

New perspectives on social work through European projects and intercultural learning in the context of this study

Abstract:

The problems of children, teenagers and families as the result of tendencies to social poverty in the social and health sectors, as discussed in this publication, cannot be seen as isolated from national concerns, but they occur at the same time, in a European context. In the future we will need to take national constitutions into consideration when we compare the conditions and methods of social work in practice and before we can take on "best practice" models. Such an exchange should take place above all in the employment sector or through job enrichment training. Yet here, the everyday job reality often creates limitations. Better possibilities for international exchange exist in the University study framework provided by social work and social education. European and bi-national enrichment programs support intercultural learning and international encounters between lecturers and students. One example is a European exchange in the context of two intensive programs on the theme of "Excluded People in Europe": universities from ten different countries participated. Through a French-German project on "child protection", intercultural learning processes took place and changed the approaches and perspectives of future social workers and social pedagogues.

Key terms: social exclusion, child protection, intercultural learning, university networks, European job perspectives and approaches in social work.

Introduction and formulating the problem

The problems of children, teenagers and families as the result of tendencies to social poverty in the social and health sectors, as discussed in this publication, can not be seen as isolated from national concerns, but they occur at the same time, in a European context. In the future we will need to take national constitutions into consideration when we compare the conditions and methods of social work in practice and before we can take on "best practice" models. Such an exchange should take place above all in the employment sector or through job enrichment training. Yet here, the everyday job reality often creates limitations. Better possibilities for international exchange exist in the University study framework provided by social work and social education. European and bi-national enrichment programs support intercultural learning and international encounters between lecturers and students. One example is a European exchange in the context of two intensive programs on the theme of "Excluded People in Europe": universities from ten different countries participated. Through a French-German project on

"child protection", intercultural learning processes took place and changed the approaches and perspectives of future social workers and social pedagogues.

Approaches to intercultural learning

The globalisation of social movements and politico-economic practices has caused theoretical change in the perception and analysis of these processes. Social and language scholars are developing new concepts for the observation, explanation and planning of inter- and intra-cultural interaction.

As a result of these cultural differences, one can-not use a simple sender-receiver model to communicate content (mostly through language). If misunderstandings or mistakes occur in the conveyed information and its content, interpretation will take place using concepts and experiences from one's own cultural background, which can lead to fundamental communication problems.

Every person has their own history, life and culture (including geography, ethnicity, morality, ethic, religion, politics, history) and thus a cultural belonging or identity. In the interaction between people, this means both people from other cultural circles, continents or countries and those from other enterprises, the other sex or from a minority group (e.g. subcultures); even within the same family different cultural values can apply (Bude, Irina: Theorie der interkulturellen Kommunikation. Die Eroberung der Göttingen, Frankfurt/Main, 2002).

Important pre-requisites for a successful intercultural communication are sensibility and self-confidence, understanding for other ways of behaviour and thinking and also the ability to convey one's own point of view well, to be understood and respected, to show flexibility where possible and to know where it is necessary.

One must develop a balance according to the situation between:

- ✓ Knowledge and experience which concerns other cultures, people, nations, ways of behaviour etc;
- ✓ Being able to put yourself in the others' position, empathy and understanding the feelings and needs of others;
- ✓ Self-confidence, self-awareness, knowledge of one's own strengths, weaknesses and needs, emotional stability.

Through the development of intercultural competence, one develops the capability to communicate successfully with people from other cultural circles, more precisely, the capability to interact with people from another culture in a way that satisfies both sides. The development or learning process is called intercultural learning. The fundament for successful intercultural communication is emotional competence and intercultural sensibility.

A person is inter-culturally competent when, in working together with people from a culture foreign to them, they understand their specific way of seeing the world, their thinking, feelings and actions. Earlier experiences are referred to and built upon free of prejudice, readiness to learn is foremost (Hecht-El Minschawi, Beatrice: Interkulturelle

Kompetenz- for a better understanding. Schlüsselfaktoren für internationale Zusammenarbeit. Weinheim, 2003).

Intercultural learning is the name for a form of social learning with the goal of intercultural competence. The goals of intercultural learning are:

- ✓ A self-aware and critical approach to stereotypes;
- ✓ An increase in acceptance of other cultures;
- ✓ Overcoming ethnic egotism;
- ✓ An understanding of one's own cultural biases and bond to a specific culture;
- ✓ An understanding for what is foreign for successful communication and co-operation with people from other cultures.

