

(De)Institutionalisation of Education and Social Care

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Description

The institutionalisation of education and care is a characteristic of modern society. In its current form, it has been shaped historically in the process of nation building as a part of public education and public social services. Thus, institutionalisation refers to specific forms of the arrangement of education and social pedagogy, which includes *legalisation*, *organisation* and *professionalisation* as main characteristics. This is how institutions shape pedagogical as well as practices of care and individual lives.

For the fields of education and social pedagogy / social work, the history of institutionalisation is told as a global story of unbroken success. This narration refers to pedagogical institutions as guarantors of social integration and political participation. This is reflected in a massive expansion of institutions in the fields of education and care over the course of the 20th century (Baker 2014) and an increasing spread and diversification of welfare systems (Pugh & Gould 2000). As critical scholars to the field point out, in this narrative of institutionalisation, global inequalities and dependencies related to the shape and scope of education and social work are often not taken into account.

Yet, also within state systems the development of pedagogical institutions is characterised by ruptures, transformations and persistent critiques. As Abramowitz (2012) argues for social work, and Kumashiro (2012) as well as Taylor (2022) show for particular fields of education, neoliberal programs questioned the relevance of state engagement and intervention in the fields of education and social pedagogy / social work, which might lead to changes in accessibility of services or even create creeping deinstitutionalisation. Besides this, the history of pedagogical institutions has been accompanied by multiple critics of the specific forms of practice and organisation. This includes historical struggles against political programs, such as compulsory schooling (Rincón-Gallardo 2019) as well as concrete critiques expressed by social movements, such as the movement for deinstitutionalisation in psychiatry (Warner 1989).

Taking this into account, the historical process of institutionalisation can not only be understood as a story of constitution – or even as a story of progress, but as a process of ongoing ambivalences and contradictions. It is repeatedly confronted with fundamental objections and attempts for an alternative organisation and practice. Therefore, not only

institutionalisation, but the tension between institutionalisation, deinstitutionalisation and reinstitutionalisation, as mentioned by Breger/Luckmann for instance, proves to be fundamental. The complexities and contradictions of institutionalisation in the fields of education and care have to be understood referring to the multiple conditions of its production. Empirical as well as historical analysis in this fields are called to understand the differences between the fields and also between countries, regions and cities seriously. Historical developments of certain institutions should be taken into account in their social, political and discursive construction. The contributions to the current SW&S.Special issue shed light on these dynamics of De-/Institutionalisation by discussing recent developments in diverse fields of education and care in different national frameworks.

Based on a broader European perspective, *Ingo Bode* (Kassel / GER) discusses processes of *deinstitutionalisation* in the context of an ongoing institutionalisation of child empowerment programs in Western Europe. Even though child empowerment is discussed as a “transversal agenda in contemporary Europe” based on various forms of education and care, Bode argues that funding cuts, barriers in the accessibility, logics of marketisation and not at least new forms of control and the political program of activation indicate a process of deinstitutionalisation of child empowerment programs. The paradoxical dynamic is seen to create a fragmentation of accessibility to child empowerment programs by social class in the light of current developments of the welfare state in Western Europe.

In the field of disability policy and practice *Griet Roets, Matthias Remmery, Simon Allemeersch, Toon Benoot, Dries Cautreels* and *Rudi Roose* (Gent / B) discuss deinstitutionalisation as an ongoing normative orientation and program. The authors reconstruct historical developments of social work with disabled people showing, how the pattern of care emerges and vanishes throughout European welfare systems. Focusing the case of Flanders in Belgium they demonstrating how different demands for deinstitutionalisation lead to ambivalent approaches of community orientation.

The contribution of *Christian Reutlinger* (St. Gallen / CH) is directed to the field of youth work and introduces de-/institutionalisation as an ordinary practice. Reutlinger argues on the empirical basis of a case study of a particular youth center in Switzerland that openness and institutionalisation act as a tension. Recalling historical roots of development of youth work in Germany and Switzerland during the second half of the 20th century, he introduces the concept of openness as a crucial pedagogical aspect. The paper reconstructs the history of the urban youth center in its various developmental stages showing contradictions between its institutionalisation in the particular city and environment and the concept of openness to young people’s interests and activities. Therefore, deinstitutionalisation in relation to time and space of a certain youth work is discussed as a necessary strategy to keep openness alive.

The argument of *Sascha Neumann* (Tübingen / GER) ist based on the assumption that the institutionalisation of childhood is defined as a “concept for theorising childhood and analysing the social position of children in modern societies”. Nevertheless institutionalisation is often defined only as an institutionalisation of education, not at least of childhood in schools. Neumann argues that both understandings should be differentiated and the relations between the two dimensions of institutionalisation should be focused. Therefore the author discusses these relations on an empirical basis of two studies: one on the participation in early childhood education in Switzerland and one on the influence of COVID-19 on children’s and adolescents’ school experience and subjective well-being in an international research perspective. Summarising the findings, Neumann can show more in

detail how institutionalisation of education is a relevant moment of childhood and vice versa, but not the same.

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