



**Research Report:
The Internationalisation of English Social Work —
The migration of German social work practitioners and ideas to England**

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BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Introduction

The internationalisation of social work is seen as a positive and dynamic aspect of contemporary practice in the UK (e.g. Conservative Party Commission on Social Workers 2007, GSCC 2008). In England, the study of internationalisation has focused on migration from 'Commonwealth' countries to the UK (e.g. Hussein et al 2011). However, little attention has been paid to the migration to England of social work practitioners, practices and ideas from other European Union (EU) countries.

Following the implementation of the EU single market directive, German social workers have been the significant group of EU trained social workers coming to work in Britain. There are, for instance, more social workers trained in Germany working in the UK than social workers trained in Ireland. Furthermore, Germany is the fifth largest international contributor to the social work workforce after Australia, USA, South Africa and India (Hussein et al 2011). There are, for instance, more employment agencies geared to the recruitment of German social workers than to the recruitment of social workers from the US, Canada, Nigeria or New Zealand (Hussein et al 2008). Interestingly, German social workers have been recruited not only to fill pressing vacancies but also to import the skills and perspectives associated with German social pedagogy into UK social care work. Historically the underlying principles of the German social work system have been quite different from the system in the UK (Lorenz, 1996). However, in the last decade there has been a noticeable increase in interest in England in German approaches to social work, particularly in social pedagogy in children's social work services (for example: Cameron 2004, Cameron and Moss 2011, DfES 2005).

Social workers from Germany

Since 1993 citizens of European Union (EU) member states have had the right to work within the European Union (Single European Act 1986), which makes it easy for UK employers to recruit social workers from Germany and for social workers trained in Germany to seek employment in the UK. While English is not their native language many have been taught English for nine years in secondary school and may also have continued to study English as part of their University degree. German social workers can work in England without a work permit or visa but, like their English colleagues, they need to register with a professional body in order to practise.

Social work in the UK grew out of a combination of different elements – poverty relief, settlement work and therapeutic work. Historically, qualifying social work courses in the UK have been offered at a range of academic levels, including pre degree, bachelor's and master's levels. Now qualifying social work courses in England are provided at either undergraduate or postgraduate (mostly master's) level. Course providers have to demonstrate that they comply with the educational standards for social workers developed by the Health and Social Care Professionals Council (HCPC), which approves qualifying

courses. In addition the Social Work Reform Board develops professional standards for social work which have now been adopted by the College of Social Work¹.

'Social worker' is now a protected title in England; its use is legally restricted and it can only be used by registered social workers. Registration of social workers started in April 2003 by the General Social Care Council (GSCC). The GSCC was later abolished and registration was transferred in August 2012 to the HCPC (Health and Social Care Act 2012). To register, social workers not only have to hold a social work qualification; they also have to meet additional requirements set by the HCPC. The registration body is also responsible for the degree recognition and registration of social workers who qualified abroad.

Initially the GSCC accepted a wide range of German social work and pedagogy degrees and required applicants to compile a portfolio and statement that demonstrated that they complied with the GSCC's code of conduct and values. However, from November 2008 the GSCC restricted the German degrees it recognised to:

- "the Bachelor of Arts: Soziale Arbeit awarded by a Fachhochschule or a University; or
- the Diplom Sozialarbeiter(in) (FH) awarded by a Fachhochschule; or
- the Diplom Sozialpaedagoge(in) awarded by a Fachhochschule or a University; or
- the Diplom Paedagoge(in), Studienrichtung either Sozialpaedagogik or Sozialarbeit awarded by a University; or
- the Diplom Sozialpaedagoge(in) (BA) awarded by a Berufsakademie" ²

At the same time it also introduced a requirement that applicants should have at least 130 days of supervised and assessed social work practice either as part of their professional course or following qualification. Once these criteria were met, German social professionals could register and work as fully qualified social workers in England.

The formal recognition of foreign social work qualifications allows foreign trained social workers to practise in England. However we should not confuse recognition with absolute similarity in practice culture. Professional structures within the EU vary and need to be studied carefully as "they cannot assume that the arrangements will fit neatly into a UK experience" (Davies Jones 1994, 26). The following section gives an overview over the professional background of German social workers.

¹ <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/pcf.aspx>, accessed: 22.12.2013

² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080602144138/http://www.gsc.org.uk/gsc/Templates/Anchor.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRORIGINALURL=%2fThe%2bSocial%2bCare%2bRegister%2fApply%2bfor%2bregistration%2fSocial%2bworkers%2btrained%2band%2bqualified%2boutside%2bthe%2bUK%2fCountry%2bassessment%2bguidance%2f&NRNODEGUID=%7bA9096040-1A3C-408F-811F-A78DF05C9EDF%7d&NRCACHEHINT=NoModifyGuest#12>, accessed: 30.9.2012

German Social Work

The German education system offers a number of different degrees to access the field of social work. Qualified social workers would have studied social work or social pedagogy at a university or university of applied sciences (Fachhochschule, similar to polytechnics in England).

