



Leseprobe aus Frampton, European and International Social Work, ISBN 978-3-7799-3963-4

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Introduction

The somewhat unusual book you are holding in your hands is designed to help you develop European and international perspectives on our social work profession. If it achieves this goal, even if part, you will experience a valuable broadening of your academic and professional horizons. However, in the interest of honesty, it must be noted this textbook has various possible shortcomings. You may prefer to ignore these, and jump straight into chapter 1: feel free to do so. However, for those interested, let us proceed by listing a selection of objections to a book such as this one.

It could be argued that the subject of the book is too broad for one slim volume such as this, and is therefore only covered in a sketchy, introductory manner. The book attempts to integrate two actually quite separate areas, comparative European social work and international social work. The topics in this book are currently considered relatively unimportant in German social work, and some would claim, do not merit a book such as this. Some too will assert that the topic, European and international social work, does not have an adequate conceptual foundation in the literature. Many of this book's chapters are extremely compact and deal with questions that really need to be discussed in more depth than is possible here. There is considerable simplification of some of the issues raised in this book, and this occasionally verges on oversimplification. Some will find that too much space in the book is spent seeking precise definitions of the various terms and concepts discussed.

The level of the book will be the subject of further objections. The book is targeted at undergraduate level, whereas many would argue that the subject is more suited to graduate level study. The book has a partly German title, but is written in English. The writing style of this book is easy to read and the text is packed with simple exercises which students can complete independently; this has little to do with the classic German scholarly approaches to such a textbook. There are not enough literature references for some tastes, and there are perhaps too many references to material in other media, such as film and photography.

One last potential shortcoming of the book should be mentioned separately. In this text, the topic is frequently approached from an Anglocentric, Germanocentric, or otherwise Eurocentric perspective. In this sense, the book, despite its title, is not truly international.

Shortly we will investigate these objections one by one, but let us first briefly consider who this book is intended for. The targeted readership is best understood by considering the internationality of social work students in Germany today. Looking at the social work student population at German universities

(both the research universities and the polytechnic colleges), we notice three highly interesting student groups.

Firstly, social work attracts a number of regular students of non-German nationality. These students are attending lectures in German and using the German literature their lecturers recommend. However, such students are typically mindful that there are other, quite separate literature bases for the discipline, namely that in one of the other languages they speak: be it English, Spanish, or Arabic, for instance. These students have an awareness of how Germany-focused their German social work studies are, and an interest in compensating for this.

Alongside such students who have already lived in Germany and mastered the German language, a second international group is visible. This second group comprises international exchange students. These students may not speak much German. They are in Germany to complete an exchange semester or two, perhaps via Erasmus+ or another bilateral agreement. At their home university, social work may be their subject of study, although some come from countries without well-established undergraduate social work training. At their German host university, these students will have a range of social work and social welfare courses taught in English to choose from. These courses make up an international study programme for one semester. Such students often have a need for at least one internationally-focused course, to systematically investigate and problematise the national orientation of the rest of their studies. Such a course is designed to inspire them to apply their German learning to social work in the context of their own and other cultures.

A third particular group of social work students are those who simply have a strong personal interest in foreign cultures, travel, and languages. Many German students have spent time abroad. It is not unusual for young people to complete a school year abroad, or a gap year of volunteering, before commencing their studies. The exciting possibilities for mobility during studies (such as an Erasmus+ exchange semester at a foreign university, or a practice placement abroad) will reinforce such interests. These students will be aware too that there are different social work professions in different places, and they will jump at the chance to attend courses with an international theme, taught in English.

It is for these three groups of students that this book has been written. This text had been specifically put together to support exchange in German social work and the internationalisation of German social work degrees. Some readers will be using this book as a course text, for a module they are completing, in English, at a German university. Others will use it for self-learning, to compensate for the international dimension lacking in their own social work studies. If the book is used during a course, the particular mixture of students (migrant, exchange, and native German) offers an exciting possibility for a rich exchange of ideas, with multiple viewpoints being integrated in class discussions. In the

spirit of Freire (1996, originally 1970), learners become teachers, as they bring their own unique experiences and knowledge to the lesson. In such a dialogue, the teacher becomes more of a facilitator than an instructor: a provider of perspectives and resources. For all of these students, the book has a simple set of objectives. It should help in contextualising their thinking; it should introduce fresh and powerful ideas, offering non-German perspectives for practice; and it should draw attention to a distinct and stimulating body of thematically linked global social work literature with a clear character: internationalist, critical, and highly political.

