

Chapter 12

Disturbing Pedagogies in Special Youth Care

Karel De Vos

Aporias

H., a 16-year-old boy, was sent to a diagnostic centre by the juvenile court, after a stay in a closed facility for juvenile offenders. He had been placed in the closed facility after some violent incidents in which he was involved. These incidents occurred in an open pedagogical institution. Due to intra-familial violence, the judge had placed him in this open institution. Here, he refused to go to school, used drugs and was involved in petty crime. His parents had financial problems and were involved in an ongoing divorce procedure. The judge ordered the diagnostic centre to provide advice for the further treatment of H. H. longed to go back home. His parents responded to this desire in an ambiguous way: at one point they would agree, at another they would object vehemently. The juvenile court was opposed to H. returning home anyway because of the lack of pedagogic skills of the parents, which was the argument in support of the boy's initial placement in the open institution, besides the actual precarious familial situation.

His stay in the diagnostic centre was characterised by the emergence of two acute problems: the discovery of a brain injury that needed care without delay and the acknowledgment that he suffered from a severe drug addiction. The treatment of his brain injury would consist of several surgical interventions. An omission of the surgical treatment could lead to death, while the treatment itself carried the risk of causing disability. By the end of the diagnostic period, it appeared that the parents' divorce procedure had the purpose of confusing the bailiffs, as a strategy to cope with poverty. In fact the parents remained living together and taking care of daily life of the family members. The advice of the diagnostic centre focused on the treatment of the brain injury and the drug addiction of H. The realisation of this advice evolved towards a non-event.

K. De Vos (✉)

Jongeren centrum Cidar, Panoramalaan 1 3051 Sint-Joris-Weert, Kortenberg, Belgium
e-mail: kadvos@gmail.com; karel.de.vos@cidar.be

One dead-end emerged in the criteria for admission to the surgical treatment and in those for admission to treatment of addictions. For the hospital H. needed to be clean before the surgery, and for admission to the drug centre, he had to be cured from his brain infliction. A second dead-end emerged while searching for a stable place for H. to reside. The juvenile court excluded home, the residential institutions for Special Youth Care regarded his condition and his behaviour as counter-indications for admission, and his parents maintained their ambiguous position, while a stable environment was regarded as a necessity for a safe recovery from surgery. A third dead-end emerged in the division of responsibilities between H., his parents and public care. At the end of the day, nobody seemed to be willing to bear the risks involved in an engagement with H.

It is not the sensational aspect of this case that makes it exemplary for the aporias that emerge in social work practices in Special Youth Care in Flanders. The case of H. expresses the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care that becomes tangible in the mentioned aporias of the case. This pedagogical logic connects several components. The interventions towards H. have as a starting point the pedagogical situation at H.'s home. The decoding that grounds the intervention points at the defective pedagogical environment as the cause for the integration problems that H. poses. Even the discovery of the brain injury is problematised in a pedagogical dimension: the parents did not look well after their son and still do not want to look after him, seen the ambiguity of their position towards his desire to come home. The next component that is connected to this logic concerns the insertion of pedagogical environments: open residential care, closed facility and diagnostic centre. This insertion is regarded as pedagogical. Failures are understood as due to the defective motivation of H. Aggression and drug abuse are initially decoded as signs of unwillingness of the boy to be helped, and that he does not fit the target group to which the pedagogical regime is oriented. And finally there is the threat of complete failure of the diagnostic intervention. At the end of the day, there is no engagement with H.'s situation.

The hierarchisation and division of responsibilities between the private and the public sphere are an element of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care. Responsibilities are taken in the public sphere after the 'failure' of the private (parental) responsibilities, but only under conditions that are expressed in advance, in terms of motivation and of belonging to predefined target groups.