Intercultural training is characteristic of the method, intercultural learning. A classification of such trainings which has stood the test of time (Gudykunst, William B.; Hammer, Mitchell R.: Basic training design: approaches of intercultural training. In: Landis, D: Handbook of Intercultural Training, 1983: 118-154) differentiates between the content of culturally general and culturally specific trainings and therefore orders the processes as informative or interactive. They suggest four types of training with the following contents and methods:

- ✓ Culturally comprehensive and informative trainings (e.g.) - seminars on intercultural communication theory, cultural anthropology and comparative psychology, working on case studies;
- ✓ Culturally specific and informative trainings (e.g.) - foreign language lessons, culturally specific seminars on history, everyday life and changing values in a particular culture, working on case studies;
- ✓ culturally comprehensive and interaction-oriented trainings (e.g.) - bi-cultural communication workshops, simulations, role-plays in aid of intercultural sensibility;
- ✓ Culturally specific interaction oriented training (e.g.) - bi-cultural communication workshops, culture specific simulations, sensitivity training.

The training goals that focus on *Eine Welt der Vielfalt* (*a world of variety*) are set to reflect on one's own cultural socialisation, to meet cultural socialisation openly, to experience differences as enrichment, to inspect one's own values and recognise one's own prejudices, to recognise the negative result of prejudices and discrimination, to develop empathy and the ability to put oneself in the other's position, to see prejudice and discrimination from the perspective of the minority, and to develop behaviour that works against discrimination and racism (Bertelsmannstiftung, Forschergruppe Jugend und Europa (Ed.), *Eine Welt der Vielfalt*, Gütersloh, 2004). The multinational and bi-national programs described in sections five and six fall under types three and four of intercultural training.

European enrichment programs

The development, enrichment and unification of people and cultures are specific concerns of international politics. The European Union has set up its own apparatus to encourage the mobility of students in Europe in the tertiary and academic area. In this way, possibilities for intercultural learning have been opened up in all of Europe and even in Turkey. In the context of the ERASMUS program, specific to tertiary education, students can receive financial contributions for a one to two semester University exchange in most European countries. Through the introduction of a "European University Charter", to which the participating Universities in the ERASMUS Program need to apply, students are guaranteed the accreditation of their study abroad and the quality of the courses. In the context of the ERASMUS Program, the mobility of lecturers, the development of European modules and networks are promoted. Placements abroad during study and as an entrance to a profession are subsidised by the LEONARDO Program.

The Universities which take part in the ERASMUS Program are required to register as co-operating institutions and attend bilateral yearly agreements about planned activities. Aid and support for co-operation with Universities abroad is provided by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which at the same time acts as a national agent in the ERASMUS Program and co-ordinates German activities (www.daad.de).

The exchange or dispatch of lecturers and professors is just as important as the exchange of students and graduates (even when similar group sizes can not be attained). Whereas international research contacts (symposia, congresses) and visits abroad (projects or sabbatical) can be relatively easily attained, mobility and co-operation in teaching is considerably more difficult. This is due to different university systems as well as to the widespread tendency to see teaching duties as compulsory and not as voluntary.

The mobility of lecturers must therefore be promoted in different ways. In Germany, for example, through university partnerships, of which in 2002 over 15,000 co-operations were officially registered. Or with the assistance of the SOCRATES-/ERASMUS Programs of the European Union: in 2001, 2000 German university lecturers made a one-to two-week visit to a university abroad.

In addition, further programs exist in Germany such as the support of long-term lecturers for teaching positions at universities abroad in the whole world, which last longer than six months but less than five years. Institutional goals are often connected to these exchanges e.g. the development of study and research programs at the university abroad.

In contrast, short-term lecturers are for at least four weeks and at the most six months. Universities abroad can invite particularly qualified German scholars to a teaching visit, to present special subjects or to illustrate interdisciplinary connections. The host university should make a suitable financial contribution, the rest of the costs are covered by the DAAD. Whether short or long-term: all participating universities profit from these tenures, the host as well as the sending university. These teaching positions promote the reputation of German scholarship abroad and provide German scholars with rich experiences in a foreign country which benefit the German universities. In addition,

there is a variety of further programs e.g. which also support foreign lecturers in Germany, which receive no further mention here.

