprofessional working, covering conceptual and practical aspects as well as contextual issues focussing on policy and professional aspects.

Part 2: Interprofessional and interagency working with different service-user groups: This section provides case studies and exercises to focus on and learn from with an practical application within specific areas and service users. Central issues of care versus control are discussed here including their varying application across the professions and agencies.

Part 3: Interprofessional and interagency working: This section introduces service users, carers and different professional groups from the direct perspectives of these groups themselves including, amongst others, social workers, teachers, doctors, dentists and nurses, occupational- and physio-therapists and pharmacists.

### **Critical Discussion**

Each chapter is self-contained and thus can be read and understood on an individual basis. Nevertheless the chapters are interlinked and the authors use cross-references. Each chapter uses data from a wide range of research studies and integrates the results in the analysis in order to ensure a greater depth.

Chapter 9 concerns itself with child protection, carrying the title ‘Safeguarding children and child protection’. Professional role and identity, including status issues, are outlined, followed by a detailed analysis of barriers to, and successes in, effective cooperation, training and communication in this field. A detailed case study (p. 122), including questions for discussion, demonstrates the editors’ resolve to keep the link to practice as close as possible. The authors conclude that “professional challenge lies in prioritising interagency working in child protection instead of developing additional policy or legislative frameworks to safeguard children and young people” (p. 128). This stance represents a key aspect in enhancing the importance of this publication.

Within part three, an individual chapter is dedicated to the specific professional perspective of social work to interprofessional practice. It starts by focussing on the core aspect of the clarification and the definition of social work itself. In doing so the author provides a clear link to the international theory base from IFSW as well as including the national (General Social Care Council 2008) or regional definitions such as the Scottish Government Report from 2006 (p. 262). Furthermore two complementary case studies within this chapter succeed in anchoring the theoretical aspects with everyday practice situations that highlight the scope of social work and its permanent, wide-ranging and essential collaboration with other agencies and professionals (p. 265-266).

A noticeable effort has been made by various authors to link diverse chapters together. A particular example of this involves the use of regularly occurring reflective exercises that utilise and synthesise knowledge, aspects of diverse literature and professional backgrounds that have already been referred to in the book (i.e. p. 264, box 20.2).

This publication demonstrates a high standard of design, following an easily accessible structure with a liberal use of diagrams to visualize complex issues. Some special features such as chapter summaries, learning objectives, exercises, key learning points or further reading lists make this book a very valuable resource for learning in various contexts, both within an academic context as well as in daily practice. It is written in a concise and accessible style with the goal of reaching out to a diverse readership.

An additional and more detailed section with a concluding summary of general outcomes and/or future perspectives would have been a desirable supplement. This minor critical aspect aside, this publication provides a valuable resource for its intended readership i.e. researchers, students, practitioners and (one would hope) policy-makers as well. It comes highly recommended.

### **European Relevance**

Some authors add international literature, e.g. the social work definition by IFSW/IASSW, or include aspects from international research. The majority of texts, however, focus clearly on issues and specifically the legal framework within the UK. A positive aspect involves the inclusion within most articles of all four countries in the UK; England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are all included in the analysis. This regional comparison raises the possibility of innovations that have already been established in one country being adapted and established elsewhere.

### **Contact**

Dr. Doris Boehler, MA

Fachhochschule Vorarlberg, Department of Social and Organisational Sciences, Austria

Email: [doris.boehler@fhv.at](mailto:doris.boehler@fhv.at)