Historically social work ('Sozialarbeit') degrees were taught at universities of applied sciences and developed from programmes taught at women's schools that focused on poor relief work. These courses tended to have a focus on working with adults. Social pedagogy ('Sozialpädagogik') courses were taught at universities and were strongly influenced by philosophy, theology and the youth movement and focused on youth welfare. Universities and universities of applied sciences can now offer both degrees and the boundary between social work and social pedagogy has become increasingly blurred. In an attempt to create an umbrella term for this joint field, 'Soziale Arbeit' (social work with capital letters) is used. The Bologna process — which has involved the harmonisation of qualifications in higher education across Europe— and the subsequent reorganisation of qualifications in Germany in line with BA and MA degrees—has accelerated the breakdown in distinctions between programmes offering social work, social pedagogy and Soziale Arbeit. This process has made it increasingly difficult to specify what a student who qualified as a social worker in Germany would have covered as part of their degree. German universities have always had a lot of freedom to set their curricula. Before the changes resulting from the Bologna process there were framework study guidelines that were valid for all universities and gave a rough idea of what students should be required to cover during their time at university. However, under the Bologna process, only the degree structure is prescribed — there is now no framework governing the content.

In the last 10 years there has been an increasing interest in social pedagogy amongst British policy-makers and academics (see below). The majority, if not all, social workers recruited from Germany will have studied social pedagogy as part of their degree. Social pedagogy is well established in Germany (and in many other European countries). However, in England profession and policy engagement with social pedagogy is a more recent phenomenon.

Social Pedagogy - an introduction

Social pedagogy approaches social problems through education outside the school curriculum. Personal development and human growth are encouraged in order to enable individuals to participate fully as members of society. In that sense it is normative, focusing on integration into society:

Social pedagogy concentrates on questions of the integration of the individual in society, both in theory and in practice. It aims to alleviate social exclusion. It deals with the processes of human growth that tie people to the systems, institutions and communities that are important to their well-being and life management. The basic idea of social pedagogy is to promote people's social functioning, inclusion,

participation, social identity and social competence as members of society.
(Hämäläinen, 2003, 76)

Social pedagogy is, therefore, closely linked to ideas of social citizenship. It effects social change by empowering individuals and groups within a community. Thus it is different from focused political approaches to societal change:

While political action strives towards a goal by affecting the external elements of society, that is structures, institutions and legislation, pedagogical action aspires to changing society by influencing the personal in society, that is people, morals and culture. (Hämäläinen, 2003, 76)

Social pedagogy is based on respect for individuals and the belief that everyone has the ability to change and to participate in society, given the right support, knowledge and opportunities for individual development. Whilst it approaches social problems through the individual or groups of individuals, its focus is on society as a whole and the integration of the individual into society. Social pedagogy is not deficit oriented but regards all human beings as being in need of guidance in order to reach their full potential (Lorenz, 2008, Davies Jones 1994). Eichsteller and Holthoff, for instance, note that: "the fundamental notion underpinning social pedagogy, [is] that human beings are intrinsically rich, full of potential, abilities, knowledge and resources. And whether they are children, parents or other members of the community, they all deserve to be respected and valued as human beings." (2011, 39)

The knowledge base of social pedagogy is interdisciplinary, drawing on sociology, psychology, educational science and philosophy. The selection of theories and authors covered varies between universities (as noted above). What unites social pedagogues is the idea of an inner attitude ('Haltung'), a shared conceptual foundation that: "...determines how we meet other people, how we engage with them and ultimately how much we can touch their lives in a positive and profound way. The most fundamental resource available to the professionals is, therefore, the person within." (Eichsteller and Holthoff 2011, 48)

In summary social pedagogues mediate between the individual and society. They build relationships and trust with their clients and engage with them within the individual's everyday reality. The aim is to offer learning situations that empower clients to become more competent in managing their lives.

Social Pedagogy in England

Social pedagogy has been linked to initiatives in England such as the Connexions personal adviser for young people (Higham, 2001) and the Sure Start Children's Centres introduced from 1999 onwards (Petrie and Cameron 2009). However, at a policy level the first clear engagement with the notion of social pedagogy was in the *Children's Workforce Strategy* Consultation Document, where it is seen as a good match for English practice:

Pedagogues are generalists. Their uniquely broad training with its theoretical, personal and practical content ideally fits them for outcome-focused work with children, including those with significant developmental need. Pedagogy, as it is understood in Europe, is an overarching concept that, if applied in England, could bring greater coherence to children's services. (DfES, 2005, 48-49)

Coussée et al. see the interest in social pedagogy in England emerging in the context of three criticisms of services for children and young people:

- The fragmentation of care through the division in health, education, social work, justice and care
- A demotivated and poorly qualified workforce, especially in the workers who do direct work with children such as family support workers, residential care workers and foster carers
- That too little attention is paid to relationships with children and young people in professional practice (2010, 791-793).

Interestingly, implementation and adoption of social pedagogy in England has focused on unqualified support workers in the areas of early years, foster care and residential care. The aim has been to raise standards and introduce professional qualifications with the hope that this will result in better outcomes for children and young people (Kornbek and Rosendal Jensen 2009). In the 2007 White Paper *Care Matters: Time for Change* the government announced it would : "fund a pilot programme to evaluate the effectiveness of social pedagogy in residential care" (DfES, 2007, 58). For this pilot project social pedagogues from Germany and Denmark were recruited to work in English children's homes. The aim of the project was to find out if "a social pedagogic approach would be likely to have a positive effect within the context of English residential children's homes" (Berridge et. al. 2011, 11). The evaluation showed no better outcomes for children and young people in the children's homes employing social pedagogues than in homes that did not. However, the evaluation report also noted that placing one or two, often inexperienced, social pedagogues in a residential home, as was the case in several of the homes in the pilot study, was unlikely to have an impact on organisational culture and practice.

