Book Reviews

The Social Work Business
Harris, J. (2003) London, Routledge, £16.99, paperback, 240pp., ISBN 0415224888

The 'Social Work Business' is an analytical history of social work policy and practice of the last 30 years, charting the change in social services from a public administrative to a business oriented organisation. From the Seebohm reform which led to the creation of the modern Social Service Departments through to the second New Labour Administration (and the potential breaking up of those Departments), the author traces the 'decline' of a specifically social work dominated approach to the personal social services, as they became colonised by approaches which have had the effect of undermining the public service and equalitarian stances which informed the thinking and practice of the original generic social care departments.

The author's thesis can be stated simply: since the inauguration of the Thatcher governments in the late 1970s there has been a gradual takeover of social work as an independent profession by managerialisrn and greater state control. Social services have ceased to be profession-led organisations concerned with expanding and developing the notion of the welfare state. Instead they have been taken over by 'pseudo-capitalist' notions of markets, competition and external providers. The relationship of the management to the practitioners has undergone a radical change which is reflected in the changed organisational structures and processes in social service departments: workers are now seen as tools to deliver politically acceptable outcomes.

The first two chapters sketch the structural condition of social work and its relationship to the state and its customers at the tail end of the post-war social democratic consensus. Social work was a relatively autonomous profession which was relied on to lead the direction of the work at social service departments and to develop the policy and practice of social care. Central government might be responsible for the broad direction of travel and the legislative regime which gave substance to the work of the departments but the organisation of services and the work of social workers were left very much to professional discretion as interpreted by social workers and managers sympathetic to the social work ethos.

In chapters 3, 4 and 5 Harris takes us from the end of the era of post war consensus on social policy through to the present day, as the ethos of capitalist business organisation was introduced and embedded into social care. The political dominance of the Right for 17 years and its impact on social policy is well documented by Harris. At the core of Thatcherism the belief in the state as an inefficient provider of goods that was coupled with the belief that social spending was a drain on resources. The effect on social work was to create a managerial regime in social service departments based on a 'managers know best' nostrum coupled with rigorous adherence to working within severe budgetary constraints. The effect of this quasi-capitalist mentality on the organisation of social work was the commodification of social work processes. Clients' life situations and problems were to be classified into discrete categories amenable to managerial decisions about access to services and assessment.

The effect on the practice of social work was to bring about a separation of the processes of conception and execution. Work which had hitherto been undertaken in relative freedom and creativity became reduced to problems of technique with processes becoming more and more formalised. The creation of business oriented managers went further as front line managers who previously had been thought of as social workers *primus inter pares* became managers with budgetary responsibilities. The

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Griffith report into community care was a conscious attempt to inject management tasks into social work processes with the creation of Care Managers who assessed, bought, monitored and reviewed care services for social care clients.

Since 1997 New Labour has continued the intensification of business techniques. Instead of the users of state services being the Conservative's consumers', they have become New Labour's 'citizens'. Globalisation leads to common approaches and themes in governance: lower taxation and the end of ideologically pure approaches to state provision means a redefinition of the state's role. No longer a direct provider, the state is an enabler which views the citizen as having rights but also obligations - they must be helped to help themselves. In place of the Conservative's managerial *equipe* forcing through business regimes, the Labour modernisation process has increased the amount of central invigilation of social service's performance. Harris sketches out a franchise model for Local Authority Social Service Departments: as deliverers of services they are independent but must conform to detailed standards of operation set and enforced by the 'parent company' i.e. central government. The creation of new regulatory bodies, the imposition of Best Value, programmes such as Quality Protects in which funding is linked to the achievement of specified goals, have contributed to the sustenance of the quasi-business discourse in social work.

It is difficult now to capture the mindset of the social work profession in the early 1970's when the creation of generic, unified, family oriented social service departments were seen as the major engine of the state's desire to ameliorate social problems of family dysfunction: youth crime, child abuse, community breakdown and social anomie. Social work with its ability to see at close

quarters social problems was in a unique position to contribute to the debate on the relationship of poverty, disability and social dysfunction. Social work ideas and rationale were seen as the main driver of social service departments working methods. John Harris' book explains how social work's valuable contribution has been undermined by successive governments in their attempt to control the social care agenda. This is an insightful and valuable contribution to the debate about the role of social work and the way it is organisationally configured and controlled.

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Reconceptualising Work with 'Carers'. New Directions for Policy and Practice
Stalker, K. (ed) (2003) London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £16.95, paperback, 208pp., ISBN: 1843101181

I work in a unitary authority, managing a small, busy team providing primarily management information, performance review and strategic planning services. As a proposed member of our Carer's Strategy Group, I welcomed the opportunity to update myself on conceptual, policy and practice issues in the excellent 'Research and Practice' series. A random selection of the contents served as a timely reminder of the complexity and range of the challenges faced by policy makers, practitioners and carers.