European network “Social Work Training” (EuroNST)

The idea of a network for social work is directed at improving the quality of study programs abroad for the students of the degree social work/ social education at the Evangelische Fachhochschule Berlin(EFB) – Protestant University of Applied Sciences Berlin. In the network, existing university partners of the EFB are compiled and new partners are integrated. The original goals of the network were:

- ✓ a fixed program for exchange students and EFB students,
- ✓ seminars in English,
- ✓ a particular number of guest lecturers and students,
- ✓ modest financial support for visits abroad,
- ✓ the support of theses on this theme,
- ✓ an annual meeting of all partners,
- ✓ recognition of the visit abroad at the home university,
- ✓ regular information events for the interested,
- ✓ the integration of all courses,
- ✓ extension to all possible European countries.

A survey was organised to gauge the readiness of students from the degrees social work/ social education. Approximately a third of the students (189) took part and the following results were reported:

- Three-quarters of the students questioned could imagine studying a semester abroad, for the most part only when their results were accredited.
- In the same way they were prepared to take part in seminars in English abroad as well as at the Evangelische Fachhochschule, although they described their own language ability as intermediate.
- Just over half of the students questioned were prepared to take on partnership with a foreign student.
- An international perspective was seen overwhelmingly as important in view of personal career chances as well as profile building.

Both goal setting and the results of the survey led to the development of a model which became the fundament of a declaration of intention. This was signed by the twelve universities which participated in the founding celebration in May 2003. The following Universities joined the network:

Table 1
Universities participated in the network

Belgium	Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen
Germany	Evangelische Fachhochschule Berlin Protestant University of Applied Sciences Berlin
Estonia	Pärnu College, University Tartu
Finland	Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences
Great Britain	Stockport College of Higher Education
Lithuania	Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas
Netherlands	Christelijke Hogeschool Ede
Norway	Stavanger University College
Austria	FH-Campus Wien
Poland	Jagiellonian University Krakow
Sweden	University Linköping
Switzerland	Lucerne University of Social Work

Source: Author's analysis.

The main activity of the network is the goal-oriented exchange of students. The students should spend an exchange semester at one of the partner universities. The planning model assumed ten students per university. The participating universities should make sure that:

- ✓ the students don't have to study for longer because of the exchange,
- ✓ all courses attended abroad are accredited at the home university by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS),
- ✓ English seminars are offered in basic courses in social work such as e.g. psychology, politics, social management, social rights, education, sociology, social education and pedagogic media,
- ✓ accompanying language courses in the language of the host land as well as further offers to improve the technical English of the foreign student should be organised.

When possible, all foreign students who belong to the network should take part in a preparatory lecture that is hosted by a partner university of the network in rotation. The preparatory course should be based on a European theme and help the student to establish first contacts.

All activities of the network are carried out in a decentralised way and organised individually by the partner universities. Every university designates a co-ordinator who looks after the internal demands of the network and at the same time maintains contact with the other partners. Each university produces a list of their seminars in English and makes it available to their partners. A central publication on the net on a common homepage would be desirable.

Every partner school develops its own criteria for selecting students who are allowed to take part in a study program abroad. They are responsible for ensuring that the students are regularly informed about the activities of the network.

Every university develops a special theme to assist the students in choosing their university abroad. Regular evaluations ensure the quality of the available programs. In addition, the participating universities support excursions into the countries of the partner universities in order to interest more students in a semester abroad through the network.

The participating universities support the exchange of lecturers and offer them organisational assistance in preparing their teaching position. In the same way, the universities support their foreign students in finding orientation in their new surroundings and offer them accompanying cultural events.

In addition, before the arrival of the exchange students, the university makes an effort to establish contact with student organisations and where possible identifies partners who can be of help in the first phase of integration at the host university.

All universities are themselves responsible for the costs that arise inside the network, in particular for language courses and accompanying theory-practice seminars. Financial support can be secured from the European Union for the preparation of the seminars. In addition, the partners make an effort to raise additional financing for network activities. (Preiss-Allesch, Dagmar, Bedeutung der internationalen Netzworkebildung für eine Fachhochschule. In: Preiss-Allesch, D.; Ptak, H.: Forum Gesundheit und Soziales, Heft 1/2006, Berlin, 71-77).