Interest in social pedagogy initiatives has now increasingly shifted to training the English workforce rather than recruiting social pedagogues from Germany. Currently several organisations offer social pedagogy training courses, mainly targeted at support workers in residential care and children's care, and foster carers.

However, the application of social pedagogy to the limited area of unqualified support workers in the areas of early years, foster care and residential care has been criticised:

The import of social pedagogy must be framed in a fundamental discussion on the place of children and young people in our society and the role social work plays and could play in the space between individual and society. The reduction of these questions to a discussion on a better organization of residential child and youth

care is not social pedagogical and will not credit to the realizations in the field.
(Coussée et al 2010, 801)

Alongside strategic moves by agencies to introduce social pedagogy into residential childcare in England, German social pedagogues have also entered the social care workforce in England through a different route. They have been recruited to fill vacant social work posts in statutory social work services. A few Local Authorities specifically recruited social pedagogues to introduce social pedagogy into social work practice with children and families. However, the majority of Local Authorities recruited from abroad because they could otherwise not fill their vacant positions. Little is known about the experiences of these workers.

A particularly interesting aspect of the experience of these German social pedagogues is what it can tell us about practices in English social work. As outsiders on the inside they can offer a critical perspective on practice. Social pedagogy, for instance, assumes a broad focus on society and the support society can offer — an interesting perspective from which to observe current social work with children and families in England. Furthermore, the adoption of social pedagogy in English social care is linked to re-thinking of current social work practice (Cameron and Moss 2011, 14) and the recovery of earlier ideas and practices in social work such as community social work (e.g. Barclay 1982). As part of this process it is important to remember, as mentioned in the opening section, that social work in England and social pedagogy/social work in Germany have their own histories of development and current contexts of practice and that English social pedagogy is likely to develop its own character and theoretical understanding of its own role and practice (Petrie and Cameron 2009, 164).

RESEARCH QUESTION AND DESIGN

This study explores how ideas and concepts in social professional practice travel, and the process of cross-cultural exchange in social work practice. The study looks at these themes through the experiences of German social workers and social pedagogues working in England. The foci of the research with this group of practitioners were:

- Participants' experiences and perceptions of social work in England, and what this could tell us about the extent and nature of continuing differences or growing similarities in practice in the two countries;
- Their understanding of social pedagogy; and
- How the idea of social pedagogy has been translated from its context of origin (Germany) to a new context of use (England).

The questions embedded in the research relate to assumptions and practices that are rooted in specific cultural and linguistic settings. The terminology and concepts we wanted to explore relate to particular practice and policy contexts. Accordingly we felt that it was important that the research design was sufficiently flexible and dialogic to enable practitioners to provide sufficient background information, the context, to allow us as researchers (and you as reader) to understand the practitioners' experiences and responses (Lincoln and Guba 2000). These concerns suggested a qualitative design.

This study explores concepts which are rooted in specific cultural and linguistic settings. The terminology and concepts may not be easily translatable from one context to the other. In recognition of this, one researcher was a German and English speaker and the other Anglophone. We were also aware that language was likely to be an issue in the interviews. While participants were working in England and were fluent English speakers, they might feel more confident in talking about some of their experiences and ideas in German and they would probably switch between the two languages in an interview to better convey ideas from each context. Accordingly the interviews were conducted by the bi-lingual researcher, who had also studied and practised as a social pedagogue in Germany and as a social worker in England.

The study was reviewed and approved in line with the university's research ethics guidelines (RHUL 2010). Interviewees were invited to participate on the basis of informed consent (they were provided with an information sheet about the research that also detailed their right to withdraw from the study at any point). The parameters of confidentiality were also discussed, and that data from the study would be anonymised.

Eleven people were recruited as interviewees for the study. The first two— a German university professor and a recruiter based in England who specialises in recruiting German social workers and social pedagogues — were recruited through personal contact and

enabled us to gain background knowledge of issues and to access to networks to approach potential interviewees.

Further research participants were recruited via the UK Social Pedagogy Development Network, the Deutsche in London (Germans in London) internet forum and word of mouth referrals of participants. Two interviewees were social pedagogy training providers. They also served as key informants in terms of having a broad awareness of the links between Germany and England in relation to developing approaches to social pedagogy.

The seven remaining interviewees had all qualified in Germany, were registered with the GSCC and had experience of working in social services, in either their current or previous posts. The areas of work that the participants worked in included Children's Services, Adult Services, Virtual School and Learning and Development. Five of the social workers had worked in Germany before coming to England; two came to England straight after graduating and started their first job in England. All but one — who had left to return to Germany — were still working in social work in England. Four had a combined degree in social work / social pedagogy and three were qualified social pedagogues. Most of this group (four) were working as social workers, and the fact that they had been trained in Germany seems to have been incidental to their employment. Two participants had specifically been recruited because of their social pedagogy degrees, and another had originally worked as a social worker but was subsequently offered a management position related to social pedagogy.

