

The **child care worker**

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NACCW

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS
IS AN INDEPENDENT NON-RACIAL ORGANISATION
WHICH PROVIDES THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND INFRASTRUCTURE
TO IMPROVE STANDARDS OF CARE AND TREATMENT
FOR CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS



Fédération Internationale des Communautés Éducatives
International Federation of Educative Communities (UNESCO)



Association Internationale des Educateurs de Jeunes Inadaptés
International Association of Workers with Troubled Children

As training opportunities grow in South Africa, German child care workers **Mario Biel** and **Monica Waivenegger** give us an insight into the past development of training and registration in their country

The Education of Child Care Workers in West Germany

Visiting several programmes, we, as child care workers from Germany, have the impression that there are strong differences in some aspects of child care work between countries. Many child care workers express their need for education, and their interest in training and education in Germany. We appreciate this opportunity to give you an idea about the education of child care workers in Germany.

Child care work is generally involved in several fields. These include: residential treatment for emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded and physically handicapped children, day care, youth centres, counselling and preschool.

Because we work in residential treatment for kids with emotional and behavioural problems, we will describe the education in this special field as an example.

There are principally three different kinds of education: 1. State Registered Child Care Worker; 2. Graduated Social Pedagogue, and 3. Diplom-Pedagogue.

State Registered Child Care Worker

Before you go to the special school for social pedagogics (social pedagogics deal with all people with deficient or deviant socialisation), you need one year of practice in child care after the tenth grade of school or you go for two years to the preparation school after the ninth grade. In the preparation school there are courses in general education as well as in nursing, cooking, food planning, handicrafts, arts and music.

After that, you can go the special school for pedagogics where basic theory is offered in the following courses: psychology, pedagogics, didactics (educational methods), sociology and youth jurisdiction. In the other courses you learn skills and practice them with children. These

courses include: youth literature, painting, musical education, rhythmic, gymnastics and guided playing.

To obtain experience in these skills you will spend one day a week, plus a six week placement period, in a child care centre.

There, you observe and assist child care workers. After this, you will work for one year as an assistant child care worker under the supervision of the training school. During this time you will have a primary child for whom you must write an observation report, a treatment plan and a developmental report, as well as daily reports of your activities with the kids. The final examination consists of written, oral and practice tests. After successful completion of these tests, you will obtain a license and the title of *State Registered Child Care Worker*.

With this occupation you are generally an on-line child care worker. This means that you are responsible for daily treatment and interaction with the kids of one group. You also have to provide dates and observations for different reports, and work out treatment plans. Often you will have to supervise practising students.

Graduated Social Pedagogue

To go to this special college you must have graduated from ninth grade or be a state registered child care worker, and you then go through a half-year preparation course.

The special college will teach you practical skills as well as a more differentiated theoretical background. There are no courses in nursing, manual instruction and painting. The practical skills are focused more on therapeutic approaches, group dynamics, rhythmic and gymnastics.

The theoretical courses include: therapeutic theory, special aspects of psychology, specific behaviour patterns, observation

techniques, working on treatment plans and community and family work. Additional courses can be taken in youth jurisdiction, administration and self-awareness. You can also choose among different courses and specialize in one aspect of child care such as behaviour modification or family therapy.

In your specialised field you have to complete your one-year practice and write a thesis of 50 pages that should combine your theoretical knowledge with your experience in the field. After an oral and written examination you receive your degree as a *Social Pedagogue*.

Diplom-Pedagogue

This is the university education for which you must have graduated from the thirteenth grade. It is divided into two parts. The first part covers three years, and provides courses in educational science, psychology, sociology, political aspects of child care, socialisation and family structures. These courses consider the extent to which individual behaviour patterns are a result of structures in the society and whether they reflect implicit norms and values. After these two years you must pass an oral and written pre-examination.

