Unity Through Relationships Conference

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My argument

- Current discourses around children and childhood are inadequate
- We need a new way of thinking about adults and children and the relationships between them
- that a concept of upbringing might provide this

Current discourses

- Rights, protection, attachment (increasingly neuro-science …), risk

The problem with rights

- 'premised on particular values and a particular understanding of the subject as a rational, autonomous individual' (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005: 30). By this way of thinking we become linked to one another only through a series of contractual relationships. There is little sense of community, inter-dependence or of difference between generations within rights discourse.

- Rights and responsibilities

The problem with protection

- Rights agenda hijacked by 'the far less emancipatory paradigm of child protection' (Butler and Drakeford, 2005: 218)

- Protection 'involves a very different conception of the relationship between an individual or group, and others than does care. Caring seems to involve taking the concerns and needs of the other as the basis for action. Protection presumes … bad intentions …. (Tronto 1994: 104).

- child protection policies are increasingly recognised as doing more harm than good (Lonne et al, 2009, Munro, 2011, Featherstone et al. 2014).

The problem with neuroscience

- 'biologising' of what is rightly social scientific terrain, offering "the comforting possibility of simple solutions to complex problems"… "The idea that the brain causes behavior is easier to get across than the subtler and more complex explanation embedded in learning, interpersonal transactions and culture" (Canter, 2012 p. 112).

The problem with risk

- The raised risk consciousness now so prevalent in social, political and cultural life suggests that risk might be regarded as being everywhere, but perhaps nowhere properly understood (Warner and Sharland, 2010).

- become a collective state of mind rather than an objective reality (Parton, 1999)

- Risk is 'a morally conservative construct that has repressive effects in direct social work practice' (Stanford, 2008)

The need for a paradigm shift

- Need to move from rights and protection to care and upbringing (Rethinking Residential Child Care, 2009)

- Care – conceptual purchase through care ethics (see Steckley and Smith, 2011) - but upbringing? - unarticulated

- The central task of child care?

'Forgotten connections'

- Social pedagogy
- Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy
- Klaus Mollenhauer (1928-1998)
- *Forgotten connections: On Culture and Upbringing* 1983
- Explores upbringing through autobiographies – Augustine, Kafka, and art
- Norm Friesen and Tone Saevi

Locating Mollenhauer

- Rooted in European philosophical traditions

- 'One cannot understand the history of education in the United States, unless one realizes that Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost' (Lagemann, 1989 p. 185).

- A positivist, scientific method (Thorndike) or learning through participation in community life (Dewey).

Some terms

- Pedagogy - ancient Greek, *pais* (child) *agein* (to lead, bring up)
- Erziehung (upbringing – to draw out/upwards, drawing out that which is innermost ..)
- Bildung (formation – lifelong learning, way of the self)

Upbringing as central to social pedagogy

- Natorp identifies SP's essence as 'the upbringing of an individual and their integration into society'

- The cultivation of the inner life or soul of the child and their inauguration into culture – Mollenhauer

- Brings together care and education (and wider culture)

- Social pedagogues are, thus, upbringers on behalf of society

Some framing questions

- What draws us to want to become involved with children?

- What is upbringing?

- What do we want for children?

- How do children grow and develop?

- How do we support children's upbringing?

- What are the features of the pedagogical relationship?

Why do we want to be involved with children?

Why do we want to be involved with children?

- Call and response
- Scottish Enlightenment thinking
- Levinas – we are drawn to the face of the other
- Human relations philosophy/psychology – we are persons in relation – not an ethic of duty but an ethic of love (John MacMurray)
- More a vocation than a job …?

What is upbringing?

What is upbringing

- Passing on a valued cultural heritage to prepare children to face the future.

- A debt owed by the adult generation to children.

- Adult understandings of upbringing are, by their nature, backward looking; we construct a sense of what might constitute a good upbringing against a backdrop of our own experiences of being brought up

- For most their upbringing was probably a bit like the curate's egg, good in parts

- Adults as both midwives and censors of children's upbringing

What do we want for children?

What do we want for children?

- I want the (perhaps very little) goodness in my life to be perpetuated

- I would like human history to continue with a sense of optimism

- My own existence can be perpetuated in some small way through my children

- The way of life I teach children has some value

- 'Anyone who does not have a heritage of some kind to pass on will probably take little pleasure in raising or educating children. … When the desire to see generations born beyond one's own is extinguished, educational and even experiential possibilities are greatly diminished. Conservative excesses threaten to turn upbringing into a ritualized duty. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that adults lose the desire to raise children and only want to interact with them as mirror images of their adult selves' (1983, p.12).

Insidious leniencies

- David Webb – A Certain Moment (British Journal of Social Work, 2010)

- the paradoxical inversion of the 'reactionary' past and the 'progressive' present are considered in terms of a contrast between an earlier clarity borne of faith and conviction and a contemporary hesitancy towards the enforcement of norms and values that are unendingly contested.