Fragmentation

The logic that is manifested lends itself to a Beckian analysis of 'expertness' (Beck et al. 1994). The expert stands for risk control, implying the incapacity of the non-expert. Seen from this angle, the expert in pedagogy controls the risk that persons could become problematic for society because of their education. To control this problem, it is divided into partial problems. Each division corresponds to an expertise. Achterhuis (1979) pointed out this mechanism in the development of

professional identities in care. He understood this development simultaneously as a response to the marketification of care and as a contribution to this marketification.

Defenders of the marketification of care argue that this guarantees the self-determinacy of the citizen in situations where he needs care. The position of the government changes from organiser of care to organiser of the market of care, in which the quality of the products (expertise) is guaranteed and the freedom of choice of the citizen is protected as a capital value. The citizen who turns to this care, on the basis of his freedom of choice, submits to a promise of improvement: after the intervention of the expert, he will be better off; his socialisation will improve. Paradoxically, the citizen appears in this conception of autonomy and freedom of choice as a passive being: once he has made his choice, he becomes the object of interventions that lead to improvement. Professional risk control anticipates this improvement. This approach contains a strong negation of the dynamics of care relations and is based on an ideal of autonomy to which not a single human being can correspond (Nussbaum 2006).

Mol (2005) demonstrates that the choice for a specific lancing device by patients suffering from diabetes is not made as a rational abstract consideration by the patient on his own but is embedded in the interactions between patient and caregiver. Transformations of the life conditions and of the changes in experiencing the disease occur as bricolage, as trial and error, as word and counterword and not as an application of a medical treatment to which patients submit themselves.

Taking care appears in Mol's analysis of this care practice as learning to take care in an interdependent relation between patient and caregiver; both are equal in relation to the unknown of good care, because good care only takes shape in its enactment.

Pols (2004) argues that statutory legal regulations, based on the freedom of choice and autonomy of the patient, can lead to the effect that patients become non-citizens or lesser citizens. Her research on the washing regimes of chronic psychiatric patients leads to the conclusion that the reference to their autonomy can end in neglect, when washing is regarded as an untouchable expression of their free choice. This in turn can lead to a dismissal of caregivers in case they take on their own the initiative to wash the patient, for example, when the smell becomes hardly bearable. A variation of this approach of the principle of individual autonomy leads to disciplining practices. Patients are entered into programmes to learn how to wash themselves, because washing oneself is considered a condition of citizenship. Pols notes in her research the possibility to read the value of self-determinacy in washing practices in a different way. Regimes that allow the decision to wash or not to wash are forged in the interaction between caregiver and patient, in which the patient and the caregiver take an active role, based on an understanding of self-determinacy as a relational happening, and not as an essential characteristic of humans.

Enacting care relations in this way lead to an understanding of citizenship as a relational concept. This approach comes close to the approach of democratic citizenship as an 'ongoing experiment' (Biesta 2011b). The experimental dimension of the care relation becomes in this view a characteristic of the care relation.

The ideal of autonomy, as it is expressed in statutory law, carries criteria for exclusion. Nussbaum (2006) relates this to the way in which the human being is

formulated in law and more specifically according to human rights, wherein statutory legal regulations are embedded. She argues that the subject of law appears as an ideal construction; the free will and rationality are the sole guides to relate to others with the purpose of realising mutual advantages. The normativity of this ideal construction is so pervasive that nobody can respond to it.

This causes a tremendous tension in the project of human rights, because this project aims at the protection and development of the human person, while it is grounded on a view of man (Broekman 1991) that produces simultaneously criteria for exclusion. To deal with this tension demands that the human rights project is read in such a way that interdependency and dependency stay within the reach of the understanding of human rights. The logic of risk control is persistent in the care system of Special Youth Care. Failure in this logic is a question of performance (Lyotard 1979). Failure means a lack of efficiency and effectivity.

The explanation of failures in the logic of risk control is obvious: clients do not belong to the target group of offered care, or the professionals apply their methods in an unrightful way, or clients lack motivation to cooperate. In the development of Youth Care in Flanders, it is remarkable that there is a consciousness of the mentioned aporias, while the solution for these problems is supposed to be found in a further refinement of the logic of risk control, what leads in turn to a further fragmentation of care.

An example is the approach to 'bottleneck cases', in a regulation by the Flemish Government as part of Integral Youth Care. This regulation acknowledges that the organisation of Youth Care can lead to dead-ends in individual cases. Under certain conditions, such cases can gain the status of 'bottleneck cases'. A bottleneck case is in the regulation defined by the assumption that regular care does not provide the appropriate combinations of expertise, to be able to respond to the problems of the client, which are understood as a combination of problems. In the case of H., this analysis would lead to the constation that care does not provide the right combination to treat simultaneously his brain injury, his addiction and eventually his behavioural disorders. The solution for this problem consists in providing the right combination of expertise as a complement to the regular offer of care (De Vos 2010).

Care providers can develop proposals for this combination, while the financial compensations for these proposals are negotiable. Fragmentation of care in increasingly refined parts, corresponding to different expertise, leads to a system that is characterised by fragmentation and evaporation of responsibilities, while many experts are doing their best to be efficient and effective in their domain.

Bauman calls this 'adiaphorisation' (Bauman 2006). Responsibilities are shattered until they become anonymous, a characteristic of 'the system'. Arendt's treatment of the Eichmann case (Arendt 1963) provides an extreme example of evaporation of responsibilities in a bureaucratic system that is conceived as the sum of partial responsibilities. In the terms of the Nazi bureaucracy, Eichmann could never be held responsible for the extermination of Jews, because he was only responsible for solving logistic problems that occurred in the transport of Jews from point a to point b.

The bureaucratisation of pedagogies and of pedagogical interventions, as an implication of the logic of risk control, ends up in a pedagogical paradox. The logic

of risk control leads to factual disengagements: problems are organised away (Roose 2006). This affects the basic conditions for shaping pedagogical relations. They consist in assuming an engagement with the other, which contains the risk that things do not turn out as foreseen (Papastephanou 2006). The pedagogical relation as seen from the angle of risk control is not regarded as 'responsivity' (Smeyers 2008) to what occurs in reality, but as the application of prescriptions, based on probability, not on reality.

In H.'s case there was forged an exit out of this aporia by shifting the focus of the intervention to the question who, in reality, could be found prepared to engage with H. and to maintain a relation with him, knowing that the 'solution' to his problem was not given. Finally, an institution was found to accept him. Their engagement was accompanied by the support of the diagnostic centre in adapting the regime of the accepting institution, in order to be able to work with H. This engagement was also accompanied by a negotiation with the authorities to accept that the support of H. would not be validated in terms of efficiency and efficacy. This means that a reconnection with the basic conditions for shaping a pedagogical relation becomes a disturbance of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care.

The Pedagogical Logic of Special Youth Care

Critics of the postmodern life condition like Lyotard, Beck and Bauman have undoubtedly developed concepts that are helpful to understand the emergence of aporias in social work practices in Special Youth Care. Nevertheless, the ground from which these aporias arise stays out of reach in this approach. The aporias are grounded in the problem definition upon which Special Youth Care relies, and in the way the relation between private and public responsibilities is articulated in this problem definition.

The initial question in the case of H. is what mechanism lies at the bottom of the connection of the problems (behaviour, drug abuse, small criminality, etc.) that he poses with the way in which he was raised. And at the end of the intervention of the diagnostic centre, the aporia raises the questions how the conditionality to deploy public means is constructed and how it relates to private responsibilities. Historical research of Special Youth Care clarifies these questions. Historical research of the foundations of Special Youth Care makes it appear as a system that is characterised by ambiguity: it is an intervention system that carries the ambition to be a resource (De Vos et al. 2012). This ambiguity is built in the connection of the child at risk with the child as a risk: the system aims simultaneously at the protection of the child and at the protection of society.

This connection has been developed in the theory of Social Defence (Prins 1910; Tulkens 1993), which postulates a causal relation between the child at risk and the child as a risk. The child as a risk becomes a criminal and grows into an offending and dangerous grown-up, due to neglect in childhood. 'Et il faut remarquer que tous ces défectueux sont ou ont été un jour des enfants défectueux' (Prins 1910, p. 146).

‘And it must be noticed that all these defective people are actually or have once been defective children’ (own translation).

The theory of Social Defence expresses a social problem construction that has been developed in the interplay between criminal courts, philanthropy and science (Tulkens 1993; Tulkens and Morau 2000). In this construction poverty and impoverishment are simultaneously recognised as a social problem and transformed into a pedagogical problem (Bouverne-De Bie 1991). This legitimises in a paradoxical way interventions from the public sphere into the private sphere of child-rearing: the child as a future citizen is protected against neglect, as a strategy to protect the social order against the danger (originally conceived as recidivism) that this same future citizen poses in case he is abandoned to ‘moral neglect’.

The pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care is designed in the theory of Social Defence and embedded in the first Belgian law on Child Protection in 1912. The following reforms of this system maintain its pedagogical logic until today. In the theory of Social Defence, private child-rearing appears as the explanation for problems of integration. This legitimises pedagogy as the object of government intervention, while the interventions are regarded as pedagogical themselves. This pedagogic intervening is regarded as a response to the level of dangerousness and unimprovability of persons. The response is delivered under the form of regimes to which persons are submitted and that aim at the improvement of these persons. This is grounded on scientific classifications of states of dangerousness, ordered as a hierarchy.

The residue of the degenerated, those who are not improvable, is positioned at the lowest level of this hierarchical order. But even for them, the convenient regimes will be developed: ‘Et ce sera l’honneur de la pédagogie moderne de l’avoir tenté d’avoir cherché à réveiller l’activité réduite des pauvres d’esprit, d’avoir songé à l’utiliser comme l’industrie moderne utilise ses déchets’ (Prins 1910, p. 163). ‘And it will be the honour of modern pedagogy to have tried to wake the reduced activity of the poor minded, to have thought to use it in the same way as modern industry uses its waste’ (own translation).

The pedagogical nature of the interventions works simultaneously in a preventive and in a curative way: it prevents and cures derailments. ‘Pour être efficace, l’intervention doit s’exercer dès l’enfance’ (Prins 1910, pp. 148–149). ‘To be efficacious, the intervention has to be executed from early childhood’ (own translation). Donzelot (1984) understands this strange transformation of a social problem into a pedagogical problem as a strategy originated in the public sphere to cope with an unsolvable political conflict. This transformation enables interventions in the private sphere, with the purpose of delaying the realisation of social justice, and to insert in this delay a promise of improvement.

In relation to the desire for social justice, the social has something very paradoxical: in the delay of realising social justice, the social maintains an idea of social justice, but by depoliticising the social problem, the social is susceptible to oblivion; the notions of social justice in the social tend to be forgotten. The depoliticisation and the forgetting of a reference to social justice find a place on the base of a redefinition of the collective social problem into a private problem of child-rearing.

H.'s case demonstrates that this collective dimension stays out of reach of the intervention because of the reduction of his problems to individual child-rearing problems. These pedagogical problems are not investigated in relation to the concrete life conditions of the family nor starting from the question of how these life conditions can be understood from a perspective of realising social justice. It is just at the end of the intervention that the suspicion arises that the relational and pedagogical problems of the family fit a strategy of the family to cope with poverty. How to understand such strategies, and what an intervention in this case could contribute, was not a subject in the activity of the diagnostic centre.

Characteristic of the promise of improvement is the anticipation of integrated citizenship that becomes visible. The instrument to reach this aim is provided by pedagogy. This instrumental approach of child-rearing, education and pedagogy has been maintained during the past century in which Special Youth Care has been developed. The pedagogy of Special Youth Care translates this promise of improvement in an orientation on a result that is regarded as known beforehand: the realisation of integrated citizenship. The design of 'future citizenship' has changed in the course of the history of Special Youth Care in Flanders.

Those changes in anticipations of citizenship can be ordained in a sequence of periods with a characteristic orientation (Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie 2009). Under the law of 1912, the pedagogy of Child Protection was a 'rehabilitative' pedagogy, an adjustment to bourgeois standards seen as civilisation of youngsters and parents, as a condition for integration in the societal order. This orientation changed with the Youth Protection law of 1965. The rehabilitative model is left behind, by accentuating participation and later 'emancipation'. Participation and emancipation become normative and conditions to access resources and to insertion in the societal order.

From the mid-1980s the orientation of the pedagogy of Special Youth Care focused on responsabilisation. Responsibilisation in the context of organised help focuses on the capacity to make the right choices in a responsible way. In the context of societal reactions to juvenile delinquency, responsabilisation means individual liability for infractions. This development of the pedagogy of Special Youth Care ends in a pedagogical design that anticipates the citizen as the entrepreneur of his own existence.

Special Youth Care as a Resource

During the past century, Special Youth Care was not able to free itself from postulating the causal relation between the child at risk and the child as a risk. On the contrary, this assumption has been reaffirmed in the postmodern approach of child-rearing and pedagogy as risk control. The development of Special Youth Care as a societal resource is characterised by a differentiation in the institutionalisation of reactions to unwellness of children and reactions to juvenile delinquency. This differentiation marks the ambition to humanise Special Youth Care by accentuating

its characteristic as a resource, in opposition to the understanding of the system as one of social control.

The introduction of the International Children's Rights Convention (1989) as a reference for the further development of Special Youth Care is meaningful in this context. The differentiation between the public reaction towards unwellness of children and towards juvenile delinquency has been developed as an accentuation of the difference between voluntary boarded help and imposed measures. The system under the law of 1912 focused on coercive interventions, imposed by the Children's Judge. In the shade of this system, there developed some practices, based on voluntary cooperation, as an initiative of the prosecutors. Voluntary, philanthropic assistance with child-rearing became a condition not to prosecute. Coercive interventions imposed by the Children's Judge were thus avoided. This hidden system of voluntary cooperation was made official in the law of 1965. Social protection was established, alongside justicial protection, with its own institution (Committee for the Protection of Youth) side by side the Youth Court.

Nevertheless, this evolution did not remove the conditionality of voluntary help. The Committees kept the official competence to appeal to the Juvenile Judge in case the client would not respond properly to the proposed help. With the installation of Special Youth Care in 1990, there was taken a further step in the evolution towards the autonomy of voluntary help, by imposing strict conditions on the possibilities of transition from the voluntary system to the system of coercion. The integration of Special Youth Care in Integral Youth Help that started in 2000 complemented the introduction of the right of assistance, based on the freedom of choice by youngsters. This was a framework for the further development of Special Youth Care as a resource.

It is remarkable that the evolution that consists of undoing the conditionality of voluntary help in its relation to coercion omitted to take a distance from the assumption that integration problems are caused by deficiencies in child-rearing, 'behind the front door' (Winter 2011). This becomes clear in the conditions for activating Special Youth Care as a resource, even in case the activation is based on voluntary cooperation or on the demand of children and parents. The conditions are that those who turn to Special Youth Care submit themselves to the assumption that their appeal concerns a pedagogical problem that can be solved by cooperating with methods designed externally to the concrete situation that gave rise to this appeal.

This conditionality was formulated at first by Gerda Debock in her comments on the Child Protection law of 1912 and the Juvenile Protection law of 1965 (Debock 1965). She formulates this conditionality as 'premium for infractions'. Only for those regarded as delinquent or pre-delinquent under the law of 1912, or as a 'child in danger' under the law of 1965, was the help or assistance foreseen by these systems made available, shaped as interventions in the private child-rearing situations. This logic is maintained today in Special Youth Care and in Integral Youth Help and is exported to the approach of any phenomenon that can be regarded as an integration problem of children and that is decoded as a pedagogical problem by the instances mandated to produce this kind of understanding.

If an intervention should be understood as a resource (a premium), it asks from the involved clients that they regard their problems as pedagogical that can be solved in the way this is organised in the institutions developed for this cause, with methods that are based on this assumption. Those are the conditions for shaping ‘the promise for improvement’ in Special Youth Care.

Despite the changes in pedagogical orientation, there is a remarkable continuity in the evolutions of Special Youth Care. The promise of improvement keeps anticipating the realisation of a known citizenship for the future, according to a design of citizenship that affirms the societal order viewed in this design. Evolution has been accompanied by the development of juvenile law *sui generis*. This law has been used as an instrument to legitimise interventions in the private sphere. Originally, this juvenile law developed on the basis of legal changes in parental authority, that were operated simultaneously with the introduction in law of the principal incapacity for children to be held accountable for infractions, on the basis of personal guilt, as was the case under criminal law. This made it possible to conceive of the interventions not as punishment but as pedagogical measures.

The development of new law (*sui generis*) and the use of it as an instrument added to the construction of the child as a not-yet-citizen (Verhellen 1996). Nevertheless, the ratification of the International Convention on Children’s Rights inserts a framework in the existing legal order to approach the child no longer as a not-yet-citizen but as a full citizen. In addition to this, the social fundamental rights become a point of reference for the further development of Special Youth Care: the right of societal support is being built as a right for every citizen, in reference to ‘human dignity’.

This evolution carries the invitation to explore how social work practices can contribute to the awareness of human dignity in the concrete circumstances of their activity.

In Youth Care this opens a point of reference for the development of possibilities for clients as well as professionals to dis-identify (Biesta 2011b) with the objectivations present in the logic of Special Youth Care. Unfortunately, we need to conclude that this possibility is not exploited and even that the reference to the International Convention on Children’s Rights leads to a reaffirmation of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care. In Youth Care this becomes visible in the legal statutory regulation, built on the principle of self-determinacy of children, that has been reduced to freedom of choice and responsibility for the choices made. This approach of self-determinacy is developed at the expense of an exploration of the idea of ‘human dignity’ (De Blois 1998).

The idea of ‘human dignity’ has a reach that allows for the acknowledgement of real interdependencies and dependencies as a base for ‘choosing’ (Mol 2005) and ‘self-determinacy’ (Pols 2004). This is because choosing and self-determinacy appear to be embedded in interactive processes that can lead to the transformation of private issues into public concerns (Biesta 2011a). The reduction of self-determinacy to freedom of choice leads to criteria of exclusion: the capacity to make choices autonomously and to be held liable for the choices made becomes a condition of citizenship. This reading of fundamental rights joins the dominant legalistic

and positivist lecture of social fundamental rights, reducing them to individualistic claims (Raes and Coene 2009).

A comparable legalistic and positivist reading of article 18 of the International Convention on Children's Rights, in which parents are regarded as first responsible for the upbringing of their children, reaffirms the conditionality of Special Youth Care. According to this reading, Special Youth Care can only be activated after the failure of parental responsibility has become obvious. This implies a reaffirmation of the hierarchisation of responsibilities in pedagogical matters. The reaffirmation of the hierarchisation of responsibilities contains the reaffirmation of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care: problems of integration are created behind the front door. This provides a legitimisation of pedagogical interventions behind the front door, using pre-established methods and under pre-established conditions. Citizenship comes afterwards.

Social Work as a Co-constructor of the Pedagogical Logic in Special Youth Care

Social work has contributed substantially to the development and reaffirmations of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care. The expansion of the reach of this logic, and the widening of what is considered disintegration, is simply unthinkable without the contributions of social work practices. Discontentment, indignation about the effects of interventions, compassion with clients and notions of justice have contributed to the movements that led to reforms of the system.

The indignation of philanthropists about the concrete detention conditions where young offenders found themselves in the nineteenth century played an important part in the creation of the 1912 Child Protection law. The introduction of the principle of guilt incompetence for children in the legal order fitted into a strategy to keep children out of prison. The development of pedagogical assistance by the prosecutors, as a hidden practice, and later made official under the law of 1965, was a reaction against the negative effects of placements and deprivations of parental authority. The pleas for emancipation as an aim for pedagogy are a reaction to the patronising practices under the law of 1965. The pleas for emancipation have contributed to unravel the reaction towards delinquency from the reaction towards unwellness and have contributed to the responsabilisation of youngsters.

With the unravelling of the reaction on unwellness from the reaction on juvenile delinquency, social work has withdrawn from the debates and research about the meaning of delinquency among youngsters. This withdrawal has contributed to the reintroduction of individual guilt and liability as a basis for decontextualised and responsabilisation reactions to juvenile delinquency (Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie 2009). In the debates about shaping the right to assistance, the voice of social work is becoming mute. This muteness is not due to the fact that social work is not part of these debates, but rather that social work omits to speak in reference to the daily experiences of aporias that emerge in practices.

This points to the difficulty that social work practices experience, to speak in a language that allows them to express the singularity of social work practices (Biesta 2006). The exit from the aporia in H.'s case was formulated in the diagnostic report, as a deduction from an indication based on an objectivation of his problems. This formulation obscured the conscious distance that was taken from an ideal approach (indication on the basis of an objectifying diagnosis), in persons who were prepared to stay responsive in their engagement without preformulated conditions.

The result of this shift in focus was presented in the final report as the result of the application of the logic of the system, in the vocabulary of the system. This muteness illustrates the aporetic situation of social work practices as interlocutors in the public scene of the formal democratic order. If they refer to their daily experience with dead-ends and to the ways out they can find, social work practices take the risk of losing their legitimacy, because this legitimacy is constructed as efficient and effective.

The difference between the presentation of matters and the practices that hide under these presentations not only points to a strategy of survival. Besides that, it is a strategy which protects the discretionary space of social work (Lipsky 2010), enabling the forthcoming practices that deviate from the recognition conditions and quality norms, to which they are submitted. The effect of this strategy is unfortunately that these practices risk losing public relevance, because social work does not refer to the public scenery of the experience it builds in singularising policies and to the learning processes that are involved in this activity.

What is developed risks escaping from the possibilities of reflection from different perspectives, while the importance of public reflection is evident, because the development of hidden practices often starts from the acknowledgement of injustice towards children and parents as a result of the way Special Youth Care is being shaped as a resource. The legitimization of social work practices in the vocabulary and pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care maintains the illusion that the aporias, which emerge in daily practice, are solvable within this logic.

Disturbing the Pedagogical Order of Special Youth Care

The institutionalisation of the pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care leads to the installation of a pedagogical order that is paradoxically unpedagogical. The conditionality of the system leads to factual disengagements; it supposes the submission of clients to the objectivations to which the activation of Special Youth Care is connected, and it supposes that clients cooperate with methods that are designed externally from their concrete life situation. The expectance is that it leads to an improved citizenship, after the intervention, as a result of intended socialisation.

Those conditions exclude beforehand that children and parents contribute actively to the problem definition, upon which Special Youth Care is based, and that they cooperate actively in the shaping of assistance, because these shapes are predefined. Pedagogical action starts from the acknowledgement that children and

grown-ups share a reality that they co-construct without possibility of positioning themselves outside this reality and with a high degree of unpredictability. This requires the support of children in assimilating the culture in which they grow up (Mollenhauer 1986) and supposes that they have enough space for critical distance as well as for the development of a conscience of co-responsibility for their concrete life situation.

The pedagogical logic of Special Youth Care hinders the development of this conscience as a subjectified conscience, because in its logic, the space for reflection is connected to an instrumental approach of pedagogy as well as of social work. Both are regarded as methods that lead to a future improvement. The order that is installed in this logic can be disturbed by social work practices for so far they succeed in developing settings that refer to the basic conditions for the development of pedagogical relations: unconditional engagement with the simultaneous invitation to contribute to the shaping of this engagement as an active subject.

Referring to these basic conditions would have led, in the case of H., to the reconstruction of the history of the intervention of Special Youth Care, within the diagnostic process. The reconstruction would have allowed the parents and H. to develop a conscious relation towards the attributions that were at the basis of the interventions. This would have enabled connecting the intervention to the question concerning what way an appeal to collective means could contribute to a consciousness of human dignity and to the question what engagements and support would be needed. This invitation is to be understood as an invitation to free H. and his parents from the position of submissiveness to the attributions and objectifications characteristic of Special Youth Care. As already mentioned, this dimension stayed out of reach in the case of H.

The dynamics that lead to the development of such settings are not rational. Much time can pass before occasional and partial experiences of injustice and loss of respect for the dignity of children, adults and professionals alike are transformed into conscious reorientations of social work practices. Reflection on these experiences demands in the social work organisations time and space to share these experiences and eventually to transform them into reorientations. In reorienting social work practices, a democratisation of Special Youth Care can take place that is enacted in the here and now of the practice. It is obvious that this can lead to surprises and that the outcome of the reorientations is unpredictable. The settings that carry this form of democratisation must be strong enough to bear the unpredictability of the outcome. The anticipation that they carry is an anticipation of possibilities, not of a certain outcome. In terms of citizenship, citizenship can be expressed in an unexpected way.

Vulnerability

Such reorientations make social work practices as vulnerable as any pedagogical practice. The vulnerability is manifested in several dimensions: in the difficulty to make those practices accountable, in the acknowledgement of the interdependence between clients

and professionals, in the acknowledgement that human communication is never complete and always unfinished and in the conscience that the course of time cannot be reduced to linear progress. The unpredictability that is inherent to these reorientations makes them hardly accountable because they suppose a distance from accountability in terms of efficiency and effectivity, understood as reaching predefined targets with as little means as possible. The unpredictability concerns not only the outcome of the practices but also their actual course in real time.

The interdependence between clients and professionals, grounded in the invitation to relate to one another and to question the appeal to collective means, demands from the professionals that they give up control over the outcome of the activity and that they renounce the hierarchisation that is inherent to the construction of the 'expert'. As a consequence, the communicative ground of the interactions between professionals and clients becomes fragile. Clients as well as professionals are confronted in these reorientations with the limitedness and insecurity of mutual attributions and typifications and with the groundlessness of the idea that meanings are always shared even if the same words are used. It demands from the professional restraint and acceptance of the fact that the range of meaning in speech and action by clients often escapes from the attributions used to encounter clients.

One evening, H. made a flame thrower with a lighter and hairspray, and he used it against an educator in the diagnostic centre. After the authoritative reaction of the director of the centre, he handed in his weapon. In the course of the incident, he expressed an ambiguous position: on the one hand, he understood that this behaviour was extremely dangerous and must not be repeated, and on the other hand, he kept repeating that the director and the educators were so stupid because they did not understand the joke. This confronted the professionals with the task of dwelling on their spontaneous responses to understanding the incident as an intentional terror attack that would lead to the immediate removal of H. from the centre and to accept that none of the professionals were at that time able to grasp the meaning of the sequence and the boy's utterings. This acceptance of uncertainty and of misunderstanding made it possible to continue working with H.

Today's challenge for social work practices in Special Youth Care not only consists in developing settings that shape the described reorientations as 'ongoing experiments' but equally uncovers these experiences and learning processes. In this way they can become the object of public concern, acknowledging their vulnerability as a necessary condition to give the consciousness of human dignity a concrete, practical meaning.

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