After that, you specialise in a field like residential treatment. The required courses are now in subjects like deficient socialisation, psychology of cognition, education and awareness, analysis of institutions, methodology and theories of science.

Besides the required courses, there are specialised courses you can choose from for your own field, like special therapeutic approaches, adult education, group dynamics, practical skills like role-playing and observation techniques. Participation in one's self-awareness training is recommended. Because many of these courses are on a highly theoretical level, there are other courses which are more directly applicable to the daily work experience. These are combined with a six-month practicum in the field in which you specialise.

After five years of study you are required to write a scientific thesis of 100 pages and pass written and oral examinations. Then you are a *Diplom-pedagogue*.

Diplom-Pedagogues often become programme directors, supervisors who do programme development, team and programme co-ordinators and teachers in special schools and colleges and in the continuing education field.

These are the planned roles, for all three occupations. In reality there are variations. Diplom-pedagogues may work as on-line child care workers, while graduates from the special school may become supervisors after some years of experience.

Continuing Education

For the continuing education of child care workers (including social pedagogues and diplom-pedagogues) there is one government-sponsored training centre in each state. Also, the four main child welfare leagues have their own centres, and there are some private ones. In all of these places you can participate in workshops of two to fourteen days, or additional courses of study lasting from one to three years. According to regulations, all child care workers should receive five days of paid continuing education each year, however about one-half of the employing agencies do not yet comply.

We hope this brief description gives you an idea about the educational system of child care work in West Germany. We also want to note that the establishment of these schools and professions has been a very important step towards more equality with psychologists, psychiatrists and administrators, as well as contributing to our own identity as child care workers.

[Child Care Work in Focus]



DAVE HARTLEY

What do we need in our work with young people in difficulty?
Chris Smith of Cape Town's Teen Centre offers some suggestions.

Working with Troubled Children

When you choose to become involved in the life of a troubled young person, you are embarking on an emotional roller coaster ride — frustration, satisfaction, dismay, anger, humour, joy, sorrow. At times you will say "I don't need this kind of frustration". On other occasions, however, you will feel the warm satisfaction of helping a youngster find meaning in his life and in his world — helping him change his life for the better.

Stopping to help

A helpful illustration from the Bible is that about a Samaritan who stops to help a man on the Jericho road. (Luke 10: 25 - 37) The Samaritan saw the man lying on the roadside beaten, robbed, bleeding and dying. He looked down and thought "If I do not help that man, what will happen to him?"

There must have been all kinds of answers to that question. Even more important questions penetrated his thoughts: "If I do not help him what will happen to me?" What happened to the people who passed by on the other side of the road? What will happen to how I feel about myself, to my dignity, pride and self-respect if I choose to pass by on the other side of the road. The focus shifts from the one in trouble to the one who might help. Child care workers must be people who are prepared to stop and help, to get involved and not pass by on the other side of the road.

Skills for helping

Sometimes we all feel that we don't have the skills or abilities to help troubled children. We feel that their problems are so difficult and complex that we wonder how we can even begin to help. In some

cases this is true and a more skilled treatment programme is required — more, perhaps, than we can offer at our own children's home.

All of our youngsters at Teen Centre require personal attention — a caring relationship with people who care about them. And just about everyone has that ability.

Staff can benefit from these:

1. Relationship building skills, so that mutual respect can be achieved.

2. Helping skills, helping young people solve their own problems. Troubled children sometimes spend too much energy in trying to solve problems which have no solutions. If a problem has no solution it's not a problem!

3. Sharing your faith, introducing a young person to the values of the Christian faith

4. Teaching life skills, assisting any adolescent in a wide range of areas, e.g., decision-making, getting a job, caring for his body, values, self-esteem, coping with pressures, sexuality.

Everyone has a unique mix of talents, gifts and abilities.

None of us will have all of these skills perfected beyond the need for improvement. Keep learning new skills.