Data were collected by interview. Interviews were conducted face to face (5) or on the phone (6). One of the interviews was held as a group interview with three participants, who took turns to respond. In line with the explorative nature of the study the interviews were semi-structured (Meuser and Nagel, 1991; Lamnek, 1995, 40; Meuser and Nagel, 1997). The interviews were supported by a topic guide (see appendix) that left enough room for interviewees to talk about additional aspects that were of importance to them.

The interviews were transcribed in the language in which they were recorded, and the German interviews translated into English. The data were analysed independently by each researcher. We then liaised, discussed and agreed the analysis. Any difference in analysis was resolved with reference to the original German transcript. Quotations have been translated for an English language readership.

FINDINGS

Understanding Social Pedagogy

All interviewees were asked to explain how they understood the idea of 'social pedagogy'. The understanding of social pedagogy was consistent between the participants and included not only common conceptual elements but was often presented using the same specific terms and phrases.

Interviewees explained that the foundation for social pedagogy is a positive idea of people:

The most profound principle is helping people to fulfil their potential. This includes that I as a social pedagogue need to be able to see their potential, value their potential and help that person recognise it when they perhaps might not be able to recognise it themselves. (11)

The interviewees identified another key aspect of social pedagogy as the creation of learning situations for people to facilitate individual change and development: "Enabling people to do what they are able to do, but might not be able to do by themselves at that time." (19). They explained that using creativity was an essential part of the task of supporting people to reach this potential: "... you use different approaches and creative ways to support people in their personal development or support people in different life situations and crisis, to work in a person centred way and to be responsive to the individual" (18).

Important aspects of creativity identified by the interviewees relate to how the social pedagogue uses him or her self as a temporary companion and tutor whose aim it is to become unnecessary in the service user's life.

Social pedagogy to me is the learning and teaching of skills. The children, young people and adults learn through you acting as a role model, using your own personal skills, incorporate a lot of your own individuality, for example if I am a volleyball player then it makes sense that I play volleyball with the young people, a lot is prevention, that one starts before something happens, that you involve the client and let them do it, guide them to help themselves, so that it is clear at some point that they should be able to do it themselves. (17)

Creativity also included recognising and helping the young people and adults to recognise their own resources and resources in the broader social environment that might help:

To support a person to become as independent as possible, to make use of all their resources, almost everything a person needs they already have but there are things around them or within them that they can't access them so my job is it to support them on their journey to independency to have access to all the resources they have and to make myself unnecessary for them in the long run. (13)

The interviewees emphasised the role of the social pedagogue in creating learning situations tailor-made to the client, starting from the client's own position and recognising their potential : *"I have this strong belief that a person is always able to learn and to reach her independence and it might look to everyone else like they are not independent but they are always able to learn something."* (13) This approach is also underpinned by a strong sense of respect for the person as an active human actor: *"I am on the same level as the people I work with, I initiate learning situations, try to empower the children and families I work with, so they can cope with life."*(15)

While the social and political aspect of social pedagogy is an essential part in academic discourses, this was only mentioned by four participants. These interviewees were quite clear that well-being is not only the goal for the individual in isolation but also an aim that reflects people living together as members of society.

For me it is not only the upbringing of children or the good upbringing of children, it is actually the good living together of all of us. (110)

The aim is always to make society even fairer than it is already and not to be content with structures or conditions. Part of the work is always to change society. (14)

Responses to other questions suggest that the interviewees who did not mention the political and organisational context had not overlooked this aspect of social pedagogic practice; they tended to speak about it more generally in relation to their work.

I always had a political consciousness for democratic processes as part of social pedagogy. It annoys me here, I am alert, I will bring it up in team meetings when political substance is missing. (15)

In summary social pedagogy was characterised across the interviews as: *A very respectful way to work with people who are in need (19)* Another person uses Pestalozzi's widely quoted idea of social pedagogy as learning by *"head, heart and hand; learning by doing rather than 'I told you so'"* (110).

Experience of working in England

In order to work as a qualified social worker in England the social pedagogues had to register with the GSCC (General Social Care Council)³. They were pleased that they could register and work as qualified social workers without any further training. Some reported initial language difficulties that they overcame quickly.

Obviously language wise it is difficult at the beginning. When you think you understand everything and then you misunderstood it. [...] I believe the first days are always exhausting. (17)

Regardless of how long they have been working in England all interviewees identified and evaluated their practice against the ideal of their understanding of social pedagogy.

A few participants were disappointed that their English colleagues knew so little about social pedagogy, even in those Local Authorities where they had been specially recruited as social pedagogues. The insularity was not one-sided; it was also reflected in some of the interviewees' own relationships to English social work. Whilst one interviewee, for instance, noted that: *"The organisation is open enough to employ us, but don't want to know any more about our education" (16)*, this person also commented: *"I have not engaged with the differences in education in Germany and England and how it could be utilised." (16)*

For those working as social workers, engagement with English social work practice gave rise to tensions in their day-to-day work, particularly in adapting the way they wanted to work to the English context. For instance :

I found it very different, not easy at the beginning (17)

I realised very quickly that it was difficult and distinctively different from what I was used to. (15)

The work in the residential children's home was quite a shock (16)

Many of the interviewees had expected that they would be involved in direct work with families and supporting younger people in gaining the skills they need to live an independent life without social services' involvement. What they found was a system structured around procedures, hierarchies and control. The interview participants measured their experience in English social work against the ability to build relationships and do direct work. Their attempts to do so collided with their experiences of paperwork, managers and the law .

