**The Internationalisation of English Social Work - The migration of German social work practitioners and ideas to England**

**Abstract**

The internationalisation of social work is a positive and dynamic aspect of contemporary practice. In England, the study of internationalisation has focused on migration from Anglophone countries to the UK. However, less attention has been paid to the migration of social work practitioners and ideas from other European Union (EU) countries. Germany has been one of the main sources of professional migrants from other parts of Europe. It has also been a source of influential ideas, particularly social pedagogy, with many German social workers actively recruited to English authorities to introduce social pedagogic practices. The article presents the findings from a qualitative study examining the experiences of German social workers working in England. The study was primarily concerned with what the perspectives and experiences of these practitioners can tell us about similarities and differences in practice between the two countries. While interviewees reported that they adapted their practice to fit with English statutory social work — they continued to see themselves as social pedagogues. This resulted in a tension between their expectations of practice, especially working directly with families to foster change, and the reality of working in a hierarchical system built around procedures and control.

**Introduction**

The internationalisation of social work is 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 of social work practitioners, practices and ideas from other European Union (EU) countries to England.

Following the implementation of the single market directive (Single European Act 1986) other EU 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. German social workers have been a significant group of EU trained social workers coming to work in Britain. Germany is the fifth largest international contributor to the social work workforce after Australia, USA, South Africa and India (Hussein et al 2011) and by far the largest source of European Economic Area social workers (Moriatry et al 2012).

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).

This interest in social pedagogy is part of wider calls to re-introduce a social work practice that offers preventative family support services, works with families rather than just the child and builds relationships rather than focussing on standardisation and documentation (Featherstone et all. 2012, Featherstone et all. 2014, Gupta et all. 2014,). In this context social pedagogy is only one of several frameworks to talk about these 'lost' aspects of social work practice.

**Social work in England and Germany**

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 developed professional standards for social work — the Professional Capabilities Framework — that have now been adopted by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW).

'Social worker' is a protected title in England; the title is legally restricted and it can only be used by registered social workers. Registration is the responsibility of 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 HCPC is also responsible for the degree recognition and registration of social workers who qualified abroad.

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 of the professional background of German social workers.

The German education system offers a number of different degrees to access the field of social work. 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 boundaries between social work and social pedagogy have 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 —the harmonisation of qualifications in higher education across Europe — and the subsequent reorganisation of qualifications 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 in Germany would have covered as part of their degree. However, the majority, if not all, social workers recruited from Germany will have studied social pedagogy as part of their degree. Social pedagogy as a field of study and an occupation is well established in Germany (and in many other European countries). However, in England professional 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. Social pedagogy is, therefore, closely linked to ideas of social citizenship. It effects social change by empowering individuals and groups within a community. 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, namely: 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; and, insufficient attention being 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). However, the pilot involved placing one or two often inexperienced social pedagogues in a residential home, and the results of the evaluation are inconclusive (Berridge et. al. 2011, 11).

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 do 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 (Evans and Kessl, 2015). 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, that has been driven by managerialism and policies focussed on targets (Featherstone et all. 2014). 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. The translation of any form of social work practice from its original (in this case German) context to a new setting (in this case England) change aspects of that practice (Harris et. al 2014), and 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 Design**

This study explores concepts that are rooted in specific cultural and linguistic settings. Accordingly a qualitative design was adopted to allow us as researchers to understand the practitioners’ experiences and responses (Lincoln and Guba 2000). Furthermore, while participants were working in England and are fluent English-speakers, we believed that they might feel more confident talking about some of their experiences and ideas in German, and would probably switch between the two languages in an interview to better convey ideas from each context. Accordingly the interviews were conducted by a 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 (ref). 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 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. The nine remaining interviewees had all qualified in Germany, were registered as social workers in England and had experience of working in social services, in either their current or previous posts. Two of these interviewees were at the time of the interview working as 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.

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 the following themes: understanding of social pedagogy; how the idea of social pedagogy has been translated from its context of origin (Germany) to a new context of use (England); and, participants’ experiences and perceptions of social work in England.

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.

