

Reforms in child and youth welfare

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1 Introduction

Services for children and young people have undergone many changes and reforms in their many years of history. Whether the reforms that have been implemented or are currently being pursued in recent years actually follows the logic of a "new managerialism" is a question that is often unambiguously answered with "yes". In fact, however, a look at the child and youth welfare statistics reveals that this answer may be somewhat hasty. At the very least, the question of the target perspective of reformed child and youth services requires more differentiated analyzes and, as a result, corresponding answers.

To describe, what characterizes the complexity of child and youth services in Germany, is not very easy. As a preliminary point, only a brief definition should therefore be reproduced: Child and youth welfare is the social infrastructure of the growth of young people and the support of their families, which includes welfare-regulated care, education, protection, and participation, with the goal of individual aptitude for the development of self-determined life plans and well-being-oriented life practices as well as the structural enabling of social participation as an expression of the perception of a public responsibility for equal chances in life and the reduction of social inequalities.

Against this background, child and youth services have undergone a very dynamic development of permanent expansion in recent years, both with regard to the addressees and the number of persons employed and with regard to the differentiation of the services. This development is not self-evident. It must be asked if with the expansion of the services, a fundamental qualitative improvement in the life situations of the addressees could actually be achieved. At the same time, it must be examined what concretely triggered this development.

2 Some data and facts

Never before has so much money been made available for child and youth services, as is currently the case: although more than € 45 billion has already been spent, the end of the increase in spendings is not in sight.

Never before have so many people – nearly 800.000 persons - been involved in child and youth welfare: child and youth welfare services are regarded as a future-oriented labor market that is growing: In the last ten years, around 250.000 additional jobs have been created. Nevertheless, almost all providers of child and youth services complain about a continuously increasing demand for social workers.

Never before have so many people availed themselves of child and youth welfare benefits. Based on SGB VIII, child and youth services are responsible for all children, adolescents and young adults in the age range of 0 to 27 years: that is around 27 million children, adolescents and young adults. Among these young people are also the refugee young people with and without families seeking protection in Germany. It is assumed that around 1.2 million people

came to Germany in 2015 and 2016. Of these, more than half are younger than 25 years old. They all fall into the area of responsibility of child and youth welfare, since according to § 1 SGB VIII all children, adolescents and young adults are promoted in Germany, to be able to develop into an independent and sociable personality.

Every third child under the age of three is now in daycare. In the last ten years, the number of under-3 years old children in day care has more than doubled. For children over the age of three, growing up without a day-care center is a matter of course today. 95 percent of them go to a daycare. It is obvious that kindergartens have become an independent educational institution for children in addition to the family. They have replaced elementary school as the first public educational institution in the biographie; many children now spend more time in day care services than in elementary school.

Up to 30 percent of young people are reached by the youth association work, in sports clubs, the percentage is higher. About half of young people between the ages of 12 and 15 participate in holiday camps. About 10 percent of young people attend a youth center. Also, start-ups of youth associations, especially by young migrants, stand for the importance of child and youth welfare in the process of growing up.

Not a few parents are unsure about education and therefore need professional help. Therefore, they seek advice when it comes to switching from nursery to elementary school and from elementary school to secondary school. But parents can also fail: for their children, child and youth welfare is a place of protection and security. Foster families and housing groups offer these children new opportunities. In addition, by caring for young unaccompanied refugees, significantly more young people live in a residential care. 1.1 million young people (7 percent of the under-21s) and their families are seeking assistance in education.

Child and youth welfare - arrived in the middle of society, so a now popular motto of child and youth welfare. More and more young people and their families are experiencing child and youth welfare as a more or less natural part of their lives. The differentiation of the range of services of child and youth services, the numerous places where it takes place, and the many cooperation partners with which child and youth services are networked, clearly reflect this development.

On the one hand, child and youth services act from the middle of society, on the other hand, they do not give up their responsibility to those people who have either fallen out of the middle of society or never arrived there. Against this background, it can be stated that child and youth services at the margins of society directly support their addressees in the context of problematic and burdened life situations in the process of growing up through numerous offers in a variety of fields of action and tasks. In addition, child and youth welfare services in the middle of society have become an integral part of a social infrastructure, that is an expression of basic social welfare provision, the benefits of which are, in principle, available to all.

