

Book review of *International Social Work Professional Action in an Interdependent World 2nd ed.*, by Lynne Healy

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Background

The first edition of this book was published in 2001. The second edition has been revised remarkably; it responds to events and developments that occurred in the period between 2000 and 2007 such as the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., in September 2001, and natural disasters such as the Tsunami, and also the increasing concern of schools of social work about international contents and global standards for education and training. The primary market of this book is North America, but Healy has enhanced the global relevance of the text, since demand from other parts of the world has been considerable. The volume is impressive and provides content that covers almost all facets of international social work such as the history of the profession in an international perspective, its collaboration with international organizations such as the UN, the functioning of international organizations, theories and concepts underpinning international social work, international relief and development practice, the international/domestic practice interface, mechanisms of and experiences with international exchange – and more. The 371 pages are supplemented by five appendixes and a glossary of terms and abbreviations.

“Comprehensiveness, of course, is impossible, especially when tackling such a vast topic area, and therefore comprehensiveness is a strength and a weakness of the book. There are many omissions and other areas that deserve much more depth” (xv) – apologizes the author in the preface to the second edition. To review

such a book is a challenge, to read the review ditto, all the more if the reviewer adds amendments as I do. I apologize to the reader, but first of all to Lynne Healy for doing so. And I hope my amending will be understood as deemed. I want to add a little more knowledge to this rich volume in order to increase the extensive knowledge about international social work that Lynne Healy has already provided.

My amendments refer mostly to UN issues. As Katherine Kendall, undoubtedly one of the international pioneers, notes in her foreword to this second edition, “neglect of international content in the social work curriculum is perhaps due not so much to lack of interest on the part of faculty members, but rather to lack of knowledge, particularly knowledge drawn from first hand experience in other lands” (ix). I have such firsthand experience from working in other lands and from working with the UN in the 90s and the early Millenium and think it might be useful to add some information. Healy relies for her reporting about UN bodies, activities, and mechanisms mostly on elder secondary literature, sometimes on unclear sources and often on personal communications, dating from the 80s and earlier. The UN, as the whole world, had to face changes and challenges in the last 20 years, which had been unpredictable, and this dramatically impacted not only policies, power distribution, and concrete activities, but also the human resources policies and needs of international organizations like the UN.

The book

Throughout the book, which consists of four main parts and fourteen chapters, the author gives empirical examples, mostly in boxes in the text, referring to sources such as “personal communication” or “case adapted from ...” or own narratives on IASSW events she had participated in. A chapter on “International Relief and Development Practice (p. 260-286) that provides a deeper insight to field practice is written by Lara Herscovitch, Education Specialist of Save the Children, with the author.

In an introduction chapter, Healy points out why international social work is important (“globalization”) and what it is. The profession has not yet agreed about a common definition. Many include a social worker working or collecting data in another country, as well as social workers from different countries coming together and discussing practices or cases in their home countries. More appropriate, in the opinion of the reviewer (and presumably also in the opinion of the author) is a definition from 1957 by the U.S. Council on Social Work Education:

“ ... that the term ‘international social work’ should properly be confined to programs of social work of international scope, such as those carried on by intergovernmental agencies, chiefly those of the U.N.; governmental; or non-governmental agencies with international program” (Stein, 1957, p.3 – Healy, p. 8).

Healy extends this definition, however: “... *international social work* is defined as international professional action and the capacity for international action by the social work profession and its members” (10). “International action” is vague. Thus, a German social worker who finds a job in Austria, not with the UN in Vienna, but in a kindergarten in Innsbruck, could claim to be an international social worker? Not really.

Healy explains “international action” further as having four dimensions: “internationally related domestic practice and advocacy, professional exchange, international practice, and international policy development and advocacy” (10). Expecting that the four main parts of the book refer to these dimensions, i.e., that each part is concerned with one of them, the reader remains, however, disappointed: The topic area is simply too vast.