In how far has this very ambitious model been actualised up to this point? In March 2004, the Pärnu College in Estonia applied to the EU for an "intensive program". Out of the network partners, eight universities participated by sending a letter of intent with the application. The first intensive program was carried out in April 2005 in Estonia. Each participating university sent four students and one lecturer. The group worked together for ten days on the theme "excluded people in Europe". The project was launched in March 2006 at the EFB, the third part was organised by the Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen in early 2007 in Belgian. The University of Applied Sciences of Seinäjoki in Finland intends to follow up by applying for a further three year intensive program. In the context of this program, European intercultural learning is to occur. The students learn much about approaches, structures and methods in social work in other European countries. In addition, they forge friendships and lasting contact with students from other

European countries. The participating lecturers develop into a co-operative group through intensive preparatory and planning processes as well as through the content and educational accompaniment of the seminars. This in particular contributes to the development and reinforcement of the network.

Intensive program „Excluded People in Europe“

In this program solutions to reduce social exclusion in our society should be discussed and worked out. The goal of the program was to compare social work, politics and employment sectors designed to cope with the reduction of social exclusion from different European countries. A major aim was to develop critical, multicultural thinking in both lecturers and students.

Intensive programs are being applied for through the European Commission in Brussels and will have a maximal duration of three years. The Pärnu College of the University Tartu in Estland was organiser and responsible for the application for the first round in April of 2005. The succeeding programs took place at in March of 2006 at the Evangelischen Fachhochschule Berlin and in March of 2007 at the Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen in Belgian. The following universities took part in the program:

- ✓ *Pärnu College, University of Tartu, Estonia*
- ✓ *Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland*
- ✓ *Protestant University of Applied Sciences Berlin , Germany*
- ✓ *Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen, Belgium*
- ✓ *Linköping University, Sweden*
- ✓ *Stockport College of Further and Higher Education, Great Britain*
- ✓ *University of Applied Sciences of Central Switzerland – Switzerland*
- ✓ *Stavanger University, Norway*
- ✓ *Jagiellonian University Krakow, Poland*

Four to five students and one to two lecturers from each participating university took part. The participating lecturers discussed and organised the program together. At every stage preparatory meetings and evaluations took place. In addition, the lecturers offered seminars on particular themes and led group work. Short meetings of the lecturers took place every day in order to analyse learning progress and decide upon last-moment program changes according to the dynamic and progress of the group.

Specific criteria were applied in the selection of the students who all came from social work degree programs: duration of study (preferably second or third) year, knowledge of English, motivation and engagement, experience abroad, and University grades. These criteria were laid down after the first round in Estonia, since it became apparent that the students' expectations were, in part, very heterogeneous. Participation in the program was practically voluntary, since the individual universities had different curricula. However, it was possible during the next two rounds to acknowledge their participation through the awarding of study credits.

In the context of the first intensive program in Estonia, different cases of exclusion in particular countries were analysed in group work. In this way, the participants needed to consider differences to their home country and at the same time think about why these differences existed.

„All work has organized from the approach that students could participate as much as possible. During the IP there were four lectures, six workshops and trainings, six case works (SLEPT-model), two days for presentations and two days for study visits in Pärnu and in Tartu. That kind of organisational approach gave enough freedom for students to share their knowledges and experiences with others. At the same time teachers gave information, supervised their work and internal group processes which was a very important part of the IP. During the IP, there were certain timetables and schedules but at the same time remained flexible. These ten days were very intensive for all participants in formal and informal way, supporting multicultural and critical thinking. Work in lectures, workshops and study visits gave strong input for further formal discussion in case studies and informal (sometimes even deeper) discussion about social work in different countries” (Liina Käär, report of 1st IP in Estonia, Pärnu 2005).