Being ourselves

Who we are is more important to troubled children than what we know (or what we think we know!) Most adolescents will take notice of what we do rather than what we say. Here are some qualities we all need in this work:

1. *Commitment. Are you willing to commit yourself to short term relationships with young people?*

Most troubled children will require a period of time really experiencing such a relationship before any significant pro-

gress is made.

2. *Do you have a genuine interest in young people, not just in their problems?*

It's easy to forget that we are working with real, flesh-and-blood people, and not just case histories. While we might want to hide behind the theories, the situation that our troubled children find themselves in is very real to them.

3. *Are you willing to suffer setbacks and discouragement?*

There are times when you will do everything you can imagine to help a troubled child, only to have him fail to respond — much less reach your expectations.

4. *Are you willing to become involved in the total life of this person?*

Are you interested in his school, hobbies, health, sports, etc? As soon as you become concerned about a child's school, health, sports, etc., you will meet other adults who have invaluable insight into his functioning. Reaching out to troubled children must be a team effort.

5. *Are you prepared for defeat?*

Defeats can occur. Unfortunately not every troubled child is willing to change or will even get to the point where they see the need to change. This can be discouraging.

6. *Do you recognise your own limitations?*

No one is perfect. We all have limitations. Don't act as though you have no weaknesses and that you know all the answers. To be effective you must identify your limitations and work in your areas of strength.

7. *Can you make every effort to understand the situation the troubled child finds himself in without being judgemental?*

If you start by passing judgement, you will lose. Its diffi-

cult sometimes not to let your immediate response be judgemental.

8. *Are you willing to be inconvenienced?*

Troubled children are not "organised" and their problems cannot be neatly scheduled. Often you will have to adjust to their development process (not your time-table) to meet their needs or help in crises. The times you often have to work with troubled children are unsociable hours — which involve evenings and times you'd rather be doing something else.

9. *Are you willing to give rather more than you get?*

The financial package you receive will generally not enable you to buy the smartest GTI model motor car, or to spend your next holiday overseas.

In our work with troubled children, we must ask ourselves: Are we ready to become a caring person for a child from a different background, with different values and with critical needs? Are we willing to get involved, like the good Samaritan, to start the necessary treatment and development programme — and to see that it is completed?

There may be a troubled child out there who can't afford to have you do anything less!

Some Do's and Don't's

When assisting children to develop or regain the skills they need to realise their full potential and enable them to function within the community, the staff team must work together.

The following are some of the management skills which we need to adopt:

DO

1. *Plan and prepare.* Plan your time. Know what you want to achieve each day. Poor planning leads to excessive stress and poor performance.

2. *Keep to the structure.* The structure is designed both for the children and the staff.

3. *Explain the structure to the children.* They can participate when they know what's going on.

4. *Act normally and confidently.* Don't try to be anything except yourself.

5. *Be sensitive to the needs of your children.* Every interaction is a two-way exchange.

6. *Encourage and praise* your children when appropriate. When they do well, tell them.
7. *Handle problems in a firm, unexcited manner.* You are the one who is expected to bring reason to their confusion.
8. *Insist when essential,* but avoid pig-headedness.
9. *Communicate with your team members.* You are stronger when you are aware of your colleagues behind you.
10. *Keep your head.* Keep asking "What is happening here? What would be most helpful?"
11. *Be alert to what is going on around you.* You are the manager of the helping environment. You can head off problems when you see them developing.
12. *Care for your children.* It is the foundation of child care work. Children are less volatile and frustrated when they feel cared for.
13. *Always try to improve your performance.* Keep reviewing your own work, ask yourself: what worked, what didn't work, how can I do that better next time?
14. *Keep your sense of humour.* It is balm for your soul, and for all who live with you.

DON'T

1. *Don't bribe for right behaviour.* We want the kids to learn to motivate themselves.
2. *Don't evade problems.* Face them, and remember that you are often modelling for the

youngsters new and more mature ways of dealing with problems.