Part I: The Context of International Social Work: Concepts, Issues, and Organizations (25-132)

Part I consists of four chapters. The first focuses on the main concepts and theories underpinning international social work:

“Globalization” is a critical term for social work, which has paid considerable attention to the negative impacts of globalization and has difficulties to develop “a shared awareness of the world as a single place” (26, Healy quoting Midgley, 1997). The impact of global interdependence has been well understood in economic and environmental matters, but less well in social work. This gap in comprehension is “particularly acute in Western nations” (28). Social workers in poorer countries have been living with the impact of global interdependence for many years. Healy points that out and gives examples, but chooses two examples that are easily understood in social work practice in industrialized countries: Migration as the most dramatic social indicator of globalization (with many more migrants in poor countries than in the rich “fortresses,” as she notes) and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

“Development” is, to Healy, “still not a widely understood concept among Western (or Northern) social workers” (52). She references definitions and theories, and focuses on “social development,” a development concept “particularly important

to social work” (56), and tries to link up social work definitions to UN definitions or concepts.

The references to UN sources are critical throughout the book.

In this chapter, Healy quotes “Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, UN Centre for Human Settlements, World Food Programme, 2006” as authors of a quotation on the degradation of ecosystem services. The reviewer, knowing FAO, IFAD, both of them specialized agencies, and WFP, subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, all with their headquarters in Rome, quite well and UNHABITAT, the UN Human Settlement Program (UN Centre for Human Settlements is the former name) a bit, was astonished: What will these organizations, different in history, mandate, funding, and other, have written together? Healy refers to a paper presented in a session of the International Forum on the Eradication and Poverty that took place in New York in November 2006. The session was, indeed, organized by the ‘authors’, but the whole Forum was an interagency initiative with about 15 UN agencies participating. The moderator of the session was from FAO; among the panelists were representatives of NGOs as Bread for the World. (see http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/PovertyForum/Documents/bg_1.html, retrieved 14/11/2009).

More information about UNDP (United Nations Development Program) that draws on the expertise of developing country nationals and NGOs, would have been helpful. Healy criticizes, instead, the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by two economists from Pakistan and India respectively and included in UNDP’s Human Development Report(s). The HDI with its three main indicators for development is criticized by many, first of all India, ranking low in the index (134 out of 180 in 2009).

But Healy’s opinion that a “much more comprehensive measure was developed by social work scholar Richard Estes” (61) does not really challenge the HDI: Estes’ Index of Social Progress (ISP) comprises 45 indicators, among them “political chaos,” “cultural diversity,” data and amount of data that are difficult to collect – at least in poor countries.

“Human rights” are “also increasingly at the core of international social work” (63). The author gives an overview, explains what treaties and conventions are. And she points out which conventions are important for social work. A core subject in the discussion on human rights inside the international community is the universalism vs. relativism debate, i.e., the plea that is raised by representatives of poorer countries for recognizing the Western bias in the Rights. Healy, who has looked further into this subject, dedicates her own chapter to it in part III of the book. In this section, she refers UN failures as the non- or too-late reaction in cases of genocide, explains the principle of state sovereignty – and comes up with introducing the non-governmental international actors, i.e., the NGOs.

Another chapter in Part I deals with global social issues that are relevant to social work: Poverty, no longer contained within national boundaries; The status of women with related subjects such as gender violence and the question of traditional practices, i.e., FGM; problems of children in difficult circumstances, i.e., child labor, street children, child soldiers, etc.; aging, a problem of the industrialized nations, and natural and man-made disasters.