³ All interviews were conducted before responsibility was transferred to HCPC

Some participants, for instance, commented on the level of paperwork and "box ticking" that took up a significant amount of their workday:

What I found a massive challenge in the Looked After Children's Team was the huge amount of paperwork that we had to do. It was simply not possible to do the direct work with the young person and sometimes parents and the paperwork and court preparations and adoption. (15)

The hierarchy in social services was another area where the participants felt their professional autonomy was limited, especially when managers asked them to implement decisions with which they disagreed. A persistent tension identified by interviewees was a conflict between the German expectation to employ discretion and creativity in their work in building relationships versus an English approach that was quite closed, instrumental and hierarchical.

First time I realised something different, was my manager turning around after I told her that a foster carer a foster child should not be in a taxi. [The manager] saying: "She is doing what we tell her, we pay her". First time I thought there is something significantly different in this country, I need to look into that. That was the first time I felt like relationship doesn't really count. We are not sitting here as all professionals around a child. And then later in social work I realised quite quickly it is all down to the social worker. But somehow not. In the sense, I don't know if you felt that, you do everything but lots of people have an influence on your decision making.(10)

The criticisms of English practice and differences from German practice that the interview participants raised in the interviews relate to the lack of opportunity to work directly with families and build relationships that facilitate sustainable change. This is, at least in Children's Services, partly rooted in the focus on the law as it relates to child protection in social work practice. The Children Act 1989 makes provisions for family support services in Sec.17, but budget constraints mean that most of the actual work done by social workers in Children's Services is related to child protection (sec 47). The participants saw this as a hindrance to building trusting relationships with their clients.

Child protection is always in the background and prevents us from building a trusting relationship because child protection issues have to be always in the foreground, if a manager feels in supervision it [a case] is a child protection issue then I have to act on it, then it gets very controlling, the interaction between social worker and families harden quickly (15)

The fact that prevention is such a marginal area of social work with children and families in England led one interviewee to comment "we are always the fire brigade" (15) and another to say: "your role is to control and monitor" (16). A social worker in child protection described her job as "where I did the supervising of the children's parents, well different from home" (110).

This is quite different from the experience of those interviewees who had also practised in Germany. These interviewees felt that the powers of child protection that social workers have in relation to decisions about the child in the family make it difficult for them to build meaningful relationships with their clients. The risk of having one's children removed or adopted was felt as a constant tension undermining any attempt to build the trust of parents.

Interviewees also spoke about a distinctive and very different understanding (to theirs) of 'the client' in English law, policy and practice:

In child protection I am mainly concerned with this one child, if the parent of that child is, for example, another child — I had 16 years old for example — but from a child protection point it [the case] was about a baby, the mum turns into an adult and there are even different social workers involved [...] Lots of professionals involved but not working together and not having a holistic view of supporting them [the young parent and her baby]. (I10)

The interviewees contrasted this approach to the way in which the case would be approached in Germany, where the social pedagogues would work with all family members. In England, with the exception of two interview participants who worked in Local Authorities that are using a systemic approach to social work, interviewees felt that the focus was on immediate action and responding to situations rather than considering things in the longer term, and from a more holistic perspective:

... however adoption break downs, care break downs and teenagers turning back to their families shows us, shall we not work with them and use the time instead of taking their kids into care or for adoption and then dealing with it a few years later again. (I10)

Interviewees commented on their discomfort with the idea that parents can be told what to do, as part of a child protection plan, without receiving the support they need in order to meet the requirements of the plan. They saw this as alien to social pedagogues:

If this mum could have started on her journey to help herself by herself I am sure she would have done it years ago, why are we not supporting her? Why is there nobody supporting her, going with her to a session? (I10)

Underpinning this perspective is the view that people can change for the better — where they have the personal resources and abilities — and a commitment to working in practical ways with families to help them: *"That I have a fundamental belief that we need to work with people in their life world and support them with our hands not just with the good ideas and the once a months visit." (I10)*

The idea of a person's 'life-world' mentioned by this interviewee is a fundamental part of German social pedagogy and shows the importance of direct work as part of social pedagogy. Several interviewees drew on this notion to contrast the hands-on approach of social pedagogy with the hands-off expectations of social work practice in England.