3. *Don't create unnecessary conflict.* It's no good to win the battle — and lose the war.
4. *Don't escalate minor incidents.* The direction we aim for is towards calmness, safety and and self-control.
5. *Don't lose control.* Often you are all we have out there. If you feel yourself losing it, go for back-up.
6. *Don't expect to be "liked".* Remember that dentists help children, but children don't always like dentists.
7. *Don't promise more than you can deliver.* They've had enough disappointment. We are trying to help youngsters manage to live in the real world. Tell them up front what they might expect.
8. *Don't over-react.* You are meant to be showing the way rational adults behave.
9. *Don't think you are always right.* Expect to learn new things each day alongside the kids.
10. *Don't be easily manipulated.* We need to help the children to develop realistic negotiating and coping skills.
11. *Don't be one of the "boys".* The kids have enough pals; now they need a friend.
12. *Don't sanction physical peer group pressure.* That way youngsters learn all the wrong lessons, and we all move back into the jungle. ■

Social Worker

A children's home requires the services of a registered bilingual social worker with at least 2 years experience. Competitive salary and usual fringe benefits. Please phone (011) 827 5732/3/4 during office hours or Fax your CV to the above number.

Child Care Staff

Modern children's home has vacancy for bilingual, matriculated lady, between 25 and 50 with a valid driver's licence, to live in and assist with the care of a family unit of 8 children and provide physical and emotional care. If married, husband continues in present employment. Fringe benefits include optional pension and medical aid scheme and generous leave benefits.

Contact o/h (011) 827 5732/3/4

Children in AFRICA

Judith Matloff writes in the *Monitor* of our near neighbours and of the unimaginable impact of war on children

Legacy of War

The woman from Angola's Ministry of Social Assistance stood in the ruins of the city of Cuito and asked, bewildered, how to deal with the legions of children traumatized by war.

Nearby, a gang of homeless orphans aggressively begged foreign-aid workers for money to buy drinks.

Two small children playing on top of rubble that was once a house pelted each other with mock grenades. Others skipped gingerly down the main street, where unexploded mortars protruded from houses.

"We have a severe lack of resources and expertise to deal with the problems of trauma," Evangelista Chamale, the ministry official responsible for children's affairs, said. "It's something we've never dealt with before. If you have any suggestions, please let us know."

Angola's children are the bitter harvest of 20 years of a civil war driven in large part by cold war, big-power rivalry; millions are displaced, orphaned, or emotionally disturbed. Countless have been forced to join either the government or National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebel armies. They were rounded up at markets and streets, and guns were thrust into their small hands.

Priorities

The country's oil wealth mainly goes toward buying weaponry. The task of looking after the children generally lies with international organizations, whose priorities are attending to emergency physical needs.



ROBERT HARRISON

"First we have to stave off hunger and epidemics," said Africare official Pedro Siloka. "Only then can we attend to shattered psyches." Cuito was the scene of the worst battle in the war. Children made up more than half of the 30,000 killed in a nine-month siege. Boys as young as 8 fought defending the city. They learned to sleep to the sound of relentless artillery fire. Many buried their parents. Some were forced to kill them. Signs of post-traumatic stress are etched on the impassive faces of children at a refugee camp three miles away in the village of Cunje. In the tent that serves as an orphanage, an Angolan teacher tries to mobilize two dozen youngsters to sing. But most sit silently. Especially withdrawn is a girl of perhaps 3 who can only say one word Teresa — her name.

She was found clinging to the breast of her dead mother in a field full of people shot by UNITA rebels while foraging for food. The children who do talk speak almost emotionlessly about the horrors they have experienced. Fifteen-year-old Geraldo, who wears a T-shirt with the word "LIFE" says his nightmares are not just of massacres past, but of a bleak future. He is the oldest survivor of a big extended family. He cradles in his arms a little sister, whom he must support along with two other siblings. He has no skills, no home. Next year he will be too old to receive help in the orphanage.