The final chapter is on “International Social Welfare Organizations and Their Functions.” It is ambitious to call UN agencies ‘social welfare organizations’ and not correct in the opinion of the reviewer. The UN is an intergovernmental international organization. The UN system is undoubtedly a unique

system of universal competencies; but it is complex, not primarily interested in “social welfare” and not even democratic. Healy describes under “Current UN Structures and

Agencies” (108) the ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council) and “major UN agencies related to social welfare.” a description the reviewer would like to revise:

	Healy (108ff)	Groterath
ECOSOC Economic and Social Council	<p>“reports to the General Assembly”</p> <p>“operates through four standing committees” and has “coordinating functions”</p> <p>one of the committees is the committee “Non-Governmental Organizations”</p>	<p>is as the General Assembly (GA) one of the 6 (5 – the Trusteeship Council suspended operations in ’94) main organs of the UN – assists the GA – 54 member States are elected by the GA on the basis of geographical representation.</p> <p>“operates” less then it did before, since subsidiary organs mainly of the GA have taken over parts of the operation and coordination. ECOSOC serves as a central forum, assists in organizing international conferences and has an own subsidiary machinery including commissions, standing committees, expert bodies, etc. Its relationships to other agencies and bodies are non-subsidiary; i.e., they are not direct reporting relationships. ECOSOC has lost much of its concrete power, but remains - in the eyes of the author (reviewer) – “the grey eminence” for economic and social matters in the UN.</p> <p>This (standing) committee is of outstanding importance for other international actors, i.e., the NGOs, which can apply for Consultative Status with ECOSOC. Healy explains, what such status is, in Part II of her book.</p>
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund	<p>“is an important agency of the UN”</p> <p>“it became a permanent agency ...”</p>	<p>UNICEF was and is a subsidiary organ of the GA, belonging to the group ‘Programs and Funds’. It might resemble the ‘specialized agencies’, which are permanent (but not called “permanent agencies”), such as WHO and FAO; but it is not a specialized agency. It has evolved from an emergency fund to a development agency.</p>

	<p>“with a focus on development”</p>	<p>not more or less “development” than other UN agencies; UNICEF’s focus is on children; the shift was from emergency to development.</p>
<p>UNDP United Nations Development Program</p>	<p>“UNDP is the largest operational development agency in the UN system”</p> <p>“UNDP ... plays a coordinating role among all the UN entities involved in development”</p> <p>”It administers the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).”</p>	<p>Is the UN’s global development network, a subsidiary organ of the GA, group “programs and funds.”</p> <p>All UN entities involved in development can hardly be coordinated by one agency: UN agencies are not necessarily “friendly” with each other, but compete; and they differ in status in the UN system in funding, power and some other things. What UNDP has set up in developing countries is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), composed of UN teams present in the country, under the leadership of the local UN Resident Coordinator (RC) who is in most cases the UNDP resident representative. The frameworks coordinate their responses to the development needs in the country; the RC, who is also the representative of the Secretary General in the country, coordinates humanitarian assistance in cases of emergencies as natural or man-made disasters.</p> <p>That is true, but it is worthwhile to mention that UNDP also administers the United Nations Volunteer Organization (UNV) which is interesting for social workers.</p>
<p>WHO World Health Organization</p>	<p>“WHO is another specialized agency of the UN.”</p> <p>“international health issues” – “international health standards” – primary health care” – “Malaria”</p>	<p>None of those mentioned above is a “specialized agency.”</p> <p>All true, but WHO has two directorates, which are of interest for social workers: Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health with a department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse; and Family and Community Health with ‘Ageing and Life Course’, ‘Gender, Women and Health’ – and some activities more.</p>