There has been a change of focus in research over the last ten years. In the introduction and overview the editor presents the themes emerging in the (vast amount of) literature. Stalker argues for an integrated policy response to provide individualised support which aims to break the social barriers which cause disability, whilst recognising the

interdependent nature of all social relationships. These challenges are exemplified throughout the introduction, which sets the research presented in the book within the critical perspective.

The reader is provided with a detailed examination of research findings into the complex issues which need to be embedded in assessment process. In line with the series overall aims, good practice frameworks are presented throughout.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the background. Lloyd's important contribution urges a move away from by now institutional response of separating out the assessment of carers and service users. She argues that the assessment process should focus on the promotion of caring networks, which themselves are affected by diverse social changes such as labour migration. She suggests that policy which fails to take networks into account contributes to the extreme isolation experienced by some service users. The chapter also explores the limitations imposed by seeing the promotion of independence as the over-riding priority, thereby neglecting the rights-based perspectives, which promote autonomy as the goal. In her informative contribution, Susan Eley presents evidence of a much more diverse stratification of carers than has traditionally been taken into account.

The chapter by Qureshi, Arksey and Nicholas presents the national policy background and goes on to provide comprehensive and accessible components for good practice frameworks. They show how research findings suggest that assessments must take a multiplicity of factors into account and the chapter goes on to summarise common problems (such as lack of sleep for the carer), which can require a range of responses across agency boundaries. The paper covers a broad range of issues which provide the evidence base for practice development. There is also a

welcome and comprehensive discussion on effectiveness of services and outcomes. Returning to a common theme in the book - placing caring within a relationship -the authors call for the Social Care Institute for Excellence to develop models around the issues influencing assessment.

Widening the discussion, Grant's chapter challenges policy makers to provide services which boost coping, demonstrates the value of empowering the family, and provides an invaluable empowerment model for family support. Later, the concise, focused chapter by Ramcharan and Whittle on carers and employment sets the discussion on powerful employment statistics. The potential opportunities and benefits arising from the current focus on 'Work/Life Balance' are highlighted and the authors evaluate the employment policy required to support carers. As with all others chapters in the publication there is a comprehensive- reading resource provided. The chapter on 'Poor Care' provides a useful and insightful perspective on the family carer and provides an important reminder of some statistics and aspects of abuse, pointing the way to potential policy responses.

Finally, Margaret Ross addresses the complexity of the legal and ethical framework. The chapter shows how legal provision for the involvement of carers in the planning and delivery of care has now been set. Using examples drawn from both Scotland and England and Wales, the topics are varied. The potential tensions between service users and carers are comprehensively explored, for example in relation to prioritisation of direct payments by carers as oppose d to those of users who are more focused on reliable and available care. Ultimately, given this complexity, the author points the way for future research.

This is a readily accessible and essential read

for practitioners and policy workers alike. In my current role in performance and planning I was immediately drawn to those articles that explicitly addressed policy and good practice guides. However the case studies presented throughout the book helped to widen my understanding of the complex contextual background in which policy is implemented. Each article was fully referenced to support further reading. Professionally I have confidence that there exists a strong evidence base to support policy, in my case the development of outcome indicators. I envisage that this book will be a frequent source of reference for any work I do in this area over the coming year.

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Interprofessional Collaboration: from policy to practice in health and social care
Leathard, A. (ed) Hove, Brunner-Routledge, £18.99, paperback, 378pp., ISBN: 1583911766

This collection of bite size chapters seeks to provide some insight, reflection and understanding of the position of collaboration, joint working, and partnership as they apply to the fields of health and social care both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Part 1 of the book provides an effective overview of policy and interprofessional issues by Leathar followed by informative chapters on management by Engel and Gursky, ethics by Wall and the potential impact of new forms of technology by Reeves and Freeth. The last two of these, though, tend to be over reliant on health perspectives reflecting one of the major drawbacks of this book that seeks to straddle both perspectives occasions appears to have got the balance wrong. Overall the book manages an equilibrium although there are some chapters that rely too heavily on health

perspectives. A counterpoint to much of the uncritical acceptance of interprofessionalism is the chapter by Hugman which asks are we *'Going round in circles'*. This chapter documents contradictory developments in Australia where considerable attention has been paid to promoting interprofessional developments in health and social welfare at the same time as the boundaries between professions have become reformed and strengthened rather than reduced.

Part II of the book moves onto practice issues identifying case studies happening between professions, sectors and communities. These chapters are more variable in quality providing the reader with a choice of settings and boundaries. There is a useful chapter on PCT's by Glendinning and Rummery indicating that 38 per cent of social service representatives on PCT's in 2000 identified an overconcern with clinical issues and the dominance of the medical culture as a major barrier to close collaboration. They also go on to suggest that GP's are more likely to consult their colleagues as 'proxy' service users rather than ask older people themselves. Manthorpe provides a helpful chapter on service users and carers whilst Barnes reflects on the struggles of the disability movement to develop user-controlled services. Barnes argues for the need to develop a holistic approach that supersedes separate notions of health and social care and the development of a new breed of professional who is allied to the local disabled community and committed to a more holistic and flexible approach to service delivery. The Australian experience would suggest the introduction of such a worker could represent a drive more towards deprofessionalisation rather than promoting interprofessional work. Park, in his chapter on a one-stop service for homeless people, pinpoints the lessons learnt from a failed' interprofessional project identifying the barriers to working with the administrative complexities of this highly mobile group. There are also practice chapters

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on primary health care, child protection and developing services for older people.