The evaluation provided important and valuable information on the benefits and failures of the IP: organisation, content, issues etc. The main responses from the students were:

- ✓ “organization of the IP was great, everything worked well,
- ✓ attitudes changed after the IP,
- ✓ social life was as important as was working during the IP,
- ✓ the program was very intensive, sometimes even too intensive to concentrate all the time,
- ✓ very strong and important learning moments from each other,
- ✓ understanding that countries, problems and social work are different in different countries in Europe,
- ✓ understanding that learning and teaching methods are different in different universities,
- ✓ understanding that multicultural working and thinking are important to see the local problems from other affective perspectives” (cf. Liina Käär, 2005).

The first IP gave an overview and introduction to the subject of social exclusion. During the second IP in Berlin 2006, the main topic focused on special groups of social exclusion such as old people, migrants, young people and people with mental handicaps or learning disabilities. In order to foster intercultural learning, a different country was responsible every day for delivering language animation by presenting some key words of their own language. The following table presents the schedule of the Intensive Program in Berlin.

Table 2
The schedule of the Intensive Program in Berlin

Day 1 (22/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction – who we are and where from we come. • National presentation – each country presented their country and social situation (20 minutes per country). • Quiz – 5 questions from each country which helped to elicit more interesting information about different people and traditions from participating countries. • Welcome party: every country presented their national food and habits; getting to know people from other countries.
Day 2 (23/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language animation – Germany. • Lecture “Welfare systems”. • Seminar “Cultural differences”. • Discussion in home groups “What kind of welfare system is in our country and how is it different from other systems? What kind of cultural differences have influence on social work and how it is in my home country?”
Day 3 (24/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language animation – Belgium. • Lecture “SLEPT-model” (model for analyzing social problems). • Seminars.
Day 4 (25/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language animation – United Kingdom. • Seminar and lecture about social work model ESMA in Switzerland. • Introduction to the projects which visited on March 27 and March 29. • Lecture “Violence. Problems with violence in homes in Estonia”. • Group work on home violence, violence at school and violence against children. Moderated by Estonian students.
Day 5 (26/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language animation – Sweden, Norway. • Interim evaluation. Discussion of experiences working and living in a multicultural environment, what has been learnt and what are the expectations for next days. • Cultural events: city tour, sightseeing and introduction to local culture.
Day 6 (27/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting the projects. All participants are divided into groups and visit two different institutions during the day.
Day 7 (28/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language animation – Estonia, Finland • Lecture “Violence and how does it appear in family life?” • Seminar and group work - case study.
Day 8 (29/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting the projects. All participants are divided into groups and visit two different institutions during the day.
Day 9 (30/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language animation – Switzerland. • Lecture “Learning disabilities” (Norwegian teacher). • Presentation and seminar “Disabled people in Poland” (Polish students).

Day 10 (31/03/06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture and seminar “Disabled people in Sweden” (Swedish teacher). • Evaluation of project visits during the IP program, exchange of experiences. • Evaluation of the IP – topics, schedule, accommodation and subsistence and all other organisational aspects, exchange of experiences and opinions. • Discussion on the topic “What we have learnt about other cultures, other countries social problems and other countries social work practice (social work traditions, social work education based on students experience and social work practice)
----------------------	---

The evaluation of the program took place during the IP project in the form that all teachers and students evaluated with grades how they worked together in a multicultural context, how they understood different cultures, which different views they had on exclusion and how it was different from their home country’s problems. Students and teachers discussed all grades together during lunch or at the evening activities. Thus it was possible to surmount the difficulty that in a formal context not everybody is open to exchange their experiences. They are later free from classroom limits and ready to discuss problems related to different welfare systems.

Teacher evaluation during the IP and in the follow-up meeting was important. The main questions were: what did they learn from the group process? From each other? From lectures, workshops and case studies? How did they see differences between teaching, studying and learning styles? These questions were important to understand the multicultural learning and working environment and to find positive and negative aspects.

The last evaluation in the IP was a common meeting between students and teachers to evaluate the IP from different aspects: the organisation, content and work processes. The results were discussed in the follow up meeting (cf. Liina Käär, 2005).

During the IP courses, it was an innovation for students to work in groups by themselves without the lecturers’ leadership. Lecturers observed the group processes and the students’ work, but did not intervene. The students could decide how fast and how deeply to work on different topics and cases. Students’ feedback was revealed in two aspects. On one hand, dealing with different cases without the intervention of lecturers who already have social work experience was seen positively. On the other hand, students needed external support from time to time to work more deeply and effectively with cases. “Generally, the opinion prevailed that work experience in multicultural context is very necessary for all students and also should be part of social work teaching programs” (cf. Liina Käär, 2005).