 a quotation on AIDS education, prevention etc. ... by “(Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006)”	The joint program is UNAIDS, a highly interesting program for social workers that could have been listed here – instead of FAO, for instance.
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund	<p>“UNFPA is the largest source of funds for family-planning-related programs in developing countries.”</p> <p>“Funding support from the United States was greatly curtailed beginning in 1984 when the United States government cut off all funds for organizations that supported or permitted abortion services. This ban was reversed in 1993 and reinstated by President George W. Bush at the beginning of his term.”</p>	<p>UNFPA is a subsidiary organ of the GA and entirely funded by donations. The biggest donor was for a long time the USA.</p> <p>... and Obama announced that funding would be restored.</p>
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	“Originally created as a temporary agency”	<p>Subsidiary body of and created by the General Assembly in 1950 with the mandate of “international protection.”</p> <p>“We need lots of social workers!” – Personal communication by a UNHCR senior staff counselor, July 2009.</p>
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization	“The first of the UN specialized agencies created, the FAO’s goal is to work toward global food security.”	That is true, or better: it is one of the specialized agencies, the “first” in the listing by alphabet. These are autonomous organizations working with the UN and with each other through coordinating at intergovernmental and inter-secretariat level. But what has FAO, the lead agency for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural development, to do with social welfare, i.e., why should the FAO be one of the “UN agencies related to social welfare” (see above), or be of interest to social workers?
WFP World Food Programme	“With the UN, the FAO sponsors the World Food Program, ...	The World Food Program is the world’s largest humanitarian organization. It is a subsidiary organ of the GA, funded entirely by voluntary contributions (a ‘donation agency’); and it is independent from the FAO. The biggest donor is the USA.

	<p>which supplies 25% of the world's food aid.”</p>	<p>This might be true, but is regrettable: the WFP is a humanitarian, not a development agency, the biggest one; and food is supplied by WFP in emergencies and after emergencies to help communities to rebuild their lives. What has this to do with social welfare? The WFP has no particular need for employing social workers, with one exception: Staff of humanitarian agencies as the WFP, also in charge of logistics and communication in emergency operations, is highly at risk, physically and mentally. A counselor team in HQ and in the field supports the staff on mission and after return; and social workers belong to that team.</p>
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References: Groterath: firsthand experience and “The United Nations Today,, United Nations Department of Public Information, New York, 2008.

Further to the UN agencies, governmental agencies are listed under “International Social Welfare Organizations,” but it is made clear that these are only in parts concerned about social welfare. “It is important for social workers to understand that international assistance serves many purposes for the donor nations and that humanitarianism is often not the major consideration” (117). Healy relates comprehensively about bi-lateral aid by USAID, the US Peace Corps inclusive, and by Japan and the Nordic Countries (commonly the most altruistic and progressive) and mentions then as the last category of “International Social Welfare Organizations” the nongovernmental organizations. The overview given in this part I is comprehensive, if not short – one example with Save the Children, short notes on the difference between relief and development and some ideas about areas of action – but Healy comes back to the NGOs and particularly to Save the Children in other parts of the book.

Part II: The Profession Internationally (133-235)

“The History of the Development of Social Work” (135-163) relates to the origins of social work in industrialized countries, which had to meet the “by-products of the industrial revolution” (136), the spread beyond North America and Europe in a second phase and then on World War II and the Nazi Period. That brought out “the worst in the profession of social work” (145), particularly in Germany. The examples from post-war Europe, particularly the Eastern countries, with some exceptions, aren’t encouraging either. From an American point of view, however, “the restoration period following World War II can be described as a rich cornucopia filled with international programs, projects and opportunities” (152, quoting Kendall). These were opportunities mainly for American and British social workers, as the reviewer would like to note: These got involved in the UNRRA program.

UNRRA was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, founded during World War II by the USA, UK, the