In one organisation, during the pilot project, the social pedagogues were used to taxi the young people and take them to clubs - which they enjoyed because it was a chance to be directly with the kids - but everyone else [the professional staff] thought: "Let them do it so that we don't have to". (I1)

England is unfamiliar with a certain way of working. For example taking a young person to a museum is more than a visit, it is a learning experience (planning where to go, experience, reflect on experience). In England this was at first seen as offering spare time activities that everyone could offer. I had to explain [my professional] reasons to British colleagues (I3)

The interviewees also spoke about the dilemmas they faced in adapting their ideas of [social pedagogic] professional practice to the expectations of the organisation within which they were now employed:

I have to constantly decide in how far I use my social pedagogic ideas to work with the families or in how far I take the typical social worker role to patronise and to say: "This and that needs to be done by my next visit" and do the paperwork that comes with it. In addition to that we do not have a lot of resources to offer families, so either I do the work or nobody does it. (I5)

Many interviewees were astonished that in England direct work with children and families tended to be handed over to support workers with little if any training. One interviewee for instance was:

Speechless! That a society thinks it is good enough to hand young people who have been in foster care into the hands of people who previously worked as bus drivers, mothers or lollipop ladies. Then we give them a group leader certificate [basic training] and then that's enough. I find that a political and societal slap in the face for children and young people. (I4)

In the light of many of the differences described above, we also asked the interviewees how they felt social pedagogy could fit into the English system.

Social pedagogy and contemporary practice in England

Given the tensions interviewees identified between the social pedagogic approach and contemporary practice in England, we were interested in hearing from the interview participants what they thought social pedagogy could offer English children and families social work. Social pedagogy as a term might be new in the English context, but its principles can connect with ideas of social work that might be buried in contemporary practice. One participant, for instance, started with the following hypothesis:

Social pedagogy is an anchor to legitimate talking about certain things that have become harder in a tightly structured and bureaucratic social work. (I2)

This view was reflected in other interviewees' comments. Interviewees who had been involved in training social work professionals described the value of social pedagogy in the English context in terms of its ability to provide a language to reconnect with something that is present in good social care practice but which has somehow been pushed below the surface:

We concluded that social pedagogy could almost enable youth workers to reconnect with their roots and give them a framework and some of the concepts that might help them articulate the value of working with children and young people without thinking about outcomes in the first place but just creating learning situations. (I1)

Similarly for residential childcare workers:

It helped them articulate something they kind of knew had value but couldn't describe it and I think often could not value it as highly as they should have. (I1)

One interviewee reported the reaction of English social workers and support workers during a social pedagogy training session she ran as: *Actually, it is a lot of what I am doing already but this gives me the language (I10).*

For many interviewees the experience of working in England had caused them to reflect on their own understanding of their professional identity and role. In one case, for instance, working in England reinforced the interviewee's particular identity as a social pedagogue:

I work here differently from my colleagues but I also had colleagues in Germany that worked differently, have never thought that this is due to the difference between social work/social pedagogy. Only since discussion started here I look at it and think "actually I am a social pedagogue" before that I never thought about differences and professional boundaries. (I6)

Two interviewees worked for Local Authorities who were promoting a 'new' systemic approach to social work in terms of taking the whole family into account. The first response of one of these practitioners was: *"What is so special about it? That is what we do anyway."*(I7)

Differences between practice in England and Germany

Some interviewees were critical of what they saw as the absence of a culture of professional dialogue in the teams in which they had worked. Topics of political importance, such as the high number of teenage mothers in one Local Authority, did not lead to open debates exploring the bigger issues involving social workers and other front line staff, as would have been the case in Germany (I4).

In Germany social pedagogy is not only firmly embedded in the professional identity of those working in child and youth welfare but it is also a part of wider society. For example some toys are endorsed as 'pädagogisch wertvoll' (having high educational value), which is considered a sign of quality and suggests that parents can use the toy to support their child's development. The presence of and reference to pedagogy in everyday life means that in Germany most people would have an awareness of the nature of pedagogy (I3).

While interviewees perceived English social work as very formal and mainly concerned with crisis intervention, they also commented that systems for getting help were much quicker in England compared to Germany (where it takes much longer to get support in place). However, behind this there was also a critique of English social work practice which reflected, for one interviewee, an: *"... idea of man of social workers— so different from mine — more at arm's length, not so committed, not supportive but more looking to pass on to somebody else."* (I5)

One interviewee also commented on what they saw as a focus on career advancement in English social work — going up the ladder [into management], rather than in staying in practice. They saw a concern in English social work for advancement as primary: "Where do I want to go?" rather than "How do I get settled in this job?" (I4). In Germany people tend to stay longer in one post as the hierarchy is flatter. As a result the turnover is lower and social pedagogues can build relationships over time and work with the families long-term. Another participant (I10) commented on how uneasy she feels working as an agency social worker in different settings, as it does not allow her to build relationships over a period of time.

The interviewees also tended to see themselves as possessing a wider range of skills than their English counterparts. This was reflected, for instance, in their view of English social work education as much narrower than the training regime for social pedagogy degree and they were worried that they might lose some of their skills while working in England.