Considering this book's readership in this way clarifies the content of this text. We can tentatively suggest a curriculum for a course on European and international social work, a curriculum which the contents of this book follow. In chapter 1 the book begins in the only possible starting place: the global definition of social work (IFSW and IASSW 2014). This definition includes the ideas of human rights, social development, social work theory, and social justice, which we return to in depth, in separate later chapters. Chapter 2 though addresses a separate question, the question of defining international social work. Comparative perspectives are then the central theme of the next group of chapters. Chapter 3 is a basic introduction to comparative social work, whereas chapter 4 examines social protection systems comparatively (for Europeans understood in terms of the welfare state). This forms a background for considering the diversity of social work internationally in more detail in chapter 5. Although international in its focus, this book is written for use in Germany, a country in the heart of Europe, and European perspectives (in particular the critical European social work of Walter Lorenz) are dealt with in chapter 6. In contrast, the following chapters, chapters 7, 8, and 9, take a broader perspective, dealing with human rights, globalisation, and migration in turn. These are global themes rather than European ones.

A key issue in the international social work literature is the question of transferring social work from the Global North to the Global South, our topic in chapter 10. The concept of social development is a valuable aid in the project of creating an authentic social work in the countries of the Global South, so is considered in chapter 11. We then return to European or Western perspectives in the final three chapters, considering European discourses on child protection in chapter 12, Anglo-Saxon social work theory in chapter 13, and neoliberalism and social work in chapter 14. This final topic raises important social work questions, and leads us back to the idea of social justice. Promoting a critical social work to foster social justice is thus the closing topic of the book, bringing us full circle. The progressive global definition of social work agreed upon by the international social work community (discussed in chapter 1), as well as the critical perspectives on social work in Europe (considered in chapter 6) both naturally lead in this direction.

We are now in a position to return to the numerous objections raised above. Let us investigate these one by one. In doing so, we also have an opportunity to consider the book's learning objectives in more depth.

The first objection was that this book is extremely slim, but its subject matter extremely broad. This is a serious objection. The topic of international social work alone fills handbooks the size of a brick, many times larger than this short introductory volume. Compared to the in-depth coverage of such handbooks, a short text such as this one can do little other than offer an overview of the subject with references for interesting further learning opportunities. In other words, this book is intended as an orientation, and as a brief introduction, not as an authoritative and detailed guide to the field. It is inspired by the concept of the travel guide: sketching the contexts of an unfamiliar territory, and drawing attention to its exotic highlights. Like a travel guide, it is incomplete in itself: you have to go there, to the place in question. You have to investigate the recommendations, and make your own impressions. Regarding the book's dual subject (both comparative European social work *and* international social work) we observe that these are indeed two separate topics that could be treated separately. Nonetheless, as will be demonstrated in the upcoming chapters, these two topics overlap enough to be considered together.

What can we say about the importance of European social work and international social work in our country, Germany? The current neglect of these topics is quite striking when seen from a non-German perspective. It is interesting to consider German academics' changing engagement with international social work traditions (see in particular Erath 2012, in German). Early 20th century German social work showed internationalist roots, and the post-war period saw this international orientation continue. Despite this, and despite the growing opportunities for internationalisation, during the last few decades German social work has exhibited a relative insularity. This self-reference could be viewed as a healthy tendency: the German profession is celebrating its national development, and considering its activities from a localist perspective. However, the marginalised status of German social work authors internationally (one or two exceptions notwithstanding), and the lack of contributions of international authors to German discourses must be viewed as a missed opportunity.

Fortunately, although German authors are underrepresented in the international social work scene, they are strongly represented in the European social work literature. For the Anglophone world, European social work is unmistakably linked to the pioneering work of Walter Lorenz (see especially *Lorenz 1994). It is highly likely that the appeal of both European and international perspectives will grow in Germany in the coming years. Perhaps the increasing visibility of the three student groups mentioned above will contribute to this adjustment, particularly as the growth in numbers of two of them (refugees and

exchange students) is relatively recent. These students' demands for international perspectives in German social work training will soon become hard to ignore. This leads us to the question of the conceptual foundation of European and international social work. We note here that German academics' reluctance to engage with non-German literature may be the source of the belief that the field's foundations are lacking. Indeed, when we consider international literature, the opposite seems true. What was once a compact field is now rich and diverse, with a solid literature base. It is hoped that this book will demonstrate this richness. Moreover, by building on the work of Lorenz (2006) for comparative perspectives, and the global definition of social work (IFSW and IASSW 2014) for international perspectives, we already have a robust conceptual basis for our distinctive field.