During the IP preparation time, all partners had to fulfil the following tasks:

- ✓ to bring and present national food,
- ✓ to prepare a presentation of their country and its social problems,
- ✓ to prepare language animation to compare different languages and cultural issues,

- ✓ to prepare students for working in multicultural context with topics related to social exclusion.

The third part of the program took place in Belgium over ten days in March 2007. The leading question was "How to overcome social exclusion with the tools and methods of social work". To solve this question, a new organizational model was introduced, based on problem-orientated learning. Students visited a social institution on the first day. They got a problem or question from the institution and worked on a solution for the duration of the IP in multi-national groups. At the end of the IP, they presented the outcome of their work to the whole group and the social institution. The working process was accompanied by theoretical inputs from different lecturers and additional visits to social institutions. Output from the whole project included web pages (www.pc.ut.ee/epe), teaching materials, evaluation materials and lecturers' contributions, students' evaluation and contributions.

Three different tools were used in evaluation: observation, discussion and a questionnaire. In interim and final evaluation the most important criteria were:

- ✓ living conditions,
- ✓ group processes and communication skills in the intercultural setting,
- ✓ what students have learned and how they understand the topics,
- ✓ how to use knowledge which was obtained during IP lectures, lessons and workshops,
- ✓ the whole process of IP,
- ✓ the spin-off of IP.

Evaluation took place during the IP program and all lecturers participated in this observation and discussion. The lecturers from Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences were responsible for the questionnaires and their analysis.

The dissemination of the project was planned on four levels:

1. all partners collected implementation possibilities from the perspective of their partner,
2. all partners were requested to submit an implementation plan on a partner level,
3. all partners were requested to draw up a social field implementation plan,
4. all partners were asked to make local implementation arrangements.

"It is noticed that students who have participated in some kind of program or project which gives a multicultural learning experience are more innovative and open for discussions and new solutions for social problems. (These notes are based on Estonian students from Pärnu College, University of Tartu)" (cf. Liina Käär, 2005).

German-French Program „Child protection“

The bi-national model was financed by the German-French youth welfare, in cooperation with the University of Grenoble, the University of Applied Sciences Mittweida (Saxony) and the Evangelische Fachhochschule Berlin. The central theme was: „The endangerment of the child's well-being in the family. A comparison of different concepts

of social and family politics and the practice of work with families.” In the context of a preparatory meeting of the lecturers, the following goals should be attained:

- ✓ reciprocal introductions of the participants and their professional backgrounds,
- ✓ the different education systems in France and Germany,
- ✓ comparison of understanding of concepts and the institutions which are active in the area of child welfare endangerment and child protection.

At the first common seminar in November 2006 in Grenoble, it was intended that schematic presentations of the education degrees from Grenoble, Berlin and Mittweida enable comparisons.

In the course of the discussions it became apparent that the systematic outline of concepts and interventions only became comprehensible for national comparison when specific historical development in law and politics and the mediation between state responsibility, social organisation and family in the twentieth century was reconstructed. Gerda Simons’ article, that also appears in this publication, comes from this context.

Through the difficulties in agreeing upon central categories for “child endangerment”, it became clear that there were fundamental differences in approach, discourse and intervention. Among other things, there were concepts which were not able to be translated, which, however, reflected key concepts suited to decoding the entire historical and cultural context and specific legitimation and interaction frameworks. This becomes clear through some examples.

As a question of systematic, “to help” in the German system means “help” and “involvement” at the same time; indicative is also the concept of subsidisation as preference for private solutions (both private and public providers), in the French system, the concept of „autorité parentale“ and the regulations regarding “enfant en danger” and “enfant en risque”.

“Parenting” means according to French civil law “parental authority” in the sense of rights and duties. This legal category is based primarily on an anthropological constellation (principles of genealogy and filiations) and is still related to the civic and social position of the citizen. Parental authority arises from a responsibility for health, security, morality, child-raising and protection of the child. These point to the restriction of the mandate to co-parenting.