I do forget what I learnt when the opportunity to work directly with families arises like how to structure questions. You have to be very pro-active and self motivated to invest in your professional development and not de-skill (I5)

Probably the most widely discussed difference between German social pedagogues and their English colleagues was in the approach to risk. Adventure and real life experiences are an essential part of social pedagogy in supporting people – especially young people – to gain independence and to master skills. Additionally, activities are used to build relationships with clients. For example if a social pedagogue likes to play football he could use these skills to bond with the young people he works with. English social workers were seen as risk averse and limited by health and safety concerns and risk assessments. One interviewee spoke of wanting: "...to go for a run with a young person in city park, but the manager did not allow it as risks were considered too high" (I5). She was allowed to run on school grounds. This, she added: 'Was my first experience with risk avoidance which I have experienced here a lot since.' (I5) This interviewee went further in linking the sometimes violent behaviour of youth she experiences in her work to the patronising attitude of teachers, parents and social workers and the lack of safe spaces where children can make mistakes and learn to judge risks for themselves. Another interviewee also talked about feeling limited by the risk aversion culture in English social work: "Social pedagogy has a very common sense approach and it doesn't need a risk assessment every time you think about doing something." (I9)

Interestingly, those who offer social pedagogy training in England also saw risk aversion as one of the biggest hurdle to overcome but at the same time they felt the restriction was often a mind-set issue rather than real health and safety issues. One trainer, for instance, said that: "during social pedagogy training we held 'myth-busting' groups with health and safety executives who explained what is required. This led to simplified risk assessments" (I1)

However, interviewees experiences of English social work was not exclusively negative. Several interviewees talked about what they felt social pedagogy and German social care could learn from English practice.

Two participants (I1, I4), for instance, focused on the emphasis on children's rights and children's participation, particularly involving children and young people in decision-making, in England. They felt that this aspect of practice was much better developed in England than in Germany. They noted that there has been interest in this area of practice in Germany for many years and that ideas have been exported from the UK, but so far, this idea of rights based practice and participative decision-making are still not anchored in structures of German youth work and training.

One of these interviewees (I1) also highlighted the quality of policies in residential childcare which deal with violence. The policy focused on violence and frustration in communication

and by relating violence to problems in communication this provided a framework for helping the young person to work through issues (in contrast to his experience in Denmark, where children were excluded from children's homes when they are violent).

The overwhelming majority of interviewees worked with children and families. An interviewee who worked in adult services commented on the much wider range of social services for older people in England than in Germany, where the responsibility for the provision is often with a Wohlfahrtsverband (welfare association) or a care insurance organisation (18). This interviewee also felt that institutionalisation was a significant problem for people with disabilities in Germany. In contrast, the English system of community care allowed more people to live as they chose and actively sought to respect their dignity.

Another aspect of adult services that was mentioned in a positive light was The Mental Capacity Act; particularly its situational definition of capacity, and its emphasis on the presumption in favour of individual's involvement in decision-making. She felt that she could not see this approach to capacity being put into operation in Germany. Overall, in adult services, she felt that the English system was more flexible and more geared to offer support to people and involving them in decision-making. Person-centred care also made it possible to take individual and family situations into account and to be more flexible than in Germany.

The context of practice

One issue that was raised in some of the interviews was the different level of need amongst English services users that service users in Germany. One of the interviewees, for instance, observed that: *"in the UK everything is just that much worse [than in Germany]... in Germany I would start work at a completely different level"* (14). The level of need influenced the nature of work and the level at which the practitioners could intervene. Another interviewee (16) commented on the very different nature of work and client group concerns she had experienced in her professional practice in Germany and England. In Germany she had worked with young women from comfortable middle class backgrounds in a [single sex] children's home with a stable staff and residents group. This was in contrast to her experience in England, where she worked in a residential home where the young people were from families suffering from high levels of deprivation. This care environment was unstable because of the high turnover of both residents and staff. She was particularly struck by how work often couldn't move beyond helping young people cope with feeling unsettled in the residential home to look at more fundamental issues in their lives.

In addition to these issues in practice and positive lessons they had been learning about English social work, the interviewees also commented on working in social services

organisations in England. Their overwhelming concern was that Germany should avoid the excesses of Managerialism they encountered day-to-day in English social care services.

[The UK is] showing that you don't want to go down the routes of managerialism, outcome focus and all of that because it does not improve outcomes. (I1)

The legal and regulatory frameworks within which social work is practiced in England raised some interesting observations for interviewees. One participant spoke about the differences in law and the processes around child protection in England and Germany. This participant commented: *"In Germany I felt more trusted within my organisation but less trusted from the outside" (I10)*. She felt that it might be beneficial to adapt the child protection powers in Germany to give social pedagogues more standing with prosecutors without jeopardising the social pedagogues' ability to build relationships with their clients. Another participant was very impressed by the system of professional regulation, particularly the requirement to demonstrate on-going training and up-to-dateness in practice to retain registration (I3).

A few participants commented on different aspects of the work setting. One social worker commented positively on the better opportunities in England for climbing the career ladder quickly, and he found the training opportunities more accessible and interesting (I7). Another participant liked the working attitude of her team: "Yes we can do it, we work as a team", which in her opinion was somewhat missing in Germany (I9).

CONCLUSION

Social work in England has a significant international dimension. The study of this international dimension has tended to focus on professional migration to England from the Anglophone countries. In this study, however, we have considered a largely un-researched migrant group: German trained social workers in England. German trained social workers are an interesting group amongst non UK-trained social workers working in England because their movement has influenced an interest in England in the practice and idea of social pedagogy. In this study we set out to explore the encounter of practices, ideas and concepts of German social pedagogues who work as social workers in England.