The objection that many topics handled in this book are covered too briefly needs to be taken seriously. This book was always intended to be extremely short. Nonetheless, the shortness of some discussions, and the simplification of content within certain chapters, may seem painful to some readers. The chapters on welfare state development and human rights, for instance, clearly deserve separate books of their own, and are indeed often taught in separate stand-alone modules. Nonetheless, for pedagogical reasons, the decision was made to keep the material brief, but ensure that the range of topics discussed remains as broad as possible. See this book as a simple introduction, not as the last word on any topic.

Why is so much space in this book spent on defining basic terms? A short answer may be that the author is (part) Anglo-Saxon, and defining things carefully is a well-known Anglo-Saxon habit. An Anglo-Saxon obsessiveness with a simplifying clarity is not the whole reason however. Instead, we must consider the book's international readership. A term used in international literature always has an internationally negotiated meaning. This negotiation of meaning has to take place before ideas can be discussed, compared, and analysed: it is the solid foundation for international scholarship. Amongst other native speakers of your own language you may not need to worry about your terminology. Indeed, maybe we all think we know what we mean, more or less, among other native speakers of our language. Internationally, this is never the case. As an exercise to illustrate this, consider the German concept of the *Mensch mit Migrationshintergrund*, and discuss the term with an English native speaker. Such exercises illustrate how there will always be assumptions and contexts behind the meanings of the terminology we are using. Many of these assumptions need to be investigated, and many of the contexts need to be made explicit. This process of investigation and contextualisation is time-consuming, but ultimately rewarding, and this is why we indulge in it here.

Our next objection was that many academics see European and international perspectives in social work as a matter for more experienced students.

In the US, for instance, a course on international social work is a core component of master's degrees, and in Europe often an elective master's course (van Ewijk 2010, p. 7). There seems consensus then that international perspectives represent a master's rather than bachelor's concern. However, the danger of such an approach is its logic of 'stay national until you graduate, and *then* you are trained enough to start to think internationally'. Such arguments will be strongly rejected here. A feature of this book is the simplicity and accessibility of many of its internationalist ideas. Apart from insufficient language skills, there is no pedagogical reason why undergraduate students are unable to appreciate international perspectives in their training. Indeed, we could argue the opposite: engaging with internationality at master's level is tricky, if you have been trained to think strictly nationally, with reference only to national (German) social work contexts.

As mentioned before, this book has been written for international and exchange students. In terms of numbers, most of these students will be studying at undergraduate level. The level of this text is thus set to the final semesters of a bachelor's degree, which happens to be the time of student mobility in both directions. One of the book's additional objectives is to prepare German students for the rich experiences and reflection opportunities of an upcoming period of international mobility. Despite the field's theoretical richness, this book has a clear practice rather than theory focus. It may thus be more suited for use at a polytechnic than at a traditional research university. Moreover, such institutions, the *Fachhochschulen*, are more likely to have tailored English-taught programmes for incomings. Taken together, these points also mean that many parts of the book may be attractive for college (*Fachschule*) teachers and students in the fields of early childhood education and youth work. In other words, the book is intended to also have use at the non-university level.

By now you may have questioned why this text has been written in the English language, given that you are probably reading it in Germany. There are a number of answers to this question. First and foremost, the European and international literature base is mostly English-language. The terms and concepts are used with their international English-derived meanings; it can be confusing to translate these. Given that English will likely be the language of instruction in lessons, it also seems sensible to have this course book in that language, and in fact there is no guarantee that all this book's readers have another common language. Finally, the language of the book has an additional function, as a gentle introduction to English-language literature, for readers intending to use their English skills more in the future.

Given though that you are probably reading this in a foreign language, efforts have been made to keep the language simple. Idiomatic and uncommon expressions have been avoided wherever possible. Occasionally this has resulted in slightly flat language, which will perhaps be noticeable to native speakers. For

the book's mostly non-native readership, these linguistic simplifications will of course be seen as an advantage. You will also have noticed by now that you are being directly addressed in the first person fairly often. Regard this as nothing more than a pedagogical trick. Its aim is to keep your attention, and ease your struggle with the annoyances of reading an academic text in a language which is not your mother tongue. This feature will be familiar to you if you have read other English-language social work introductory texts.