The differences should become clear through an example of a case study. Through this, the problem arises of how someone can formulate a case study culturally and legally “neutrally”. The lecturers agreed that there was a tendency to orientate around family competences and resources. The newer concepts of reciprocity in arranging assistance, the concept of voluntary co-operation and the positioning of the client as user can be seen in their ambivalence! It is important to balance comparable developments with incomparable developments and evaluate exemplary innovative practices.

Underlying the discourses and innovations, a different pressure to change is brought to bear through economisation, re-privatisation etc. Delegation on the regional level is followed by reduced economical security and therefore results in the masked retreat of the countries from the responsibility for securing against risks. In contrast to the

opening of encrusted structures in the sense that they are better able to be reached by clients, a continuing process of deconstruction of the public aid takes place behind the back of youth welfare's political transformations.

In contrast to the qualification of social services for child protection through innovation and professionalism, "need" is rising because both countries can noticeably no longer guarantee basic life security as standard and as necessary to a welfare state. The discourse of modernisation and professionalism contributes to cover this disparity and this instead of privatising a socio-political publication.

The three participating universities developed a common task in a preparatory meeting: a better understanding of the chances and limitations of measures undertaken in pursuit of child protection in France and Germany. Differences should be worked out through intercultural comparisons and a better understanding of the contemporary youth welfare landscape in both lands should arise on the basis of historical backgrounds. In addition, both a common view of new challenges in the context of development within Europe and also a social and youth welfare political curriculum should develop. Out of these, a common program was developed that was oriented on newly arising questions and interests. This program was put into practice in Grenoble and Berlin by the responsible university lecturers in close co-operation with groups of students.

The second week in Berlin in January 2007 was launched with a summary of the results and impressions from the week in Grenoble in November 2006. The program in the Evangelische Fachhochschule Berlin contained both seminars and a podium on systematic and lines of development in Germany as well as new answers to pressing problematical situations in France. The selection of institutions was designed to show work in major institutions as well as further development in private and public institutions.

The week in Berlin included the following events:

Monday, 15.01

- ✓ Introduction to the week.
- ✓ Summary of the French and German results: looking back at the presentation of leading questions.
- ✓ Speech: concepts of interaction with parents.
- ✓ Results/conclusion of the key experiences in Grenoble.

Tuesday, 16.01 morning: visiting projects

- ✓ Legal office Pakow/Weissensee.
- ✓ Youth welfare office Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf.
- ✓ Youth emergency Services Berlin.

Afternoon

- ✓ Group work on the visited projects.
- ✓ Presentations and discussions in a forum.

Wednesday morning 17.01 (Presentations)

- ✓ Methods and practice in family work.
- ✓ (How does the family present itself today, how in history, how in cultures?)
- ✓ Which roles do children today have, here, elsewhere?
- ✓ Which function do old people have today, here, elsewhere?

- ✓ Which rights and duties to parents have today, here, elsewhere?
- ✓ Current formulations from the co-operation of university with youth welfare institutions).
- ✓ Discussion of the German-French perspective.

Thursday 18.01 morning:

- ✓ Wadzek foundation, pedagogical healing centre, children's home.
- ✓ The child as focus, social therapeutic help for sexually abused children and their families.
- ✓ Joint without monitors, ProMax.
- ✓ Children's Protection Centre.

Afternoon:

- ✓ Group work on the project visits
- ✓ Discussion in plenum

Friday 19.01:

- ✓ Podium discussion with practitioners (representatives of the youth welfare, public and private institutions).
- ✓ "Child Protection in Germany".
- ✓ Open debate: "Balancing lines of development in youth welfare's political and socio-political perspective."

Saturday 20.01:

- ✓ Safeguarding of the new perspectives on one's own and foreign youth welfare systems; new reflection on the professional standpoint of social work, an innovative common view of demands and perspectives of the globalisation of Europe; further tasks and questions for the following function.
- ✓ Evaluation in small mixed groups, forum.

In preparation for each meeting, the students were informed and involved (placement experiences) and became more sensitive to the endangerment of child welfare. They also took part in the organisation of the project visits and in looking after the incoming participants. In both function weeks, faculty specific talks were organised which firstly dealt with key concepts, legal and institutional general conditions and then outlined methodical approaches. Parallel to this, there were accompanied practice visits, reflection in bi-national groups, culture-specific and common reflection in aid of widening perspectives and developing an understanding of one's own and foreign practices.