**Understanding Social Pedagogy**

Given the diverse nature of professional courses in Germany (see above) 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 to able to recognise it themselves. (I1)

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." (I9). 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" (I8).

Important aspects of creativity identified by the interviewees relate to how the social pedagogue uses him or herself 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. (I7)

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. (I3)

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." (I3) 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."(I5)

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. (I10)

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. (I4)

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. (I5)

In summary social pedagogy was characterised across the interviews as: "A very respectful way to work with people who are in need" (I9). Another person uses Pestalozzi's (Eichsteller and Holthoff 2011, 40) widely quoted idea of social pedagogy as learning by "head, heart and hand; learning by doing rather than 'I told you so'" (I10).

**Experience of working in England**

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 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 doesn't want to know any more about our education" (I6), this person also commented: "I have not engaged with the differences in education in Germany and England." (I6)

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 realised very quickly that it was difficult and distinctively different from what I was used to. (I5)

The work in the residential children's home was quite a shock (I6)

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.

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. (I5)

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. The German social pedagogues interviewed in this study are not the only critics. Practitioners and managers who contributed to the Munro Review raised similar concerns:

Practitioners and their managers told the review that statutory guidance, targets and local rules have become so extensive that they limit their ability to stay child centred. The demands of bureaucracy have reduced their capacity to work directly with children, young people and families. Services have become so standardised that they do not provide the required range of responses to the variety of need that is presented. (Munro 2011, 6-7)

The limited opportunities for direct work in Children's Services are also partly rooted in the focus on the law as it relates to child protection in social work practice. The Children Act 1989 - the main legislation governing children's services in England - 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). Indeed, family support is rarely mentioned in current English policy documents relating to child protection (Featherstone et. all 2014). 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 (I5)

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" (I5) and another to say: "your role is to control and monitor" (I6). A social worker in child protection described her job as "where I did the supervising of the children's parents, well different from home" (I10). This is quite different from the experience of those interviewees who had also practised in Germany. These interviewees felt that the unrelenting focus on child protection and the constant threat for parents of having one's children removed was intolerable, 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 a 16 year 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 (Goodman and Trowler 2011) 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)

Social pedagogues want to help their clients to have a more successful everyday life as it empowers people and gives them a sense of ownership. The interview participants valued opportunities for direct work that their English colleagues turned down:

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, and 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)

The social pedagogues observed not only a different organisational, policy and legal framework for practice but also a greater level of need amongst English services users when compared to 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" (I4). The level of need influenced the nature of work and the level at which the practitioners could intervene. Another interviewee (I6) 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 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).

Probably the most widely discussed challenge for German social pedagogues (and their English colleagues) was 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" (I11)

**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 was influenced by (and in turn has influenced) 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.

Despite the variation in education all the social pedagogues we interviewed shared the ideas and concepts of social pedagogy and saw them as 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 did not change their professional foundation and beliefs. Their commitment to building strong relationships with families and offering support to the whole family (rather than just seeing the child in isolation) seems not to have changed even after having worked for several years in England. This caused 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 risk, procedures and control. The interviewees felt that direct work with clients is degraded in England and reflected in the low level of remuneration for care work and in the poor qualification levels of many support workers. They contrasted this with Germany where 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. It could also contribute to the development of social work in England in terms of reconnecting the profession with the fundamental value of direct work and continuing robust support for children and families.

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 - focusing on professionalising the support workforce in children and families. However, dialogue between social pedagogues and social workers seems to be limited by professional blinkers – reflected in English lack of interest and German dismissal of professionalism in aspects of English social work. Of course this is the picture from one side - we only interviewed German social workers. 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 overlap with the experiences of German social pedagogues in England.

A small number of interviewees were pessimistic about the prospects for social pedagogy in England. Two participants, for instance, were concerned that in England 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]. Another participant had a more fundamental concern that social pedagogy could not be fully implemented in England because of the ways in which many organisational policies intruded into practice and the 'health and safety' risk averse/defensive culture permeating contemporary practice. However, despite the obvious struggles, most of the interview participants felt 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 could eventually adapt itself and engage with wider professional culture in social work that seems responsive to its principles, and to cope with/survive the current culture of new public management.

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