

Book Reviews

Learning Disability and Social Inclusion

MacIntyre, G.

Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2008, pp.96, ISBN: 978-1-903765-83-8, £13.50, (pbk.)

One of the key questions this book seeks to address is the extent to which people with learning disabilities are experiencing greater social inclusion than previously. In the introductory chapter it is acknowledged that this is a difficult question to answer and is complicated by the fact that there is no single definition of social inclusion or exclusion. As a result, thoughts about the most effective ways to promote social inclusion vary.

In Chapter Two, MacIntyre draws attention to the fact that, although the education of children and adults with learning disabilities is increasingly taking place in mainstream settings, this does not necessarily result in greater social inclusion. Young people who have been classified as having a learning disability are less likely to leave school with qualifications. The majority are likely to go into further education where they will be channelled onto a special needs course, regardless of whether they had attended a mainstream school. Within the further education college, they are unlikely to mix with their peers and, again, are less likely to attain valued qualifications. The most likely outcome upon completion of their course is to undertake another course (the revolving door syndrome) or to take up a placement on a time-limited training or employment programme.

In Chapter Three, MacIntyre notes that both the Scottish Executive and UK government have presented a clear policy that all people with learning disabilities should have paid employment if they want it. Whilst not wishing to deny the overall value and positive aspects of employment for those

who successfully find and sustain it, MacIntyre suggests that a note of caution and realism is required when considering employment opportunities for all people with learning disabilities.

Chapter Four highlights the fact that, on the whole, people with learning disabilities experience more significant health problems than the general population and are likely to have greater unmet health needs. It is suggested that people with learning disabilities might benefit from support which enables them to take a more proactive approach to their health.

A key trend in service provision for people with learning disabilities is noted in Chapter Five. There has been a significant shift, both in policy rhetoric and within practice, which has changed the focus from the provision of relatively fixed, inflexible services towards handing control (and money) to people with learning disabilities and their families (e.g. direct payments and self-directed support). A major challenge, however, has been the continued slow implementation of all these developments. Of particular concern is the fact that service providers do not agree what social inclusion for people with learning disabilities actually means and what the best methods are for promoting it.

In the concluding chapter, MacIntyre recommends that service providers should question the objectives, goals and roles of their services for people with learning disabilities. The question is posed: "Is an intervention worthwhile if it assists a person with a learning disability into an employment situation where they are likely to continue to be marginalised, both financially and socially?" A more meaningful intervention might be to offer people with learning disabilities support to

make choices and empower them to act upon these choices.

Further, although traditional day centres are no longer regarded as an appropriate post school option for the majority of young people with learning disabilities, MacIntyre points to evidence suggesting people are being marginalised within mainstream colleges and employment settings. Thus, value must be given to a range of activities and options available to people with learning disabilities, rather than promoting unrealistic or unattainable goals. Finally, MacIntyre notes that independence should not only be understood as the ability to sustain a place at college or on a training course or the ability to hold down a paid job. Instead, independence should be about having the support to make choices about one's own life and to pursue these choices without encountering barriers.

All those responsible for policy development and the provision of services for people with learning disabilities should read this book. That will not be a difficult task given that it is only 96 pages in length and has been written with commendable clarity and objectivity. If the points of constructive criticism made by MacIntyre are taken on board, we might move to a position where we have a wider range of services for people with learning disabilities that are more imaginative and realistic. A first step would be moving to a definition of social inclusion which is more relevant and meaningful for people with learning disabilities and which is not dictated by ideological or bureaucratic considerations.

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Narrative Approaches in Play with Children

Cattanach, A.

London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008, pp.207, ISBN 978 1 84310 588 6, £18.99, (pbk.)

As a child care practitioner, I am always on the look out for books and materials that help me to communicate effectively with children. Direct work is pivotal in making assessments of children to ensure they are involved at every stage of the planning process. *Every Child Matters* (2003) spearheads an agenda for improving the lives of children through effective communication. Child care practitioners must develop skills to engage children on the child's own terms to help them meet their full potential. In this book, Ann Cattanach, a play therapist and drama therapist with many years experience of working in clinical settings, describes how her work in story telling and role play can engage children who have experienced sadness or trauma in their lives.

The first two chapters describe how to begin a therapeutic relationship with children that can be built through narrative. The author demonstrates very well that all we need is our voices and a willingness to let our imaginations roam into the child's world. Later chapters consider in more depth the experiences of past trauma for children and how these can be safely explored in the present through telling stories. There are useful reminders about child development, attachment and the impact on children of experiences such as abuse, loss, change or bereavement. Chapter Five considers children's school experience. I thought it was useful to have guidance from ChildLine and National Children's Homes on bullying and abuse in this section (pp.133-4).