One problem this international subject field may present you, as a reader, is the unfamiliarity of the literature base. Moreover, you may think that the Anglo-Saxon books cited internationally are not easily available in a German university library. This latter point is actually untrue. The distance lending (*Fernleihe*) facility in Germany works extremely well, and the country's libraries contain most essential texts (assuming you are patient enough to wait the few weeks necessary for a book to be delivered). Whilst the citations for this book were being selected, an attempt was made to avoid sources which are hard to find in Germany. Many of the citations actually come from a fairly limited selection of sources, and a list of essential purchases for libraries can be found in the appendix at the end of this book. Draw your librarian's attention to it. There was also a deliberate attempt to cite books which are themselves interesting for students to use as further reading. In practice, this means avoiding books written in a style which non-native readers find hard to read. Pleasingly, the Anglo-Saxon writing style in social work is refreshingly readable, by and large. To encourage the reader to use the books cited here, a '*' before the first author's name is used to indicate that a book is well worth seeking out, and is written in a clear enough language for a non-native speaker to enjoy. If the source is in German, this is explicitly indicated, to save non-German speakers the effort of checking; no asterisk system is used for German books, as the assumption is they will only be consulted by German native speakers or near-native speakers. If a paper comes from the Oxford or Sage international social work handbooks edited by Healy and Link (2012) and Lyons, Hokenstad, Pawar, Huegler, and Hall (2012) respectively, this too is indicated in the text. When referring to further reading, an attempt has been made to explicitly indicate each work's potential interest to readers, as is common in such Anglo-Saxon textbooks.

Judging from anecdotal evidence from social work students, a common German approach to university classroom pedagogy is to request students read an article, and then to discuss it in class. There is little evidence this is a particularly effective or enjoyable way of learning. There is evidence that other teaching methods work much better (see *Petty 2009 for an inspiring introduction to evidence-based teaching). *Korczak (1992, originally 1929, p. 172) notes that the solutions to the questions of childhood are to be found not just in psychology, but also (among other things) in poetry. We can take this point

with the utmost of seriousness. For this reason, suggestions for further reading are constantly balanced with references to interesting and relevant material in other media: documentary, video clip, audio podcast, journalism, photography, and of course, feature film. This material is readily available at the time of going to press. For links to internet videos and images, search engine terms are given as well as the web address to maximise speed of access. It is best to read this book whilst being online via your phone, tablet, or laptop, as you will often be invited to search for something interesting: a definition of a term, a video to watch, or a famous document perhaps. The book was largely written on the road, and you may enjoy reading it on the road, parallel to visiting a partner university or agency, for instance.

German social pedagogy training traditionally includes a sensitisation to creative methods, and part of this is aesthetic training. This is a very beautiful tradition, thoroughly compatible with the holistic German idea of *Bildung*. On a practice level, we note it is also very useful. For a social worker, developing an aesthetic sense is a valuable communicative skill when working interculturally, or when working with clients primarily using nonverbal communication. For this reason, the film, documentary, and photography recommendations have been selected carefully. The aim is for you to become acquainted not only with relevant subject material, but also with aesthetically notable art and film, and with thought-provoking (photo) journalism and political commentary. German social work students should have the chance to engage with films by Fassbinder and Winterbottom, or battle with the ideas of Klein and Chomsky, just as they should become familiar with social work literature by Böhnisch and Payne. A good work of art, documentary, or journalism can deepen your understanding of a social issue as much as a scholarly text, and can sometimes provide richer opportunities for reflection. The international media recommended in this text also provide an opportunity to see the world from a perspective other than the familiar North-Western European one, and this is valuable in itself.

This discussion leaves us with one last potential shortcoming which remains to be explained: the question of this book's Eurocentric focus. Unfortunately this criticism cannot be countered. Your author is a German/British citizen, raised in the UK, and trained in Germany. We all have limits to our cultural horizons, and as with any book, you will probably be able to identify your author's limits here. Nonetheless, great efforts have been made to avoid a Eurocentric perspective wherever possible. During the final revision process, the question was frequently posed, 'Is this true everywhere, or is this simply true in Germany and Britain?' This checking process led to more care with terminology and concepts, and, hopefully, a better balance between the Western and the non-Western perspectives.

In closing, we return to the travel guide analogy. This book is intended to map out some new sights of interest, to illustrate things worth seeking out and