Soviet Union, China, and about 40 other nations under the guidance of U.S. President Roosevelt, to provide relief to countries and peoples that were liberated from the enemy, i.e., the Axis powers. President Roosevelt has, indeed, coined the name “United Nations.” But these UNRRA “United Nations” were not what we know today as United Nations. Unfortunately, Healy does not explain that. Sentences like “Building on the UNRRA programs . . . , the UN soon became the largest contributor to the spread of social work in a number of developing countries” (152) mislead the reader, may they in parts be true (the UN used, of course, the relief and rehabilitation experience of UNRRA and some of the UNRRA staff got employed by the UN) and may they be said by the author herself or by Younghusband, to whom she refers. Other developments in the “career” of social work with the United Nations (those of today) reported, cannot be verified. Healy quotes Garigue, who has made a contribution to the Ninth Annual Program Meeting of the U.S. Council on Social Work Education in New York in 1961 and who said that in 1959, the ECOSOC had asked the UN Secretary General to do “everything possible to obtain the participation of social workers in the preparation and application of programs for underdeveloped countries” (153, quoting Garigue). True or not: Many countries received assistance in the period of independence movements / decolonization, and most probably also by social workers from Western nations, whether these were acting on behalf of the UN, bilateral aid programs or the Peace Corps. And the “Era of indigenization: The 1970s” (153ff) that followed was characterized not only in social work matters by “strong anti-American feelings developed along with a rejection of the process of borrowing and using models from the industrialized countries” (156). Another “model-colonization” then took place after the fall of the Eastern bloc, when “a flood of consultants” (157) arrived in Eastern Europe. Healy: “It is likely that

another era of indigenization will emerge for the countries of the East” (157).

Interesting and fascinating is the collection of biographies of the pioneers of social work from Denmark (Manon Luttichau), Germany, then UK and the USA (Alice Salomon), Poland (Irena Sendler), Jamaica (Sybil Francis) and Iran (Sattareh Farman Farmaian) that are presented in boxes in the text throughout this chapter. This collection of biographies continues in the next chapter on “International Professional Action, A Selective History” with portrayals of Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children; René Sand, a founder of the ICSW and the IASSW; Donald Howard, social worker in UNRRA; and Dame Eileen Younghusband, the author of the 3rd Global Survey of Social Work Training for the UN. In this chapter, Healy describes how social work takes the world stage by collaborating with and founding its own International Organizations. The three major international social work organizations, IASSW, IFSW, and ICSW, developed out of The International Conference of Social Work in 1928 in Paris, are described in detail. IASSW was engaged mainly in promoting and developing education and training internationally, IFSW was promoting the profession and as standing for The International Code of Ethics, and ICSW was the organization that maintained active liaison with the UN on social development matters. On this occasion, Healy explains what a Consultative Status with the UN is: “The system for NGOs to interact with the UN was established in 1946 and remains largely unchanged today. Organizations are permitted to apply for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) if they meet several conditions: They must focus on issues related to ECOSOC, have aims consistent with the UN Charter, and broadly represent those in their field (with a preference for worldwide organizations rather than national bodies). NGOs can be accepted into one of three

classifications, with varying privileges. ICSW is a Category I organization, designated as an organization “with a basic interest in most of the activities of the Council” (Willetts, 1996, p.32” (183). Healy does not explain this concept further, which is regrettable, since Category II, Special Consultative status, is an interesting category for social work also, ditto, as a “starter,” the Roster Category III.

Further to the International Social Work Organizations — as a fourth major international social work organization—the International Consortium for Social Development is mentioned, but not described in detail. Healy reports about “Direct Work in International Organizations” and gives three examples. There is also a small section on “Inside Influence at the United Nations” where pioneers such as Katherine Kendall are cited, all enthusiastic about working experiences with the young United Nations, and the true United Nations as a referral to the first meeting of the Social Commission of ECOSOC in 1947 (190) lets suppose. The “American-British bias” or predominance, however, is not raised as a topic: “.... and social welfare officials from developing countries were given UN support to study social work in the United States and Great Britain” (191). Among the reasons for the decline of inside influence of social work (in the UN) that the author suggests is much about emphasis on economic development, increasing bureaucracy, as well as the difficulties of the profession to adapt to challenges and new circumstances and to compete in interdisciplinary environments. But there is nothing about this bias in a new environment of international politics. In the post-war period (and confusion), with decolonization beginning and only 51 UN member states, the USA and UK were, if not the only ones, but the dominant ones to impact international policies. A lot has changed meanwhile, starting from the number of member states that increased to 192. Today, somebody who knows only one

national model and who speaks only English will hardly be able to work with the UN if not for politically motivated reasons. Knowledge of at least two languages, preferably UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian), is a basic requirement for working with the UN.

The chapter on “Social Work Around the World Today” (201-235) gives an interesting insight into social work education and practice in countries such as Denmark, Japan, Armenia, and Ethiopia, among others. It is obvious that the differences are remarkable and interesting, and it is encouraging to find all these country reports in one book. Denmark is the only European country described. The American glance at Europe needs getting used to, but is refreshing: “As have many other European countries, Denmark has joined the Barcelona Convention, which validates educational comparison and allows student mobility. This system is facilitated by a joint European Credit Transfer System (ECTS points)” (204). Barcelona?! She obviously means Bologna, i.e., the Bologna Process. Never mind! If only the system was already facilitated

Part III: International Social Work: Values, Practice, and Policy (239-337)

This is the part of the book where the author brings up the important debate on universalism vs. cultural relativism, a debate truly relevant not only to social work. Concepts like self-determination, independence, non-directivity, confidentiality, i.e., core concepts of social work, seem to be grounded in Western individualistic culture; and they are questioned and challenged by authors, officials, and further representatives mainly from Africa and Asia. The question is described and discussed thoroughly. Without a proper knowledge of the universalism-relativism debate and an appropriate self-

positioning, a social worker can or should, indeed, not act on international stages. Lynne Healy proposes moderately relativist or moderately universalist positions. Donaldson, for instance, proposes a set of core human values to be respected as “an absolute moral threshold” (255, quoting Donaldson) to be mixed with respect for local traditions and the context – a good example for a moderately relativist position in the opinion of the reviewer who recognizes her own position.

The second chapter in this part III is written by Lara Herscovitch, Education Specialist of Save the Children / USA, with the author. This chapter informs thoroughly and in detail on field practice, introduces the relevant glossary and related concepts and mentions a debate, which is important in current international politics and technical cooperation, i.e., the debate on relief and/or vs. development. The modern relief vs. development landscape has, indeed, changed as the authors note (261). “There is an increasing understanding of the issues that connect relief and development work and how one can pave the way to the other. For example, poorly planned agricultural practices – typical development work – can cause soil erosion or deforestation, which can cause severe landslides during a heavy rainy season or hurricane thus leading to the need for relief work” (261). Particularly interesting for the readers of this book, supposedly social workers interested in getting involved in international business, is the section about employment of social workers in internationally active NGOs. There are lots of possibilities, as the authors report, even though many of the vacancies are not vacancies exclusively for social workers. International jobs are definitely more generic than domestic ones. A social worker who reads David Bourns’ report about “A Day in the Life of a Program Manager,” one of the empirical examples in a box in this chapter (270-271), can certainly develop an idea of whether she / he would be

able to take such a job or not. David Bourns works with Save the Children and holds a Master’s in Social Work degree. In the opinion and the experience of the reviewer, the remarks on the unsustainability of a number of classical psychological or therapeutic interventions (274) are important. Trauma counseling should, indeed, be provided, if ever, only under conditions of a guaranteed appropriate and sustained follow-up mechanism – and not in every possible form / method, as could be added. True, interesting, and encouraging for the reader is also what is said about networking possibilities in the field. NGOs are working together with UN agencies and other internationally active bodies. The institutional gap is much smaller in the field than in Headquarters, and meeting and collaboration is easier – and in relief operations often facilitated, as could be added, by OCHA staff. OCHA is the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In another chapter in part III, Healy discusses the “International / Domestic Practice Interface” (286-316), affirming that “all” social workers “are likely to engage in internationally related social work within their usual jobs” (286) – with migrants, refugees, in international adoption, through interpreters, in inter-country case work, and in border areas. “It is hard to imagine a social work career in the twenty-first century that will not bring the practitioner into periodic contact with situations that require knowledge beyond the borders of one’s own country” (313). True – but she / he has interpreters at hand if needed, represents the power, can insist in being on the right side, acts on behalf of national authorities, etc. And this would require an in-depth discussion.