Agreement over key concepts allowed delving into the different discourses which guide concepts and measures for child protection in both countries. All functions and practice visits took place bilingually or were translated, as well as being professionally accompanied and evaluated in small groups. At appropriate times, language animation was incorporated into the practice visits and functions – it had particular weight in group discussion.

In individual groups, in the public talks and running discussions, time and space was allowed for reciprocal understanding to encourage sharpened attention and openness for the interests of the others through their communications and the standpoints and

professional approaches that are evident in them. A desire to increasingly communicate in the other's language grew through this.

Both function weeks were accompanied by the group of university lecturers and they secured the quality of student participation and the approaches contributed by them. All results were outlined and commemorated in bilingual wall newspapers. At the end of each function week there was an evaluation.

Chances and limits of the intercultural exchanges in this area:

- ✓ A new level of problem awareness arose through explanations. These involved fundamental concepts in one's own practice and measures in one's historical and current spectrum. The limits of current practice could be more easily and more offensively recognised.
- ✓ Capabilities, the wish and curiosity to observe one's own field from a broader perspective and in this way better situate others in a European frame.
- ✓ The historical and systematic-reflective situating in the frame of a self-critical, collegial encounter contributed to this.
- ✓ The practice visits and the student work groups were particularly helpful. In addition, discussion among the participants was named to be particularly important.

From this first exchange, wishes and themes for further work arose:

- ✓ A repetition of the function using the experiences gained,
- ✓ A continuation with new and more discriminating questions,
- ✓ A repetition/continuation with new themes.

The organisation of the new/third function should be led and organised by the University of Applied Sciences Mittweida, Faculty of Social Work.

Conclusions

Two different models of intercultural learning were presented in this paper: an approach to intercultural, interaction-oriented trainings (multicultural) and an approach to culturally specific, interaction-oriented trainings (bicultural). Both approaches attain different goals. Whilst the multicultural approach enables one to get to know different nations and their social and welfare systems and imparts a wide understanding of different cultural orientations, the variety involved means that insights gained remain relatively superficial. Through the bi-national program, a deeper understanding of social and cultural differences between the lands was cultivated. There is common ground in goal setting for intercultural learning: cultural differences and similarities should be made accessible, prejudices should be made visible, reflected upon and finally dispensed with. The common learning process was often the beginning of long-term friendships, which were maintained through private meetings and email contact. For many students, participation in an international seminar was an alternative to a semester or placement abroad – also on the basis of economic pressures.

In both models, opinions and viewpoints could be changed or widened. One's "own" could, in comparison and interaction with "others" or "foreigners", be newly reflected upon, analysed and changed. The deficits of or advances in one's own social system could, through comparison with another national system, be put into a wider perspective and enriched through other experiences and models (critical, multicultural thinking). It was noticed that students who participated in a project or programme which provided a multicultural learning experience, were more innovative and open to discussions and new solutions for social problems. In view of Europe's increasing integration, important key qualifications for future social workers can be developed in this way in a European social space.

References:

Bertelsmannstiftung, Forschergruppe Jugend und Europa (Ed.), Eine Welt der Vielfalt, Gütersloh, 2004.

Buche, I.: Theorie der interkulturellen Kommunikation. Die Eroberung der Göttinnen. Frankfurt am Main, 2002.

Minshawi Hecht-El B.: *Interkulturelle Kompetenz - For a Better Understanding. Schlüsselfaktoren für internationale Zusammenarbeit.* Weinheim, 2003.

Gudykunst, W.B.; Hammer, M.R.; Basic training design: approaches of intercultural training, /In:/ Landis, D.: Handbook of Intercultural Training, 1983, p.118-154.

Käär, L., report of 1st IP in Estonia, Pärnu, 2005.

Preiss-Allesch, D., Bedeutung der internationalen Netzwerkbildung für eine Fachhochschule, /In:/ Preiss-Allesch, D.; Ptak, H.: Forum Gesundheit und Soziales, Heft 1/2006, Berlin, p. 71-77.

Web pages:

www.pc.ut.ee/epe

www.daad.de