The continuous expansion of social welfare-based intervention needs and also of the socio-pedagogical fields of action and the educational task spectrum has helped to make child and youth welfare more and more an accompanying medium of social integration in society. Starting from a focus on social problems, a priority responsibility for people at the so-called margins of society, social work and also child and youth welfare services has developed into a modern service profession. The child and youth welfare services has normalized. They have

become boundless in relation to its original limited functions of normalization, discipline and administrative care. In these processes social work and social services for young people and their families are more and more an important part of processes of addressing young people and their families beyond the classical attribution patterns.

3 Addressees are made!

In this sense, it is important to discuss when and how young people and their parents become addressees of the offers and support services of child and youth services. They always become so when there is social, political or individual support, protection, help, education and / or educational needs are defined. Thus, normative guidelines are focused and boundaries of lifestyles are enforced. This means that one's own subjective interpretation or the objective social situation of people do not necessarily lead to people becoming addressees. Rather, the definition of normal or deviant, of education and support needs, etc. may be decisive.

Against this background, the growth of child and youth services cannot be explained solely by an increase in the problems faced by their addressees. Thus, most of the children and adolescents in Germany live in material security. Most young people in Germany also have parents who enable them to grow up carefree. For the opportunities of children and adolescents, however, it remains central to which social, financial and cultural capital their family is endowed. While the greater part of children and adolescents can grow up carefree and secure, almost one of three young people is affected by a risk situation, which in turn applies particularly to young people from families with a migration or refugee background.

Against this background, there are three developments that have favored the expansion of child and youth services and that contribute the changing strategies of processes of addressing young people and families. These interrelated developments can only be outlined here.

First, demographic change means that a positioning has prevailed that no young person should be lost. This happens less from the perspective of the individual young person himself, but rather from the perspective that sufficient and qualified skilled workers must be guaranteed for successful economic progress at present and in the future. Secondly, this goes hand in hand with the fact that education (Bildung) has become a core social task that schools alone can no longer cope with. And thirdly, strategies to help reconcile work and family life should accelerate the long-term integration of mothers into the labor market. Traditionally, family guiding principles are dominant, which essentially constitute a gender-specific division of labor. Fathers were responsible for the material security of family life, mothers had to take over the tasks of raising children and the immaterial security of family life. The current normality slide for families is now the coexistence of parents interested in education with privately and publicly funded children on the basis of two earned incomes. Family becomes the site of numerous negotiation processes in relation to a family-friendly division of labor and time spent together. At the same time, two earned incomes should prevent the founding family from being associated with an increasing risk of poverty. Families, who do not live this new normality independent from the reasons for living in another way tend to be held responsible for the processes of their children's precarious upbringing and lack of social participation.

For child and youth services, these three developments summarize that it has become a socially relevant institution that symbolizes early investment in the next generation with the aim of promoting educational potential, ensuring the participation of women in the labor market and preventing poverty. Priority will be given to the infrastructural expansion of early

help and day care, and child and youth welfare should become a natural part of schools. The comprehensive provision of such infrastructural services is intended to prevent as far as possible the use of further individual assistance from families. All this follows the logic, that early investment in the process of growth pays off both: for those concerned in terms of a successful educational biography and fiscal in terms of avoiding the use of costly later assistance. In this context, parents should ensure that their children are adequately educated, materially protected and, in the future, able to secure their existence without social state alimentation. In this context, more and more investments in children, women and families are being made, whose use increase the control of family education and care. The focus of this policy is not primarily the growing up of children in public responsibility as an expression of structural support needs of families. Instead, following the assumption of their diminishing individual capacity, family ownership of their children's education, education, and social inclusion is emphasized.

4 Tension fields of child and youth welfare

With the expansion of daycare for children, children have become more important as a group of addressees in the focus of child and youth welfare. The question of the quality of child care has been neglected so far with the quantitative expansion. It is therefore emphasized in the socio pedagogical discourse that not only the quantity, but also the quality of early childhood education and care must be secured and further developed with high intensity. Childhood is far too rarely perceived as something that children can design themselves. Instead, childhood has become a sequence of more and more institutionalized events designed by professional professionals to increase the performance of children. Although there are now more or less concrete ideas about what a qualitative development of daycare needs to look like and what course is required for this, but the immediate perspective of children is still relatively little known. Their desires and needs very rarely provide the starting point for appropriate considerations and strategies and thus also for child-oriented addressing processes. Instead of focussing on the needs of childcare, education and training in policy-based reasons for the expansion of day care, the needs of the parents' labor market are often the focus of attention. The expansion of day care serves for children primarily to facilitate the compatibility of employment and family activities.