The last chapter in part III is dedicated to the question of “Understanding and Influencing Global Policy” (317-337), an important question, and an important requirement for

working in the international fields. The author gives useful advice concerning policy making organizations and argues again for a social work involvement in international politics. Indeed, with issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender, etc. (see above), on the global agenda, an involvement of social workers (or, as the reviewer would propose, “soft skills experts,” and this term includes other professions) makes sense and should meet demand. Particularly the Civil Society, i.e., the NGOs and the NGO Committees at the United Nations, have moved a lot in recent times. They could be an excellent forum for social workers if social workers, as other professionals, were ready to engage in more generic jobs, to leave apart some of their domestic professional convictions and attitudes, and do not try to use these forums as professional vanity fairs. Lynne Healy uses this chapter to integrate some of what has been said and explained before and gives advice on how to use the international machinery to influence international as well as domestic policy. But influencing policy is “a big thing” all the more if it is global policy. Much lobbying is necessary; and lobbying can be done by individuals, but is often more efficient if done by organizations or associations. Not surprisingly, Lynne Healy concludes this chapter with an appeal to the international professional organizations to expand their efforts in policy influencing.

IV Strengthening International Social Work: Strategies and Challenges (341-371)

In the first of these two last chapters in part IV, the author discusses international exchange modalities and questions. Hardly anybody doubts about the usefulness of international exchange – if not social workers?! “Exchange is likely to occur only when each party to the transaction has something of value to transmit to the other” (344). And a hypothesis of an author called

Wagner, who wrote in 1992 about social work education in an integrated Europe and had probably the transfer from Western models and ideas to post-sovietic Eastern Europe in mind, is that “social workers and social work educators probably have more affinity with the concept of unilateral transfer than with the concept of exchange, because it is based on altruism, rather than economic transplantation and self interest (p.126)” (344). If this is true, i.e., if social workers from industrialized countries believe that their own domestic practice is the best and that they could not learn from others – they should stay at home. As Healy notes the increasing global dialogue has diminished western dominance and fractured the predominantly Anglo-Western pedagogical hegemony. Among the examples of exchange practice, the European situation is discussed, i.e., the Erasmus program, an attempt to “promote Europeanization” (350) by the EU. The Erasmus funding has enabled many students to have exchange experiences, but is, from the point of view of Non-Europeans (and probably some Europeans, the reviewer inclusive) “Euro-centric” (351).

A small, however, important section in this chapter on exchange treats the “Paradigm Shift in International Exchange” (352). This shift is from emphasis on experience to emphasis on competence. Healy quotes Albach & Teichler, 2001: “The traditional ideal of a cultural experience has been superseded by the goal of obtaining knowledge useful for the new internationalized professions of the postindustrial era” (352). And this is good and bad news, according to the author – and more good and less bad news, according to the reviewer who considers the cross-cultural experience and its impact on personal growth or transformation not the core, but an added value of exchange.

Healy’s last chapter is called “Social Work as a Force for Humane Global Change and Development” (357-371). She uses the

chapter for summarizing, for a “de-briefing” as would be said in terms of international practice. In the conclusion, she comes back to her definition of International Social Work, a definition, that emphasizes “professional international action in a globalized world” (369), taking position against universalism: “International social work indeed transcends national boundaries and gives social work a global face, but more so in terms of actions and presence on the

international scene than in terms of sameness or universality” (369).

Conclusive statement by the reviewer

I am sure that Lynne Healy could already open up the minds of many students of social work by her commitment, her work, and by this book, and that she will continue to do so. This book merits to be read and to become a basic textbook for students of social work.