- 'The refusal to teach the child,' Gramsci argues, amounts to allowing his personality to develop haphazardly by incorporating principles and values chaotically from his general environment'

- Rochdale, Rotherham … ?

How do children grow and develop?

How do children grow?

- Not through method or technique but through relational and personal educational practice

- Human development cannot be externally forced on the child' rather there must be something present in the child which is oriented toward development and which asks for the help. This means that it is the nature of the child to *want* to grow (bildsamkeit)

- Children should be brought up not as if they were material to be changed and formed. Instead they should be brought up in support for a kind of power and potentiality that develops itself, in a dialogical relationship, in a kind of mutual interchange or call and response (Mollenhauer)

How do we support children's upbringing?

How to support upbringing

- We cannot not engage in upbringing
- It is simply unimaginable for an adult to undertake any educational or child-rearing measure without conveying some aspect of him or herself or the way he or she lives – Mollenhauer
- Question then arises as to what kind of life we want to present to children

Presentation

- In pre-modern societies adults and children lived their lives in largely undifferentiated ways - adults simply 'presented' to children their grown up way of life (lebensform)

- It is the child's principal educational task to reproduce this image. Thus, upbringing is implicit, habitual and generally not reflected upon

Representation

- With merchant capitalism, adult's 'work' became separated from children's 'learning'

- Adults were faced with the question of which features of adult life were considered valuable and worth passing on and which should be filtered out

- Requires some forethought, planning and technical expertise

- Institutions to promote upbringing - schools youth clubs, children's homes etc

Tensions

- Adults need to ensure age appropriate 'shielding' from some harmful aspects of the adult world but also help children reach a 'position facing the world' (risk!)
- Can involve a slowing down/pacing of child's initiation to the adult world for which adults need to take responsibility

Presentation and representation

- Interplay
- Systematic and deliberate representation is inextricably mixed with unreflective and habitual presentation
- Messages transmitted by conscious teaching of more limited importance than those that unconsciously seep into a learner's consciousness (gestures, touch, tone of voice ..)
- The pedagogical relationship precedes educational theories and methods

What are the features of the pedagogical relationship?

The pedagogical relationship

- Nohl – 'the loving relationship of a mature person with a developing person entered into for the sake of the child so that he can discover his own life and form'

Pedagogical relationships

- Grounded in the difference between generations
- There is a purpose to such relationships (upbringing!)
- The relationship is oriented to what the child might become
- It is asymetrical – the adult is there for the child in a way that the child is not there for the adult
- It is dispositional reflecting the ways that adults 'are' with children
- It comes to an end – but may change its complexion
- The arena for the pedagogical relationship is the lifespace

The aporia of upbringing

- Passing on what is deemed valuable while recognising that the fruits of our endeavour cannot be pre-determined – 'prophets of a future not our own'

- We cannot 'know' children - the pedagogical relationship draws its strength from the tension of opposites, the uniqueness of the individual child

- The more policy makers seek to pin social pedagogy down the less likely it becomes to validate its results – cf outcomes debate

Conclusions

- Rights, protection, treatment, risk …
- 'Responses in these areas are necessary but insufficient because every instance of upbringing has to do with culture as a whole – it cannot be subsumed to science or scholarship'
- Upbringing is primarily cultural and social rather than individual, 'scientific' or 'therapeutic'
- value rational rather than technical rational
- Dispositional – requires adults who are …reflective, curious, confident
- Ethical, reflexive practice rather than one that can be practised through following procedure ('It depends').
- Based in the everyday – 'experts in the everyday'

Upbringing in action

- The bike I used was one I bought almost 30 years ago when a couple of colleagues and I used to take groups of boys from the school I worked in at the time cycling around the Highlands. These trips were formative cultural experiences for me in my early days as a child and youth care worker and have remained with me. They were valuable in so many ways: introducing boys to the beauty of the Scottish countryside; the opportunities to learn about history and about nature; the need to understand and work within the expectations of the youth hostels we stayed in, to make beds, do chores, cook our meals and clean up afterwards and the closeness that comes from sharing physical endeavor and achievement. And, as the boys fished off a local pier we adults sat in a nearby hotel having a beer. This was not something to be hidden from the boys but was just what adults did and that they too would someday do. My bike, still going strong, provided the link to this past and to the cultural experience I was passing on to Aidan and Jack. And as I cycled alongside them, sometimes ahead, leading the way, sometimes encouraging them from behind, … try a lower gear at this point, stay out a wee bit from the verge of the road, not long to go now…. And I wondered if any of the boys who had come with us on those earlier trips had sought to pass this experience onto their own children.

Reference

- The article upon which this presentation is based can be accessed at

- http://www.celcis.org/media/resources/ publications/ 2013_vol12_no2_smith_forgottenconnectio nsreviving.pdf