The book allows the stories to take on a life of their own and I think they will give child care practitioners ideas about how to listen to, support, advocate and empower children

and young people to promote their rights and best interests. I must admit, as an English reader, it did take a while to adjust to the rhythms of the Scottish dialect, although once this adjustment took place it was all the more enriching. As the book goes on, there are other ancient stories offering the same kind of richness from all over the world. The children's stories, which are the most powerful of all, begin to dominate the text taking on a magical and increasingly dark quality. The final chapters consider the monsters in children's stories, the wicked step mothers, the dark sludgy places, the dragons and goblins and how children's stories can be weaved with ancient, old and mysterious tales that mirror their world.

The inherent theme in this work is letting the child be the guide and facilitating them to make sense of the world as they see it. Doing story work has so much potential because it honours the child and empowers them within the assessment and decision-making process. The stories present an imaginary world that can act as a starting point for collecting our own narratives for working with children. Reading them certainly triggered memories of stories that I remember from being a child. Overall, it is a straightforward book to read and take ideas from. I think this book will be very useful for hard-pressed child care practitioners wanting to increase their skills and knowledge to engage in direct work with children. I agree with the author when she urges, "So let us all learn to play with children to find out what they think and feel" (p.39).

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The Child in Mind – A Child Protection Handbook (3rd edition)

Barker, J. & Hodes, D.

London: Routledge, 2007, pp.115,

ISBN 978-0-415-42602-2, £14.99, (pbk.)

This is an excellent guide to the complexities of child protection and the challenge of risk assessing many different variables across both private and public spheres. As a social worker reading a handbook designed for health practitioners, it provides a different perspective on what has become, for me, familiar territory.

The book is very clear. It establishes the policy framework since the Climbié report, lucidly distinguishes between the signs and symptoms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and it identifies the many pitfalls associated with assessing the impact of chronic neglect on children. I found it helpful to re-visit these issues in my own work, re-evaluating decisions and interventions in past and current cases, making the book not simply informative but promoting reflective practice. I particularly liked the understanding of how practitioners have constantly to balance a recognition of mitigating factors provided by parental strengths and individual resilience, without losing sight of the vulnerability of children which demands that professionals act to protect them.

However, despite the clarity of the book there did seem to me to be a tendency to address health practitioners in terms of their role prior to a referral to social care, rather than as equal partners in implementing child protection plans. This assumes that social care would take over once the referral was made. Most child protection cases do not lead to the removal of children from their families and the focus of the plan is to promote change. This often means that aspects of a child's life may well be less than good enough, but this can be balanced by other strengths and supports in the wider setting, and this in turn is balanced in the

decision-making by the potentially damaging effects of the care system. As the book acknowledges, these are not easy judgements to make and outcomes are not predictable. It is rather about trying to create conditions in which positive outcomes are more likely within a particular family context.

There are dimensions to this work which can be especially helped by the skills and expertise of health practitioners: an understanding of attachment needs, particularly with under fives; insight into personality disorder; depression and other mental health issues; the provision of information and advice regarding ADHD or autistic spectrum disorder; and so on. There can be a fine line between supporting families struggling with these issues through child protection procedures and the difficult decision to remove children. Health practitioners can play an active and essential part throughout these interventions, often providing expert advice at crucial times, and offering containment of situations that may seem alarming from a less well-informed perspective. Multi-agency working in child protection is not just about information sharing, or recognising when thresholds are met, although this is crucial. It is also about bringing in specialist skills throughout the process in order to effect change. This is perhaps not so much a criticism of the book as a plea for constant multi-agency discussion, as roles and responsibilities in child protection can be a source of some tension, and healthy debate is always useful.

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The McDonaldization of Social Work

Dustin, D.

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007,

ISBN 978-0-7546-4639-6, £55 (hbk.)

McDonaldization is the term invented by American sociologist George Ritzer to describe what he saw as the principles of the fast food industry increasingly coming to dominate society. It involves breaking tasks down into smaller tasks to produce an efficient and logical sequence whose outcomes are predictable, controllable and quantifiable. However, he warns, this comes at a cost; the process of over rationalisation produces irrational side effects in which the rationalized system results in events or outcomes that were neither anticipated nor desired.

In the *McDonaldization of Social Work*, Donna Dustin describes how social work has been subject to this process through the introduction of care management arrangements in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. She begins by summarising the main social theories that led to the changes. This is followed by accounts of her interviews with care managers working in five London boroughs in the late 1990s. The final part of the book considers whether care management can really be termed social work and considers how social workers should act in response to the conflicts and complexities inherent in their work as care managers. There is a glossary of terms used in the book which is extremely helpful for social policy and sociology readers not familiar with social work and for social workers less familiar with social theory. The bibliography is comprehensive.

It would be a great shame if a wider audience of potential readers were deterred from reading this book partly because of its focus on social work and partly because of the comparatively long time that has elapsed since these data were collected. Some of the themes emerging from the interviews with care managers would be familiar to all

those working in social care more generally. Also, Dustin's early summary of the key texts influencing policy in the developed economies is concise and clear. It would be extremely useful to a range of undergraduate and graduate students.

This is a well-written book, deeply grounded in a commitment to improving both social work practice and service quality. Where I have some slight reservation is in Dustin's failure to clarify the extent to which some of the unintended consequences of these changes had their origins in policy decisions about the way that care management should be implemented in the UK, rather than in the system *per se*. The impact of budgetary constraints emerging through the 1990s might also have been given more attention. These, for example, often resulted in an end to devolved budgets. An example of this change is actually given in the text where it is reported that a team manager cannot authorise expenditure greater than £30. By contrast, in the mid 1990s, individual workers in some teams were permitted to arrange care packages equivalent to the cost of residential care.

One of the most interesting questions I have after reading this book is whether the introduction of personalisation will accentuate the changes that Dustin has observed or create greater autonomy for workers and people using services alike.

We are often told piously that we need to study history so that we can avoid past mistakes. By contrast, George Bernard Shaw famously said that 'we learn from history that we learn nothing from history.' In the context of the major changes taking place in Adult's and Children's Services, much would be learned from a careful reading of this book. I was left with two very vivid pictures. In the first, Dustin describes how, when she lived in New York in the 1970s, she used a laundrette in which she regularly saw a woman with mental

health problems who had been discharged from an institution. The woman had to stand naked in the corner while her one set of clothes was washing. In the second more positive example, Dustin describes how she was able to access funding so that she could give money to two parents in difficulty to buy disposable nappies for their children. These are striking reminders, both of the need for policies that help address people's everyday issues and of the care needed to ensure that changes do not simply make matters worse.

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Understanding Immigration and Refugee Policy: Contradictions and Continuities

Sales, R.

*Bristol: Policy Press, 2007, pp.296,
ISBN 9781861344519, £19.99, (pbk.)*

In the wake of the decision by the UK government to open its labour market to the eight Eastern European countries that joined the European Union in 2004 (the so-called A8 countries), policy debates and public opinion have increasingly focused on the economic and social impact of immigration. Advocates of freedom of movement for EU citizens explicitly focus on the economic benefits of immigration. The social impact of immigration, on the other hand, is usually seen negatively. Within this intensifying debate about the social consequences of immigration, Liam Byrne, the Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, recently set out the 'progressive case for controlled immigration'. The result, as Rosemary Sales' closely researched account suggests, is that talk of 'managed migration' fuels the public perception that immigrants and refugees place a significant strain on public spending and service provision, as well as on social cohesion and community engagement.

Against this background, *Understanding Immigration and Refugee Policy* provides a timely and compendious corrective to the contemporary 'common-sense' view that immigration controls are politically and ethically justifiable. In attempting to make the argument that abolition of controls can impact positively on social cohesion and civic identity, Sales eschews the doctrinal for a more nuanced and critically engaged approach, which draws explicitly on post-national and democratic models of citizenship.

The book is divided into two substantive sections. The first aims to outline global trends in migratory movements and theory while the second is concerned with understanding immigration policy specifically within the British context. In trying to comprehend the complexity and interplay between global forces and the national context, the book cogently argues that, to grasp contemporary migratory flows and strategies in a meaningful and effective way, we need to look *between* individualist and structuralist approaches and integrate the meso-level - that is the critical role that social networks and migrant institutions assume in the 'immigrant experience' - more fully into our explanatory accounts.

Reasoned, rigorous and riveting, *Understanding Immigration and Refugee Policy* is a valuable textbook for students, researchers, policymakers and practitioners of international migration, social policy and welfare. It is a collection that will primarily appeal to an academic audience, particularly undergraduate and postgraduate students, and would certainly sit comfortably on an introductory reading list. Drawing on a wide range of contemporary policy debates combined with historical analysis, it is a key reference point for understanding the development of immigration and asylum policy, its contradictions and continuities. In doing so, it outlines landmark legislative change and shows how, under New Labour, asylum policy has become increasingly

punitive and ill-liberal. The historical detail of this book is therefore to be welcomed, and indeed, by bringing together such a comprehensive review of the development of British immigration policy in one publication, it makes an important contribution to the literature. More broadly, the book goes on to integrate successfully secondary sources with primary research, thus enabling the reader to view migrants as social beings whose experience is conditioned by both individual choice and impersonal social forces. Each chapter concludes with a condensed and extremely accessible summary and accompanying list of questions for discussion.

Against the prevailing tide of anti-immigrant rhetoric and populist posturing, *Understanding Immigration and Refugee Policy* skilfully and economically illustrates how contemporary immigration policy is fundamentally concerned with strategies of inclusion and exclusion. Paradoxically, there were moments for me when the book felt too thin and temperate to challenge the visceral hostility to immigrants, reflected in the current rise of the BNP and the fevered efforts to control migration. Nevertheless, it is clear that, in a political climate where public attitudes are often as misinformed as they are deeply held, this contribution will be of great interest to all those committed to upholding and extending the values of cultural diversity and social justice.

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