Part III of the book examines learning together and is headed by an extremely helpful chapter by Barr on 'Unpacking Interprofessional Education'. Barr proposes 'that professions work better together when they learn together, thereby improving the quality of care for service users'. He then provides a critique of various approaches including modifying reciprocal attitudes, team-building and continuous quality improvement to suggest that no one approach has all the answers for promoting interprofessional education but put together they provide a degree of promise. This is followed by chapters about interprofessional education in Canada, Norway and Hong Kong. Interprofessional collaboration is then placed within a global perspective before being followed by Leathard's conclusion. Leathard considers that health and social care has become crucial to the development of health and social care, with the service user set as the central focus of action and endeavour and that interprofessional education sets the context of learning together for the new millennium.

Overall, the book is a readable, interesting and thoughtful contribution for managers, practitioners and researchers to the often uncritical debate on interprofessional collaboration. It also makes a worthy companion to Balloch and Taylor's (2001) work on partnership that Leathard quotes extensively in her conclusion. I am left sharing Hugmnan's concern for the development of interprofessional collaboration. He asks what incentives are there for health and social welfare professionals to move beyond their 'tribal circles' when the different professional perspectives understand and see the benefits for service users very differently and experience the attempts to weaken boundaries as economic rationalism's attack on professionalism per se?

Reference

Balloch, S. and Taylor, M. (eds) (2001) *Partnership Working: Policy and Practice*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

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Doing Research with Children and Young People
Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellet, M. and Robinson, C. (eds) (2004) Sage Publications Ltd, £18.99, paperback, 352pp., ISBN: 0761943811

This book provides the reader with a thorough understanding of the key issues that are paramount when conducting research with children. It is written by a range of well respected researchers.

The book is organised into four sections: Setting the context, Research relations, Diversity and finally Relative, evaluation and dissemination. Each chapter within these sections reflects on the authors' experiences as a researchers hence there is some degree of overlap between chapters in each section.

This book is especially beneficial in terms of its breadth of discussion on the legal, ethical and moral issues of conducting research with children and young people alongside the key methodological challenges that students and practitioners are faced with when conducting this type of research. As such the book can be regarded more as a practical handbook that can be read in portions instead of starting at the beginning and reading through to the end.

Inevitably, since the book is written by people with an academic background, jargon is used in place of clear and understandable language. This is particularly noticeable in the chapter on

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Paradigms and Philosophy, for example it is not clear to the casuusal reader what the distinction is between scientific, structuralist, interactionist and post-structuralist paradigms nor is Kuhn's view of paradigms. In fact, this chapter seems a little misplaced in relation to the other chapters as it rests on philosophical considerations as opposed to the practical considerations discussed elsewhere.

Diversity is a key term to describe how this book discusses research with children. Different age groups, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and the adult's perspective of these groups can all change how children are viewed in research. There are three chapters devoted to the different methodological challenges when conducting research with children in different age groups: Early childhood (birth to five years), Middle childhood and Young people. These chapters highlight the unique complexity of designing, implementing and disseminating research within the age groups bringing to light the importance of issues such as access, gender, consent, language, and context.

Interestingly, this book deals with both the legal and ethical issue of conducting research with children. It makes clear that whilst both are linked, the law only ensures a minimum acceptable standard whilst the aspirations of ethical practice are higher. A separate chapter is devoted to discussing each topic. The chapter on the legal context deals with issues such as parental responsibility, obtaining consent, confidentiality, data protection and preventing abuse of children. The ethics chapter discusses these issues but in more detail with respect to what *should* be conducted. It is made clear that consideration of ethical issues should be made at the outset

of a project as opposed to an inconvenient afterthought once project design and funding have been obtained. In particular, the ethics chapter deals with the issue of consent from the children and whether it is always important for the parents/head teacher to provide consent on behalf of the child.

The book finishes by an examination of the relationship between research and policy by looking at two examples of research: bullying and child employment. These two examples highlights gaps in the stark contrast of the relationship between research and policy. , bullying Rresearch into bullying has been very influential whereas, child employment research so far has not. This final chapter tries to establish the reasons why this is the case by discussing factors such as environmental stability, the level of controversy status, the level of disruption caused by any changes taking place and budget issues. Ultimately however it is difficult to pin point why research is incorporated into policy changes in some areas and not in others.

This is a useful book that could benefit researchers embarking on research with children in fields such as education, health, welfare, childhood and youth studies, psychology and sociology. A recurrent theme relates to the involvement and participation of children in research hence the title doing research *with* children not *on* children. The book focuses on practical issues and offers a number of suggestions to the complex challenges that may arise when conducting research with children.

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