The yardstick of a child-friendly quality offensive must be the claim to create a place of life for and with children. Kitas are primarily places where children grow up. They also serve, but not primarily, the reconciliation of family and employment. The priority legitimacy of a quality offensive Kita is therefore the needs and concerns of children and not the strategies of the labor market.

In the past few years child and youth welfare services are involved in the education debate (Bildungsdebatte). For many decades, the educational mission of child and youth welfare has been more or less hidden. Their relationship to the school was limited in the discussions about the possibilities of school social work and even today the general participation of child and youth welfare services in schools is disputed.

First, child and youth welfare emphasizes that the growth of the younger generation, childhood and youth is more than just education. Behind this is the fear that education will remain strongly related to future contexts of utilization, and that the current debate on education will also take account of efforts that promote the economization of educational processes.

In spite of all its concerns, child and youth welfare services, if they set their own educational mandate more aggressively for their different fields of action, could integrate themselves into the education debate with much more self-confidence and also approach the school with more comprehensive aspirations. That it is not, that child and youth welfare services do not have the task of criticizing the fact, that more social education should solve all social problems. Social problems as an expression of structural inequality are almost universally explained by a lack of education. This is far too high a claim to education and this does not sufficiently justify processes of growing inequality structures.

For child and youth welfare, this means that on the one hand it must specify the educational mission of its fields of action, on the other hand, the comprehensive understanding of education, education, care, protection and support cannot be absorbed by education alone. Instead, it must make it clear that, beyond education aimed at the future, children and adolescents also have a claim to be able to experience the here and now in a meaningful and self-determined way.

The aids for education as a central social educational offer for children, adolescents and their families refer to diverse familial problem constellations, socialization and education requirements. After day care, they represent the second largest field of work and action of child and youth welfare; their utilization has risen by about 60 percent in the last 15 years. As far as support for education is concerned, it is a criterion of justice policy to what extent young people in precarious living constellations are enabled to have their own phase of life.

The increase in use of benefits (single parents are disproportionately represented in the aid to education, 60% of these families are families in poverty, in the single parent more than 70%) documents a complex relationship of family change processes, of consequences the overburdening of a part of families, the consequences of precarious life situations, the consequences of the child protection debate and the increasing recognition of professional support services. Thus, the increase in case numbers in the aid to education can not be interpreted one-dimensionally in the direction of decreasing family parenting or an increase in familial violence. Analyzes show that, in particular, the numbers of inpatient assistance are significantly related to "child poverty" in a region. People in economic deprivation are clearly overrepresented among those who have an "educational need".

This seemingly clear connection must be put into perspective by the fact that even among the families who receive transfer payments, only a minority, namely 13 percent, use educational support. So there can be no question that poverty automatically leads to an individual need for help. There is no information on whether these families have resources to help them avoid the need for education. Or, conversely, whether child and youth welfare services have not yet reached these families.

Looking at the current situation of child and youth welfare as a whole, this is characterized by considerable areas of tension. The benchmark of a just society is how it deals with the young generation and thus the sustainable shaping of its own future resources. Criticizing a society of inequality, continuing to lack and unequal opportunities for the next generation is indispensable against this background. Criticism for its own sake, however, becomes a mere attitude if it only addresses the development of child and youth welfare as a political instrumentalisation. Anyone who always negates the progress of social protection jeopardizes the recognition of child and youth welfare by the politically responsible persons, by the social workers and by the users of the services. Finally, such a critique also jeopardizes the approval

of a welfare-oriented and publicly funded welfare state, which is necessary for a democratically constituted society. It provokes into the middle of society the question of why one should participate in the financing and structuring a welfare state if he has only a less of effects.

The development of child and youth welfare services should therefore **also** be seen as a story of success. Care, education, protection and support of young people are not possible without the child and youth welfare. The task of the child and youth welfare system will be more than it is self-evident today, to prioritize the needs and rights of young people, and to prioritize the social-pedagogic profile as a defense of the professionalism of the social workers.

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