Chapter 1

EDUCATION AND YOUTH: SOCIAL SERVICES BETWEEN SOCIETY AND INDIVIDUAL; THE EXAMPLE OF YOUTH WELFARE IN AUSTRIA

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1. AUSTRIA – FIGURES, FACTS, PROBLEMS

The republic of Austria is a federal state with nine provinces and an approximate size of 83,859 square kilometres. According to the census in 2001 the number of inhabitants amounts to 8.2 million.

As can be seen from the subsequent figures, the Austrian society is obviously an aging society:

The birth rate amounted to 9.5 in 2003 (1963: 18.8); the net reproduction rate (i.e., the quantitative replacement of the parents' generation) amounted to 0.66 in 2003 (1963: 1.31); children per woman at present: 1.30 (1963: 2.82). The part of children in the age groups from 0-15 years at the population is retrogressive, from 24 percent (1971) to 17 percent in 2000.

The largest city is Vienna with 1.550 million inhabitants. Graz, which is the capital of Styria, is the second largest town of Austria with 226.000 inhabitants.

Due to the development of the last 15 years, Austrian society can definitely be called an immigration society. The portion of foreigners in Austria rose from 5.1

percent in the year of 1989 to 8.6 percent in 1993 and amounts to about 9.1 percent (730,000 people) at present.

The major increase between 1989 and present is mainly a consequence of the wars in former Yugoslavia.

The proportion of foreigners in Austria is very high compared to other countries in Europe (Ireland: 3.3 percent).

The specific situation of Austria in this respect also becomes evident when we look at the asylum situation:

Year	Applications for asylum	Asylum granted
2001	30.127	1.113
2002	39.354	1.073
2003	32.359	2.084
2004	24.634	5.208

As far as the economic situation is concerned, Austria ranks among the 10 richest countries of the world – quoted from the latest OECD studies. Between 1996 and 2005, the gross domestic product rose from 182 to 254 billion Euros.

The gross domestic product (per person) amounted to 28,200 US dollars in 2001. (EU-15: 25,300)

For 2006 the economic growth (growth rate of the gross domestic product) is estimated with 1.9 percent.

At present the unemployment rate amounts to 5.2 percent (August 2005) (EU-25: 8.6 percent). The youth unemployment rate (age: 15 to 24) amounts to approximately 10.5 percent (October 2005) (EU-25: 18.2 percent).

Austria takes the 5th place in the EU-25 regarding unemployment rate. The reasons for this comparatively good ranking include factors such as a developing high tech sector, a high quality service sector and - in comparison to Germany - greater flexibility on the labour market.

Austria is one of the highly developed welfare states. In 2002, 29.1 percent of the economic added value (gross domestic product) was spent on health-related services. Nevertheless, a relatively high number of the population is in danger of falling into poverty: 1,044,000 persons (that is 13.2 percent of the overall population) are in danger of falling below the poverty line (EU-15: 15 percent); six percent (approx. 470,000 people) live in acute poverty. Especially families with many of children are over-proportionately at risk of falling into poverty (cf Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Safety, Generations and Consumer Protection 2004).

And last, but not least, it is worth mentioning that approx. 0.7 percent of children and young people in the age groups from 0-18 years are in care in youth welfare facilities.

These include placement in residential care, apartment sharing communities, foster families and SOS Children's Villages.[1]

The expenses for this type of care account for significantly more than 80 percent of the entire expenditure concerning youth welfare (these are estimates based on data compiled in the Province of Styria in 1999).

2. TERMINOLOGY

The duality of the terms social work and social pedagogics as it is commonly used in Austria (and also in Germany), has no obvious match in the English-spoken parts of Europe. Walter Lorenz, who was Professor in Cork, points out that it is very difficult to explain to Anglophone colleagues and students the difference between social work and social pedagogics. He also adds that not even in Germany or Austria everybody understands the difference. There is no generally accepted definition for social work in Europe. And Lorenz adds: "The professions (...) do not follow a universal logic or principle. There simply exists no universal standard" (Lorenz 2001, p. 9).

In Austria, equal to Germany, social work is close to social service administration. The term derives from public welfare for the poor. At present it is a system basically for social security including assistance for psychosocial problems.

The term social pedagogics has its roots in the education of juveniles in residential care and is still associated with it. It also implies protection of minors and youth work. The guiding science for social pedagogics is the science of education. In comparison, for social work the guiding sciences include sociology, psychology and law. In other words, there is no genuine "lead science,", and social work science is only slowly developing its own reputation.

At present there is a broad overlap between the two fields of work. Social workers and social pedagogues often work together in the same professional fields, speaking a mutual language. This also includes joint theoretical concepts.

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[1] Looking at available data, it is not possible to provide a detailed statistic regarding the age groups of placed children. Children up to the tenth year of age are preferably placed in foster families or SOS Children's Villages; for older children, apartment sharing communities and residential care are preferred. Support of children in kindergartens is not included in youth welfare services.

This indicates that social work and social pedagogics seem to merge. One talks about the convergence of social work and social pedagogics. In the end, a concept of social work should evolve.

In the respective literature fringe group phenomena are mentioned more commonly than educational or socio-cultural concerns. In case of a merging of the different areas social pedagogy would be dominated by aspects of social work. In research, however, an educational science with a focus on social sciences would take a key role without turning into the leading discipline. "Science of Social Work" (cf. Rauschenbach 1999) is defined as the guiding discipline (cf. for the contemporary discussion: Böhnisch et al., 2005).

Within this system of social services administration youth welfare is one field of social work in Austria. In professional fields such as youth welfare – for example in homes, apartment-sharing communities, care of respective families, crisis centers or homeless shelters, work is shared amongst social workers, social pedagogues and psychologists. That's it for now dealing with conceptual confusions and ambiguities.

3. A BRIEF CROSS-REFERENCE TO YOUTH RESEARCH IN AUSTRIA

In the twenties and thirties of the last century, several ground-breaking reports about youth research were published in Austria. I would like to mention the following examples – Siegfried Bernfeld: "About the Concept of Youth" (1914); Hildegard Hetzer: "Childhood and Poverty" (1929); Paul Lazarsfeld: "Youth and Occupation" (1931) or Charlotte Bühler: "The Psychich Life of Young People" (1927).

In fact, there were youth studies published in Austria also in the seventies and eighties but those were primarily regional specific investigations. Only in the late eighties, the responsible Federal Ministry started to publish youth reports on a regular basis. Their main topics are the situation of adolescents in Austria. The most recent report was published in December 2003. This report indicated that girls and young women perceived their educational situation as more important than their male peers. Adolescents are described as "social networkers". They realize an impressive amount of "values-sampling," etc. Admittedly, there are still no longitudinal studies available as mandated by epidemiological systematics. Topics such as education, leisure, perception of values, drugs would also be important for youth welfare. Thus, intermediate trends could be identified (cf: BM

für Soziale Sicherheit, Generationen und Konsumentenschutz, 2003; Scheipl 2004, p. 31).

I would like to add a marginal note: with regard to the estimation of trends for youth welfare, it has to be stated that this information is not readily available. The statistical report of youth welfare of the Federal Ministry was discontinued in 1999 (cf. Österreichischer Amtsvormund 2000, p. 200). Social workers kept silent about it. Now, I have finally arrived at youth welfare.

4. YOUTH WELFARE IN AUSTRIA

4.1. Youth Welfare Act (JWG) 1989 – General Remarks

In the nineties of the last century, youth welfare underwent a notable improvement in Austria. An important basis for the re-orientation of youth welfare provided the Youth Welfare Act (JWG) of the Federal Government. After ten years of discussion,[2] this act was passed by the parliament in 1989. The Austrian parliament has the authority to pass the basic laws in the area of youth welfare. Provincial legislature provides the regulations for the execution of the laws. On the province level, the laws were passed between 1990 and 1993.

Communities are included in the development of offers and in financing services at local level. In Styria sixty percent of the expenses are covered by the provincial state and forty percent must be covered by the communities.

The Basic Act (of 1989) tries to provide a careful balance. On the one hand, it intendeds to strengthen subjective rights with a reserved official interpretation and on the other hand a classical approach of intervention can be observed. A very good example for this approach is article 1 which states the need "to secure the development of minors utilizing supporting systems for fostering and upbringing, and granting an education". Providing a support system which emphasizes subjective rights, stands opposite to the term "securing" by means of mandated measures. This implies the right for the state to regulate. It can be interpreted as a disciplining element. This guarantees, however, that a higher degree of control options is left with the federal authorities.

In any case, the JWG of 1989 regarded the primary responsibility of youth welfare in strengthening the educational competence of the family (e.g., parents).

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[2]   The extended debate was caused by disputes over protection of unborn life. It resulted in a bill on the preemptive support of "mothers, mothers to be and their unborn" (JWG § 1(1); cf. Stockart-Bernkopf 1989, p. 56).

It also postulated the basic principle of least possible interference. It favors supporting measures over external placement outside the family.

Due to shrinking funds, this demand currently more and more often leads to undesired consequences in that first and foremost the least costly measures are applied. However, according to legislation, the means that are applied should be the "mildest" with a view to the extent and intensity of the intervention. And these are by no means always the cheapest.

4.2. The Independent Agencies

The JWG 1989 also emphasizes (in contrast to the previous JWG of 1954) the subsidiary principle. Based on it, it supports the development of independent (private) agencies to work in the field of youth welfare – for example: freelance educators, private apartment-sharing communities or privately owned homes. Admittedly, all these private institutions have to be approved by the governmental authorities of the province before they can work with adolescents according to the JWG. They determine the guidelines for establishing and running a facility – for example: the size of the building, ratio of the staff, training of the staff, financial planning etc.

In Germany, certain independent agencies such as the "Caritas", the "Diakonische Werk" or the "Arbeiterwohlfahrt" can be called social corporations. In comparison, independent agencies in Austria are rather small, except for the "Caritas" or the "SOS-children's village – and to a limited extent also the "Volkshilfe".

Therefore, they mostly work at a regional or even local level. For a better coordination of interests, independent agencies merge to umbrella organizations in certain federal states. In this way they increase their power towards politics and authorities.

4.3. The Decade of Reforms in the Home Sector: 1990

During the sixties to the eighties, there were several attempts to reform the education in homes in Austria. A striking change has only been noticeable since the nineties. It is difficult for me to exclude the Styrian reforms (cf. Scheipl 2001, pp. 208). But the reforms of Vienna provide a better example. Based on numerous debates and reform attempts, the youth welfare system in Vienna has undergone a fundamental restructuring process under the title of "Home 2000" since 1995.

Back then, homes in Vienna housed 2.746 adolescents (in 1985 this number amounted to 4.097).

By following the slogan of the reform project „Heim 2000": "Identify earlier – care for a shorter time – differentiate the support" a preventative approach is possible (cf. Eichmann et al. 1997). This approach is also based on the local level as it is here where social requirements are defined. An important goal is the closure of large homes (up to 180 places).

As a second important goal, the city was divided into (six) socio-pedagogical regions. They would be established around modified residential homes, they are now social pedagogical points of support for the administration. The existing precincts' boarders were eliminated. In this way the current social structure of the demographic development could be addressed much better. In addition, this regional specific approach provided better possibilities for the use of local and regional resources and support structures.

Each socio-pedagogical region contains the following:

- One or more crisis centres
- Several apartment-sharing communities
- Potentially one small home
- Socio-pedagogic information centres

The key component of each region is the crisis centre. This crisis centre offers short term accommodation (six weeks maximum) and a diagnostic clarification. It serves as an initial "clearing-point" in case of crises and as a networking centre for social workers, teachers and the police. A total of 17 crisis centres shall be established. The idea of ambulant support and the help with accommodation outside of the family are especially important. If outside accommodation is indicated, the children (age range 2 to 15 years) are sent to apartment-sharing communities or small homes. A major aim of this concept is, however, the avoidance of external accommodation.

The above-mentioned apartment-sharing communities are co-educative, house children at different ages and work as decentralized groups. This means that this reform offers more spatial proximity by regionalization. The creation of smaller entities offers more personal closeness.

Conceptually, one would like to provide differentiated services especially in these apartment-sharing communities. Here, the persons in charge of the project are not yet fully satisfied. Currently, one attempts to establish socio-therapeutic communities. In this project, up to two especially difficult children/adolescents

are integrated into a group of eight children, looked after by six specially trained social pedagogues. In addition, specially attended groups will be established.

Moreover, it has to be pointed out that the placement of children with foster parents has become increasingly difficult. Apparently, "normal" families cannot provide appropriate care for these children. Therefore, the number of professional foster homes has increased. There does not exist a uniform training for staff working in these homes, however.

The socio-pedagogical centers, an important part of the Viennese concept, underline the regional character and accentuate the ambulant aspect of the entire reform (cf. Winkler 2001; Fleischmann 2001).

With the beginning of the year 2004, the last measures in this respect were taken, and the final report following this major reform bearing the name "Heim 2000" was published in October 2004 (cf. Stadt Wien-MAG ELF 2004). Staff was asked what they made of the new (reformed) working conditions. However — and this is, unfortunately, somewhat typical of the Austrian youth welfare situation — comprehensive accompanying scientific research activities were not carried out, a fact that one could almost call negligent. This meant that, triggered by the reforms carried out in Vienna, the opportunity was missed to establish a comprehensive youth welfare research project in Austria.

4.4. Youth Welfare Planning in Austria

In the Youth Welfare Act 1989 (article 7), all provinces (federal states) were advised to establish a research oriented youth welfare plan. A similar attempt was made in Germany. There, the Children and Youth Support Act of 1991 also suggested mandatory planning for youth support.

In Germany, a high volume of publications appeared on this topic — especially on participative planning.

In Austria, on the other hand, not much happened. Here a more pragmatic and very hesitant approach was taken.

Despite the legal requirement only two federal states dedicated their energy to the development of plans for youth welfare — those states were Styria and Salzburg. These two federal states acknowledged the importance and included the planning for youth welfare into their federal laws. All other seven federal states remained vague on this issue (cf. Scheipl 2001, p. 285). Therefore these two federal states have established the most detailed planning documents. However, the two approaches are very different.

4.4.1. The Example of Salzburg

In 1997 a discourse-oriented and participative approach was chosen for Salzburg (cf. ibid. pp. 290). Representatives of the independent agencies were involved as well as experts and employees of the authorities. The planning guidelines were developed based on the methodology of product description. Thereby every single service that offered "educational support" or "Sheltered living", was described by means of several criteria – for example goals, basic principles, target group, personnel, expenses, basic standard, and others. Based on these aspects, the current status of youth welfare measures and facilities was determined ("actual" product description) and a "target" product description was compiled.

Ultimately, a package of measures was developed. This package of measures includes a detailed description of activities to be initiated in order to reach the "target"-standards (defined responsibilities, time frame, expenses). These measures seem to work satisfactorily. The periodically updated youth welfare plan dating from 2000 is a confirmation of this circumstance (cf. Land Salzburg 2000).

4.4.2. The Example of Styria

In Styria, a more "top-down" approach was attempted (ibid. pp. 292). The first youth welfare plan was already initiated by a single expert working for the authorities in 1992 [supported by a survey of 166 social workers] (cf. Hengsberger 1992). The current Styrian youth welfare plan (1999) was developed by a group of external experts. This group of experts surveyed the "actual standard" in its first comprehensive analysis. In detailed studies that followed, a "target"-concept was developed which was based on interviews with experts, international comparisons, data analysis (for example risk assessment for illegitimate children, children from single parent homes, children from divorced parents etc. to end up in youth welfare institutions). This concept is based on statistical variables (mean, standard deviation – for demand estimation). Thereby a quantitative prognosis can be determined which would be easy to reconfirm. Strange to say, exactly this quantitative prognosis has not been evaluated so far during the preparation of the Third Styrian Youth Welfare Plan. (cf. Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung 2005).

It has to be added that complex connections and the qualitative dimensions of problems, trends and professional requests are also included in this plan from 1999 – for example in the form of 17 proposed projects (e.g., collaboration of youth welfare and youth psychiatry, collaboration of youth welfare and penal system, development of social work at schools etc.)

Currently openly discussed is which services should be provided by independent agencies and which services should be seen as basic services, provided by statutory bodies. There is a tendency that difficult problems remain in the responsibility of the official social work institutions. Independent agencies focus on cases that are "easier to handle". (This does not necessarily have to be that way: There are special offers by independent agencies but those are very expensive and the government is careful not to pay these high costs to private entities. If these expensive services stay "within the own home" the costs could be "obscured".

Another important aspect in the discussion in Styria is the privatization of youth welfare facilities (e.g., homes) which are operated by the authorities. The employees' opposition is massive.

In addition, Styria gave rise to a fairly interesting development in 2004 which had an impact on youth welfare planning. In the context of a ruling on the "determination of services and service remunerations" (cf. Landesgesetzblatt 2005), a comprehensive catalogue listing detailed descriptions of individual services provided in youth welfare was elaborated. This "catalogue of services" described in detail the individual services offered in the context of mobile, ambulant and institutional care according to crucial aspects, such as: function and objectives, quality standards regarding structure, process, result and controlling (cf. Landesgesetzblatt 2005, appendix 1). In this way, the services offered in youth welfare have, on the whole, been standardized and made accessible for quality assurance. In connection with time schedules and costs projections, this specification allows for more transparency in youth welfare planning as far as client orientation, regional supply and the financial side are concerned. The services that have been in existence up to now will have to be adapted to match the new specifications in the course of one year. The "catalogue of services" follows in a modified form the idea of participatory quality development in a communicative way, which was done by the youth-office of the city of Graz (cf. Stadt Graz 2000). This approach is designed as one of the most remarkable initiatives in the field of youth welfare in Austria during the last years (cf. Pantucek 2005, 9).

The advantages of the procedure of the "catalogue of services" will be that the public factor will clearly outline the services to be rendered in youth welfare and will lay down the relevant costs, thus making the situation transparent for the providers. This is certainly a progress compared to the situation we have had so far which did not allow for a comprehensive overview of the practices or individual concepts and subsidies.

One has to point out on principle, however, that the idea of subsidiarity is undermined. It is largely based on the principle that social services can be provided and supported largely by responsible citizens including honorary services without direct governmental control. The exact guidelines of the government which are now issued regarding services and financing for youth welfare do not allow much room for private entities for independent activities. The current practice resembles an outsourcing program for governmental services instead of the government for providing resources which would encourage private entities to develop creative solutions for the challenges of youth welfare.

However, problems are likely to evolve if the system is not applied in a flexible manner. Necessary is that required new services, aiming on making youth welfare work more flexible must be possible without great effort despite the specified standardization. A certain fear in this respect is nurtured by the fact that individual services offered are extremely differentiated or "tight". So, for instance, the following forms of communities, etc. have been defined as separate target areas: "children and youth community", "socio-pedagogic community for children and young people", "family-like community", etc., whereas due to the specific patterns at present their combination is not possible. Perhaps a modular concept with a predictable necessary flexibilization would have been the better option. In any case, it must be guaranteed that the standardization established does not act as a "suffocating structure", and that it does not get stuck in this way.

This would limit the discussion about services provided by social work to discussing financial issues only. Thereby, the government would deprive itself of the constitutive, socio-political dimension. Youth welfare has the (socio-)political responsibility to demand the task to shape the social structure of the state.

In any case Styria has, together with Salzburg, occupied a pioneering role in Austria with its approach.

What is remarkable in this context is that the specified package of services no longer includes the youth welfare classic, "youth home". Considering that it was the large homes in the seventies of the last century from where the reforms of youth welfare in Austria originated – especially so in Vienna and Styria – the abolishing of homes can be seen as the provisional end of a reform movement. Whether or not the end point has been reached by replacing the classic homes by various living communities remains to be seen; more likely not. It would actually have done more justice to the variety of the services offered not to abolish the smaller homes. Overall, an inclusion of the clients or users of youth welfare offers does still not exist either in Salzburg or in Styria. But such an aspect would emphasize the (co)-producer approach of service provision, at present a very important approach.

A research cooperation in youth welfare planning, involving all the nine federal states has also not been realized.

4.5. The Problem with Social-pedagogical Diagnostics

In line with a comprehensive analysis of the social environment, one district in Graz (Styria) was examined in more detail, focusing on the situation of the local adolescents (cf. Scheipl/Pfoser/Leodolter/Kern 2000.). Besides interviewing adolescents, parents and experts also the records of the youth welfare office were analyzed. The aim was to obtain more detailed information about the clients and the work of the youth welfare office in this area. The research-team particularly noticed: In several cases more than one line of assistance was provided per family in parallel. In other cases offers of assistance were continuously replaced (therapeutic pedagogical institution, neighbor, therapeutic pedagogical institution, day care, educational assistance, youth homes, educational assistance, etc.). If there were no other options available, even horseback riding or vaulting was chosen. There was no systemic approach that could be identified.

In some families these interventions lasted for more than five years. In the most extreme cases the expenses added up to € 4.000 per month for a nine year period. Monthly expenses between € 1.500 to € 2.000 were a common occurrence (ibid., pp. 153). Despite the mandatory conferences assisting in decision-making regarding educational support (for example: educational assistance) or granting full educational responsibility, respectively (for example: education in homes) (cf. STJWG article 40). Several problems have been identified and written about that involve inadequate measures preceding placement in a home environment which ultimately failed (cf Buerger 1998, Ader/Schrapper 2002, p. 27). These measures seem like test runs that consequently strain the subsequent home education. The main problem still seems to be the problem of diagnosis in social pedagogies.

Today one rejects diagnostics because of a more critical attitude toward social work. One fears that the diagnostic approach can develop into pathological branding or stigma.

Still, "professional routine in the respective institutions (home, probation assistance, children and youth psychiatry) relies on psychiatric reports (DSM-IV, ICD-10) and in part on medical results or psychological diagnostics – and as a rule on standardized testing procedures" (Schreiber 2000, p. 581).

Remarkably, when interviewing people in the field of social work, they attribute the capability of making a precise diagnosis more often to psychologists

or medical doctors than to social pedagogues. Doesn't this assumption point to an idealization of these professional groups by simultaneously devaluating our own?

I cannot offer any solution – but I would like to point out important objectives for the Austrian youth welfare system. It seems important to me to acknowledge that "external comprehension supported by experts" cannot be replaced by "the self-interpretation of one's own comprehension" (Mueller 2002, p. 44). Naturally, it is meaningful and necessary to address the issue of negotiating the clients' capacity to act in meetings with support personnel or when developing plans of assistance. Without incorporating the clients as co-producers no satisfactory results can be obtained in this field. But experts (from the youth welfare office) should not attend these meetings without diagnostic pre-assessments and without justified socio-pedagogical propositions to act. Social pedagogues should not only serve as moderators for external assessments. Hopefully, they also developed their own diagnostic hypotheses based on professional experience (cf. Mueller 2002, p. 45). In youth welfare, there will be situations – for example when working with street kids or drug related incidents – where one faces the necessity of a forceful intervention on the basis of diagnostic results (cf. Hansbauer/Schnurr 2002, p. 90).

There are no guarantees that the measures forcefully imposed on the clients will actually become "meaningful" to them. There are hardly any satisfactory answers. However, youth welfare should not avoid dealing with these ethical questions. This topic requires more discussion on the one hand. On the other hand, youth welfare offices and independent agencies must provide the institutional and conceptual conditions for their employees so that decisions can be prepared adequately, discussed and reflected on (ibid.). This problem will provide sufficient substance for discussion in Austria in the near future.

4.6. Further Issues for Debate

4.6.1. Orienting on "Social Space" ("Sozialraumorientierung")

Only a few remarks will be made on this topic as we are in Austria in this area still in the initial phase.

I may again remind: In the context of the reform of homes in Vienna, urban districts were joined into regions and the integration of the institutions into the environment was emphasised.

In the case of Graz it is intended to change the approach in the Office for Youth and Family Affairs and in the Office for Social Affairs from a case-oriented to a social space oriented one because the current situation is not satisfactory.

Based on the legal regulations (Youth Welfare Act, Youth Court Act, Social Welfare Act) the single case serves as indicator. Only after people "qualify" according to the law, support can be offered – which means help can be financed. In consequence the work focuses on individual cases. Subsequently, case management is a commonly used approach. Moreover, it is aimed on making the best use of already existing buildings or services. These existing offers often become a central identification object – of the private institution or authority. Finally the bureaucracy also tries to create a collective involvement in form of a target group by combining single cases (the violent kids, drug-addicted juveniles, abused women). The integration of these aspects into the social space aims on cross-linking the following perspectives: case-orientation, referral to buildings/offers, target group orientation.

The cities of Stuttgart (FRG) and Zurich (CH) serve as role models for the city of Graz. They have already made impressive progress in the restructuring phase.

The expectations are as follows:

- an improved problem-oriented (comprehensive) support
- more networking within the support system,
- a better cooperation of staff members,
- a more economical use of financial means.

The example of Zurich shows: the social center is the drop-in center for all issues related to youth welfare and social welfare. This center should be well positioned in the social space (quarter). The clients turn to the INTAKE. There basic information is provided and a respective assignment to a specific social space team takes place. These teams consist of several areas (youth welfare, social welfare). There also exists a so called "Fachaustauschgruppe", a group aiming on exchanging ideas and networking activities among the teams. In this way an improved resource-oriented, cooperative and cross-linking working situation is expected. The social spaces defined by the clients are regarded as the starting point for any further intervention.

4.6.2. Training and Education of Social Workers and Social Pedagogues

Despite the introductory remarks regarding the convergence of social work and social pedagogics that are both involved in the practical youth welfare work, there are major differences with regard to the training/education. These differences even increased during the last years. A brief look at one example will illustrate this.

Let's have a look at the education of social workers. Since the year of 2001 this has taken place at universities of applied studies (Fachhochschulen). This means it takes place at the tertiary level now whereas in former days it took place at post-secondary level. Now it is an eight semester program and after graduation you receive the title "Magister" (FH). Then a graduate can start a doctoral program at a university. He/She has to take an additional year of studies, however, which is not compulsory for graduates from universities. At Austrian universities there does not exist a program for "the science of social work".

All universities of applied sciences are privately managed. However, the state pays a certain contribution per semester towards each training position.

It is advisable for graduates to study social pedagogics which is offered at the department of education. Sociology, psychology, law, or philosophy are also recommendable study programs.

Currently, there exists a restructuring process at the "Fachhochschule", or university of applied sciences to comply with the regulations of the "Bologna-process." This means for social work to install a study program at bachelor level (six semesters).

It covers the requirements of the training program for social workers. It replaces the eight-semester-program. After the B.A. a three or four semester Master study program can be offered. This establishes the connection to the doctoral program at the university.

It will probably offer opportunities for specialization, e.g., for social management, geriatric care, etc.

Professionalisation and professional representation are very well developed in the case of social workers, much better than in other social professions. They even want to strengthen their position and demand that youth welfare becomes an exclusive domain of social workers, not only with the authorities but in all the different working fields – a development that is not desirable from an Austrian perspective.

The education for social pedagogues takes place at the second level of secondary education. Upon its completion, students sit their final examinations qualifying for university entrance. At the same time they receive a diploma (vocational qualification).[3]

A shifting of this field of education to the tertiary level of a university of applied sciences has been demanded by many experts. However, the educational administration currently seems to be turning a blind eye to this possibility — a circumstance which is likely to lead to a widening educational gap between social

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[3]   In Austria, this model is also applied to the education of kindergarten teachers

workers and social pedagogues in Austria rather than a convergence between them. However, making this gap smaller, or possibly even merging the two working fields would be what is prompted by the theoretical development (Science of Social Work) which was mentioned earlier by way of introduction.

In conclusion, education and training in social-pedagogic areas, e.g., foster parenting, have to be considerably improved in the near future.

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