SPECIAL REPORT

The International Working Group on the Training of Residential Child Care Workers, 1980 Meetings

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Marking the ongoing professional consolidation of the child care field is the increasing occurrence of gatherings that provide opportunity for communication and collaboration among practitioners not only from the United States, but from all over the world. The 13th meeting of the International Working Group on the Training of Residential Child Workers, which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, May 2-9, 1980, is representative of these expanding networks.

Background

As with many activities in an evolving effort, the 1980 meeting was the outcome of a historical precedent which reflects the growth strivings of the field and a core of committed attendees, and promises significant future developments.

The International Working Group dates all the way back to 1960, when it was initiated by Hans Christian Rasmussen of Denmark. It was conceived as a means of bringing people concerned with improving residential care together for informal exchange around emerging issues in the training of educateurs, social pedagogues, and residential workers (European terms designating child care workers). At its inception, the group’s membership was primarily European, with representatives from such countries as Britain, France, Spain, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden and, of course, Denmark. Membership has expanded in more recent years, when colleagues attended from the United States, and Israel was
represented at this year's gathering as well. While it is anticipated that some formalization will occur in the future through such activities as preliminary preparation of papers, the group will also continue its tradition of accomplishment through establishment of networks of informal exchange.

Meetings have been held approximately every year and a half since the Group's inception, with a particular theme selected as the focus of the discussions for each. The meeting immediately preceding the Copenhagen gathering was held in November, 1978, in La Baule, France, with an agenda concerned with identifying major influences on patterns of European training. Economic and political factors were recognized as having major impact. There was articulation of a need for integration of training of child care, social service, health, and educational practitioners. Indicating that the ideal goal of fully trained practitioners might be unlikely to be achieved, the 1978 group felt that it is necessary to examine ways of using volunteers and of implementing post-qualifying (graduate) study for those who are professionally trained. This training should not, however, center on creating people with a professional identity based on a specific location of practice, such as the residential center, in view of the strong deinstitutionalization movement which is taking place in Europe as well as the United States.

In view of the group's identification of post-qualifying studies as one means of addressing some of the current problems in educating child care practitioners, post-qualifying studies was chosen to be the theme of the next meeting, the one that took place last year. A working definition of "post-qualifying studies" is those studies occurring subsequent to the first professional degree or its equivalent. They are a means for qualified practitioners to undertake advanced training in some relevant specialization, not necessarily for a degree.

The 1980 Copenhagen Meeting on Post-Qualifying Studies

Hosted by H.C. Rasmussen, Birgit Raben, and Lis Westergaard of Denmark, the 1980 Working Group meetings were attended also by Frank Ainsworth and Haydn Davies-Jones, England; Samir Akel and Peter Hess, Germany; Zvi Eisikovits, Israel; and Richard Clugston (Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota) and Karen VanderVen (Department of Child Development and Child Care, University of Pittsburgh), United States. Each participant had prepared a presentation to share with the group on his/her country's post-qualifying education along the dimensions of