For all the social pedagogues we interviewed the ideas and concepts of social pedagogy are a central aspect of their professional identity. The interviewees had to adapt their practice to fit into the English legal framework and organisational policies but this has not changed their professional foundation and beliefs. However their commitment to social pedagogy seems not to have changed even after having worked for several years in England. This causes a tension between their expectations of how they should work, namely working directly with families to foster change, and the reality of working in a hierarchical system built around procedures and control. At the moment, they feel that direct work with clients

is degraded in England and reflected in the low level of remuneration for the work and in the poor qualification levels of many support workers. In Germany direct work is the most important part of social pedagogy. From this point of view social pedagogy could help professionalise the youth work and community work sector and increase support worker skill levels.

Despite the fact that some social pedagogues have specifically been brought into teams to stimulate new ways of working, we found little exchange or debate between German and English social workers on the underlying philosophy of the work they are doing. This might be due to an absence of a shared culture of professional dialogue. Some interviewees provide social pedagogy training and are involved in this professionalising the support workforce in children and families. However, dialogue between social pedagogues and social workers seems to be limited by dismissal of each approach from both parties – reflected in English lack of interest and German dismissal of professionalism in aspects of English social work. It would be interesting to interview English social workers who work with the social pedagogues, or who have worked in a country where social pedagogy is dominant, to appreciate the extent to which their experiences might mirror the experiences of German social pedagogues in England.

The German social pedagogues find it challenging to work in England. All came with a strong sense of the importance of working directly with their clients and building relationships. They have found it difficult to realise these goals in their practice in England. However, there is also a sense in which they have sought to adapt to the English context, e.g. seeking to integrate their understanding of building human relationships with practice in England that is dominated by a culture of standardised tasks, parsimony and intrusive management.

Despite the current struggles, most of the interview participants feel that there is a future for social pedagogy in England. They see the introduction of social pedagogy—albeit a new, particularly English, form of social pedagogy—as a development that might take a few generations to be established and to adapt itself to a professional environment that seems responsive to its principles, and to cope with/survive the current culture of new public management. However, two participants also voice a concern that social pedagogy might be ghettoised in residential care and children’s social care and lose its connection with social care professional practice [i.e. social work] in the translation to the English context. Another participant has a more fundamental concern about the culture of social work practice in England. She feels that social pedagogy could not be fully implemented because of the intrusive nature of many organisational policies and the 'health and safety' risk averse/defensive culture permeating contemporary practice.

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Appendices

Interview topic guide

- What led you to come to England to practice?
- What prior work experience did you have?
- How did you find it working in England? What struck you as unusual? What are similarities / differences?
- Did this meet your expectations?

- Was social pedagogy a factor in you being offered the post?
- How important is social pedagogy for your professional understanding?
- Why do you think it is important?
- Where did you develop this understanding?
- Could you define social pedagogy for me?
- Can you apply it in your post?
- What do you think can social pedagogy add to English practice?

- Is there anything that you think English practice can add to social pedagogy?

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Consent Form

Are you a GSCC registered social worker?

Do you hold a degree in social pedagogy from Germany?

Do you currently work in England?

Would you like to share your experiences?

If your answers to these questions are 'yes' you are invited to take part in a research study:

The Internationalisation of Social Work:

The Migration of German Social Work Practitioners and Ideas to England

Please read through the information in this leaflet before deciding whether to take part.

Contact Details

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My name is Dr Katrin Bain. I am a researcher at Royal Holloway University of London. I am conducting this research study with Prof Tony Evans. The study is financed by a University research grant.

In this research project we want to find out how German social pedagogues perceive social work in England.

The results of the study will be used to inform research and practice in Germany and Britain through seminars, presentations and publications.

As part of the study I would like to talk to social pedagogues about their experiences of working in England. These interviews will be conducted over the phone at a time suitable for you and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I would like to record the interviews, as this will provide an accurate record of what has been said. The tapes will be stored on a password-secured computer. The data might be transcribed and anonymised for use in the study. Confidentiality will be strictly observed.

Your participation in the research study will help me to get an accurate understanding of current practice in social work and thereby contribute to cross-national exchange of knowledge between Germany and Britain.

If you are willing to participate in the research, I would be grateful if you would complete the attached pages and arrange an interview date with me. My contact details are printed on the bottom of this leaflet. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw from the interview at any stage without notice or explanation.

If you would like to we can send you a copy of the study findings at a later stage.

THIS SHEET CONFIRMS YOUR CONCENT . IT WILL BE KEPT SEPERATELY FROM THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND INFORMATION SHEET AND THE INTERVIEW RECORDING.

Interview Number: _____

Name: _____

Contact telephone number: _____

E-Mail: _____

I have received and read a copy of the research information sheet and I am aware of the purpose of the research. I understand that any information I contribute will be on an anonymous basis and will be treated in strict confidence. I also understand that information given in interviews does not enjoy legal privilege.

I agree to be interviewed and for the information to be used in the research study. I agree to the interview being recorded and that anonymous quotations can be used in the final research report and/or other publications.

I understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any time, if I choose to do so.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Interview-Nr. _____

Age: _____

Female

Male

Ethnicity: _____

1 Social Work Qualification

Type of qualification: _____

Year of graduation: _____

Country in which qualification was gained: _____

2 Work experience in Germany

Job title: _____

Length of time in job: _____

3 Work experience in England

Job title: _____

Length of time in social work: _____

Length of time in current job: _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview!