CHILD AND YOUTH CARE IN ISRAEL: TRENDS AND DILEMMAS IN TRAINING AND IN THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT: This article describes and analyzes the unique development of Child and Youth Care referred to in Israel as "Youth Advancement." Common models for training workers in community and residential institutions, the workers' academic background, and legal and state statutes are discussed. The wide range of roles in the field of Child and Youth Care are presented, along with the dilemmas surrounding the recognition of the professionalism of the workers. Furthermore, the national frameworks employing these workers and the prominent voluntary organizations are described. Updated surveys on the characteristics of the population in this field are presented, with emphasis on the distinction between the "conservative" population and the current population, consists of Arabs and new immigrants mainly from Russia and Ethiopia. Included are examples of studies conducted at the universities and in research institutes. These deal with various issues such as training, educational and therapeutic topics, and attitudes towards youth being treated.

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE IN ISRAEL

Lahav (1993) studied the development of services for dropout youth in the educational system in Israel. The Society and Youth Administration, at the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Correctional Department, in the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, provide the majority of services.

These services offered can be divided into 2 groups:
1. services that are part of the legal system where authority comes from the law and clients are referred through the system. Examples are youth courts, youth probation services, youth protection authority, and welfare officers;
2. services that are part of the social system where the mandate comes from the Israeli Parliament and its committees, such as The Unit for Youth Advancement at the Ministry of Education and Culture and The Youth and Young Adult Services at the Ministry of Labour and Welfare.

It is difficult to be specific about who received these services because the criteria for referral have not been consistent. For example, in the early 1940s there was a formal request to establish services for dropout youth within the educational system. Nadad, in 1945, called for two kinds of solutions: one that dealt with dropout prevention through mandatory general learning and the improvement of existing schools, by adapting them to the needs of students; and another that dealt with establishing a special system to handle dropouts in their own environments.

During the settlement period and until the end of the 1960s, the prevailing attitude was that not all youth had to study, and that there were other social and occupational avenues for those who dropped out. At the beginning of the 70s, social and political unrest resulted in the establishment of the Prime Minister's Committee for Children and Youth in Distress. There was a new focus on youth dropouts. For the first time, the Ministry of Education and Culture was pressured to take responsibility for educating youth outside the school system (Katz, 1973).

Over the next 20 years, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Welfare introduced services for dropout youth, initially focusing on prevention and on providing leisure activities. Later, services for integrating dropouts back into mainstream programs for their age groups were implemented. At its peak, as the State of Israel was being established, 3850 youth were involved in recreational activities, mostly at the municipal level. The model follows the British system and is based on the premise that providing significant social-leisure activities prevents youth from roaming the streets, behaviour that is usually associated with delinquency and deviance.

Throughout the years, there have been many changes in the structure of the services, the quality and the quantity of the manpower, the perception of professionalism, and the activities provided. (1984, p. 37)

DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES FOR DROPOUT YOUTH

Services have been developed for dropout youth in the municipalities, mostly at the community level, by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, voluntary organizations, the community sector (social services), and in residential institutions. The Youth Aliya (which today is part of the residential branch of the Ministry of Education) took an active part in this development (Beker & Magnuson, 1996).

Literature reflects the involvement of various governmental offices, like the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Welfare (Beker & Magnuson, 1996; Kerem, 1977; Lahav, 1994; Shorer, 1970). What follows is a summary of the contributions of these various organizations.

Ministry of Labour and Welfare

According to Kerem (1977) the treatment of street corner groups[1] began by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare (then The Ministry of Welfare) in Tel Aviv in 1962, in Jerusalem in 1965, and nation-wide in 1967. Other services were developed by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, including the Youth Probation Services that dealt mainly with delinquents (Elad and Weiner, 1995) and the Youth Protection Authority, which places youth delinquents in special residential institutions.

Ministry of Education and Culture

There was a significant change in treatment of dropout youth at the end of the 60s, first supported by local initiative and, later, by national programs. Gal (1985) notes that the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasized the educational-rehabilitation aspects in contrast to prevention of delinquency and law enforcement, which was characteristic of earlier programs. During those years, the first street corner group workers began to work at the municipalities, within a budget and under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The development of treatment for dropout youth in Israel is largely based on the study of street corner groups in Tel-Aviv, which was the first real attempt to understand the problem in Israel (Brick, 1970; Liesner, 1968; Rimmerman, 1980; Volansky, 1979). Liesner (1968) studied street gangs between 1963 and 1967, comparing his findings with knowledge and experience accumulated in New York. He examined the problems of Tel-Aviv dropout youth and the types of relations formed with them, demonstrating that street corner group workers succeeded in changing attitudes and behavior patterns of the group members. However, the workers had limited influence. In addition, the study revealed that locating workers on street corners to reach out and form relationships with street corner group members in their own environment was part of the success of the program. The "Street Club" system was found to be suitable in Israel as well.

"The Or Yehuda Experiment," was conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In this study, Kreisler and Leib (1969) examined the problems and methods applied in the small town of Or Yehuda. As found in the above noted study it was found that new methods were needed for dealing with dropout youth.

Two main recommendations from these studies were: the need to establish a therapeutic-educational unit which would operate independently from the existing social system; and the importance of an alternative principal education for the street group population, many of whom had dropped out of school at a relatively young age. As a result, the Unit for Youth was created at the municipal level, and the first counselors began to work at the end of the 60s.

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[1] The teminology "street corner groups" is a direct translation from Hebrew

Peled (1982) believes that, until the end of the 60s, the problem of dropout youth concerned only educators and caregivers, not policy makers. The "Black Panther's" violent public protest in March 1971, which included dropout youths, served as the turning point in the development of dropout youth services in Israel. The government of Israel established a national committee, "The Committee for Children and Youth in Distress," which found that about 25.8% of youth ages 14-17 had dropped out of the educational system and that a relatively high percentage of this population were of Asian-African origin (Katz,1973).

As a result of these findings, a unit was established in 1972, at the national and district levels of the Ministry of Education and Culture, to deal with the problem of dropout youth. For the first time, the responsibility for the informal education of this population was defined unequivocally (Lahav, 1994). The main emphasis was on educational and social development, rather than the "therapy-welfare" that had been provided to the same population by the street corner groups from the Ministry of Welfare.

Field experience and studies conducted during that period (Aviel, 1970; Volansky, 1979) resulted in a change in the perception, policy and method of work with this population—a shift from prevention to intervention. At the center of this trend was the creation of opportunities for dropout youth to reintegrate into the normative systems for their age group. There was also shift in emphasis from working with groups in the community to working with individuals, stressing personal relations and a therapeutic approach. This change was also reflected in a new name for street corner group workers and the services they provided—to Youth Advancement workers in the Unit for Youth Advancement.

The professional approach used during those years was based on the belief that it would be difficult for the youth of the Youth Advancement Unit to integrate into the regular social system (Volansky, 1979). Therefore, controlled socialization processes in a special system were designed to reintegrate youth into society. This was based on the theory of unequal opportunity for youth (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960), which asserts that creating new opportunities for dropout youth is a goal for reintegration.

However separate services for special populations did not last long for several reasons. First, organized groups did not exist naturally, but because the counselor created a group of problem youth. Second, it became apparent that the segregated activities did not always result in the development of motivation to reintegrate into the community, instead they legitimized detachment. Finally, labeling these organized groups was a problem because even youth that used them did not want to be associated with them.

Consequently, at the end of the 1980s, the Unit for Youth Advancement developed an integrative approach, emphasizing the need to return the dropout youth directly to the regular affiliation groups for their age.

These changes were also reflected in the qualitative, quantitative and professional growth of the workers. An expression of the qualitative improvement was in the increase in the rate of academic graduates, especially in behavioral science, among the Youth Advancement employees in Israel. For example Shlesinger (1977) that only 17.6% of the workers had a bachelor's degree, whereas in 1987, Lahav discovered that 42.5% of the workers had at least a bachelor's degree and 25.5% were graduates of the Counselors Seminar.

At the same time, training and specialization programs were developed for Youth Advancement workers. One of the most prominent of these began in 1983 at Beit-Berl College where graduates earn a bachelor's degree in education (B.E.D.). Recently, working with dropout and delinquent youth has been recognized as a special field for Social Workers (Rehabilitation Field) at Tel-Aviv University and Bar Ilan University, and the Department of Education at Haifa University.

NATIONAL AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

In 1999, the Youth Advancement Unit from the Ministry of Education treated 13,054 youth (Israeli origin, Arabic origin, former USSR origin), and an additional 550 youth of Ethiopian origin who were not included in the study. The historical mandate of this unit was to treat male youth only. More than half (55%) of the youth treated by the Youth Advancement Unit in 1999 were Israel (Jewish) males and 18% were Israeli (Jewish) females. Only 5% were of Arabic origin, mostly male. This percentage is relatively low in comparison to the percentage of Arab youth among the entire population in Israel, especially those who do not attend school. About 22% of the youth treated at the unit are of former USSR origin. This percentage is double the percentage of the former USSR immigrants making up the general population of youth aged 15-17 (9.7%). (Kahan-Strawczynski, Dolev and Shemesh,1999)

In February of 1992 the free-education program was implemented jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance to apply the Free law for youth who do not study in any formal system. It was also decided to apply the program where the Ministry of Education is deficient: youth between the ages of 14-15 who have been exempted from the obligatory education law; and youth ages 16-18 who do not study in any educational system. Furthermore, this program was applied to working youth who attend school and/or work groups of the Ministry of Labor and Welfare and are under 18. This allowed those dropout youth, who have not already found solutions within the regular education system, to study.

Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary organizations have an important role in certain aspects of the treatment of dropout youth. The prominent organizations in this field

are described briefly below. ELEM is mainly concerned with the placement of youth in community hostels and in the care of immigrant youth from Ethiopia and the former USSR. This organization was the first to warn of the detachment of many youth as a consequence of immigration to Israel. EFSHAR is an organization dedicated to the advancement and development of social-educational work, the educational treatment of dropout youth.

ELEM

ELEM – Youth in Distress in Israel, is an association that was established in 1982 by a group of professionals and lay volunteers in Israel and the USA to help troubled Israeli teenagers become productive adults. ELEM deals with the initiation, development and operation of outreach, educational and consultation programs for the support of youth at risk, and for the treatment and rehabilitation of under-privileged, neglected, abused, alienated and delinquent youth.

ELEM volunteers and workers collaborate with the various Ministries, municipalities and many other public agencies. ELEM has devoted much of its resources to the development of out-of-home settings in Israel and Community Based Hostels for severely neglected and delinquent youth. Gradually ELEM began initiating, encouraging and supporting a long list of innovative programs in response to the growing needs of alienated youth. ELEM has opened Crisis Shelters for homeless youth in Israel's major cities, has mobilized outreach vans and street teams and operates counseling centers for youth. Recently ELEM began placing special emphasis on the problem of immigrant youth at risk— both from the former USSR and from Ethiopia (ELEM, 1999).

EFSHAR

EFSHAR, The Association for Development of Social Services, focuses on socio-educational work, which encompasses education, therapy and rehabilitation of members of society of all ages who have special needs, both in boarding schools and the community.

The goals of EFSHAR are: (1) to create a professional framework and provide professional status for the thousands of socio-educational workers in Israel; (2) to offer assistance to organizations and institutions in the field of socio-educational work; (3) to initiate research and distribute information on the field of socio-educational work; and (4) to offer organizational and management services to educational and social agencies undergoing privatization (EFSHAR, 1999).

In their educational and rehabilitative work, socio-educational workers combine methods from the fields of education and social work and they serve as part of a multidisciplinary team.

MODELS OF TRAINING

Training for dropout youth workers began as a para-professional field in institutes that granted diplomas. The change to academic and professional training was accompanied by controversy. There was strong disagreement between those favoring subordination to the field of social work which already had integrated academic training (Hamenachem, Ohad, Kfir, & Romi, 1989; Sherer, 1989), and those who wished to develop a special academic field for Youth Advancement professionals to work in community and institutional units (Hamenachem & Kfir, 1994). Today, in addition to Social Work programs at the universities, there are two distinct training approaches. The first type of program college-level qualification, primarily Beit-Berl College, where students take theoretical and practice-based courses. They graduate with a bachelor's degree in Education and a professional certificate as therapeutic educators. The second is a university based approach, principally at Bar-Ilan University, which emphasizes study in the field of dropout youth who are within the informal education system.

The College Curriculum

The curriculum of the Department of Youth Care Workers at Beit-Berl College offers an integrated, interdisciplinary approach based on a wide range of theoretical courses that stem from relevant disciplines such as psychology, sociology, criminology, education and social work, and special education. A professionally supervised practicum accompanies the theoretical courses. Acquaintance through practice with the institutions that treat youth in distress offers an opportunity to experience various methods of treatment. Students are placed in a range of settings, including special schools in residential facilities, youth villages, correctional facilities, community centers and juvenile police departments (Avissar, Levi, & Romi, 1994; Levi, 1998).

This program trains students to work in various social services that offer prevention and treatment programs for adolescents. Graduates work with youth with general adjustment difficulties, substance abuse, and problems with adjustment to jobs and studies.

DILEMMAS EMERGING FROM THE ISRAELI EXPERIENCE

The dilemmas presented below are characteristic of this field although they are not unique and may also be true for other educational therapeutic fields. Discussing these dilemmas with a view to training, workshops and research in the field will help establish criteria for professional development, particularly regarding therapeutic intervention with youth.

Definition of the Professional Role and Professional Identity

The most significant dilemma is connected to the essence of the Child and Youth Care (CYC) worker's role, the fundamental nature of the daily

work and interaction of the worker with close therapeutic professionals, i.e., the social worker, the psychologist and the social counselor at the dropout youth residential centers. The most noticeable tension is observed between the therapeutic aspects and the educational-social aspects at the residential centers. This is a question of boundaries; when does the CYC worker continue to work with the youth and when does the youth need to be referred to a different professional, who has other specific theoretical and practical knowledge?

Therapeutic Contents of the CYC Worker's Training and Limitations

The second dilemma stems directly from the definition of the worker's role. Since there is a lack of consensus about the CYC work profile and definitions change, to some degree, from organization to organization, it is difficult to determine the relevant therapeutic content of training. Moreover, there is debate about the importance of such content and the resulting influence on the worker's approach. Emphasizing the psychological contents such as: theories of identity, methods of therapy and group therapy, as well as the significance of psycho-diagnostic tests, will focus the worker on psychological-therapeutic care. Phelan (2000) discussed this dilemma from an American perspective and suggested terms for use by CYC workers.

Certification and Patterns of Relationships with Other Professionals in the field

Initially, it was believed that "good-natured" people would be the most appropriate for working with youth at risk. Professionalism in all behavioral sciences, to some degree, has influenced policy makers in this field to promote the need for certification. The lenient approach perceives certification as a post-factum demand resulting from the certification requirements of other professions, such as social work and psychology. The strict approach sees certification as critical for defining professional identity boundaries. To date, there is no requirement for certification in Israel; the "market needs" determine the character of the professional role.

RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Many studies have been conducted in the field of dropout youth in Israel. The main problem highlighted in these studies is the split that exists between the various authorities involved. A comprehensive and updated study was conducted by Kahan-Strawcynski, Dolev & Shemesh (1999). Some of the findings of this study were presented earlier in this paper. This was a survey conducted at the of the JDC-Brookdale Institute in cooperation with the Youth and Society Administration of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. This research examined the various characteristics of dropout youth in Israel who are under the care of workers from the Ministry of Education.

The percentage of female youth who study, or who work and study, is especially high (61%). In contrast, the percentage of youth of Arab origin who work is very high (79%) but very few study or work and study (4%). There is a high percentage of youth from the former USSR who study and work. (Kahan-Strawcynski, et al., 1999)

Among the youth of Arab origin, treatment focused on studies (68%), and work and social relations (48%), rather than on the emotional dimensions or family relations (18%). In comparison, treatment for youth who are of former USSR origin focused relatively less on studies (52%) and work (13%), nor did their treatment focus on the emotional and social aspects (20%) and family relations (19%). The treatment provided to immigrant youth focused on alcohol and drug abuse. This fits with the high percentage of immigrants who have reported using drugs and consuming alcohol. (Kahan-Strawcynski, et al, 1999)

A publication by Hovav, Golan and Wosner (1999) deals with the contribution of social work to the field of delinquents and youth advancement. It also discusses relevant research assessing various intervention programs for delinquents.

A number of the studies in this field examined the various aspects of methods of treating youth. For instance, Romi and Kohan (1999) discuss the influence of wilderness programs on changes in dropout youth. The findings of the research emphasized the differences between the groups, and especially the uniqueness of the group who participated in the wilderness program. Those that participated in the program increased their self-esteem and self-efficacy. In comparison, findings showed a decrease in respect in those who did not take part in these activities.

An additional study (Romi & Gathon, 2000), examined the unique traits of dropout youth of Ethiopian origin. The most significant finding revealed that the family's attitude is more important among the Ethiopian youth than it is to Israeli born dropout youth. This is an important finding since it has implications for the type of intervention needed in these cases. The usual procedure of removing dropout youth from their parent's home and away from the family misses the point for this population.

Other studies examined issues dealing with CYC workers and the systems that employ them. For example, Hamenachem (1995) describes his study about the problem of dropouts, adaptation difficulties, and violence among children and youth in schools in a southern Israeli town. The author recommends integrating a therapeutic educator (CYC worker (with the appropriate experience and qualifications) into the school and allowing the worker to intervene through informal bridging.

Romi (1999) investigated the level of the youth care worker's burnout in comparison to those working with normal youth, finding greater burnout among youth care workers. No correlation was found between years of work experience and the level of burnout. The findings indicate a need for a more in-depth investigation into the causes of burnout among youth care workers.

Grouper (1999) surveyed the history of the professionalism of the training for residential school educators in Israel and throughout the world. He noted the gap that exists between the desired role model and the existing worker and suggested ways of filling this gap. In the conclusion, he presented a multi-stage developmental model for advancing professionalism of residential school educators.

Bachar (1996), in her study, examined a combination of parameters to assess the effectiveness of workers in this field. Bachar proposed personal and environmental parameters that will predict the quality of performance of CYC workers according to their outlook. The findings revealed a positive and significant correlation between a worker's perception of the organizational climate and the perception of behavioral change in clients. No correlation was found between the worker's focused control and education and the perception of behavioral change. The findings of this study also showed that an open organizational environment clearly explains the dependent variable—high regard for the treated youth's behavioral change.

Romi (1999) conducted a two-phase study of average youth's attitudes toward integrating detached youth into normative youth settings. Phase I dealt with high school students and focused on gender differences in attitude. Phase II dealt with college students and focused on gender and field of studies differences. The findings indicated that normative youths' attitudes towards integrating detached youth were found to be positive. In addition, the findings of Phase II showed that there were no gender differences, nor any differences between social science students and natural science students.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The issue of the Child and Youth Care workers in Israel has developed with a continual drive towards professionalism. From a system employing "good-natured" workers who faithfully performed their work, a new system has emerged, employing professional practitioners with academic degrees who perceive their work as a source of professional development. The work, while a never-ending challenge, brings respect and status.

Nonetheless, it is still too early to be content with the changes that have occurred. In this era, the entire therapeutic and administrative system has advanced. Dilemmas such as those presented in this paper, are part of the present dialectic but an necessary part of further development of the field.

Professional and legal recognition similar to that of social workers and psychologists is required for CYC workers in order to better clarify professional boundaries. Furthermore, there is a need for a better, clearer and affirmative definition of the designated population for child and youth care work, despite its heterogeneous character.

Currently, there is both hope and expectation that this drive towards professionalism will continue, leading to significant professional advancement in the CYC field in Israel.

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