

It takes a village to raise a child

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Abstract

There are different theories regarding the best way to help people. This article will focus on two different ways: through family or community interventions. Family-based intervention is currently the most common and widely respected type of intervention in the Netherlands. However, community-based intervention, based on the notion of a *pedagogical civil society*, is gradually gaining more ground in the Netherlands. The different emphases and interventions related to these viewpoints are discussed. This article ends with suggestions for the future role of the government and a change in the education of pedagogical students.

Keywords: *clinical approach, pedagogical civil society, socially responsible behavior, community, interventions*

Introduction

Students of pedagogical sciences are taught to help children according to a one-sided clinical method. This means that they look at the child and family in isolation, apart from a wider social context. They make a diagnosis based on an intake interview, or observation in an atypical environment. Subsequently, a treatment is offered which aims at the child and the family (Drake et al., 2001). Still, this one-sided clinical approach seems to be the most common in the Netherlands. However, a different view has recently been gaining ground, one based on the notion of the *pedagogical civil society*. In this approach, citizens of a community share the responsibility for socializing their children (De Winter, 2012c).

The *pedagogical civil society* is best known through Micha de Winter (2012b) in his article "The modernity of child abuse", in which he writes that the frequency of child abuse has not decreased in recent years. He explains this by noting that people can hide their maltreatment very well and that people who suspect something do not feel obliged to say or do anything. De Winter states that the *pedagogical civil society* should enable a decrease in child abuse rates, and that interventions should be focused on the structural, systematic and social risks as well (De Winter, 2012b).

In the current article, earlier versions of these different views, and the interventions based on them, are described.

Earlier Views

For decades there has been a wide spectrum of views about handling pedagogical problems, like educational or behavioral problems, within families and/or the community. On the one hand, socialization is seen as an individual development and is more focused on behavioral aspects, a vision inspired by, among others, the Dutch educator Martinus Langeveld. On the other hand, the *pedagogical civil society* is derived more directly from the writings of Maria Montessori and John Dewey, who wanted to change the world through socialization practices.

Langeveld

Martinus Langeveld was interested in a child's development (Bos, 2011) and he had a clinical view of the child (Klinkers & Levering, 1985; Bos 2011). He was especially interested in the child's own inner world.

According to Langeveld, socialization depends on value judgment to such an extent that, in his view, without value judgment socialization cannot be achieved. In order to acquire a value judgment, one needs to have a socialization goal. Langeveld considers self-determination and responsibility as the highest socialization goals (Klinkers & Levering, 1985; Bos, 2011).

The goal of Langeveld's theory was to help an individual child and his or her caretakers, because he saw methods of individualized knowledge as standing at the core of pedagogical sciences. His methods aimed to create a concrete image of a specific child (Klinkers & Levering, 1985). Langeveld wanted professionals to be able to help the individual child with his or her acquired knowledge and experience (Bos, 2011).

Montessori and Dewey

María Montessori had a different view from that of Langeveld (De Winter, 2012a). She thought that, given that children are the future of humanity, they should be educated to value basic human principles. After all, their education determines whether they become adults who feel responsible for the community (De Winter, 2012a). Montessori developed a program-centered method of education. The core of this method is to fulfill the needs of an individually developing student and to supply a well-structured enough program to ensure that proper education occurs. She ensures this by providing an environment that is developmentally appropriate for students. Some of the important key aspects of Montessori's method are the importance of choice and interest in learning. Adult interaction styles, child outcomes and learning from peers are also important but those are difficult to evaluate (Gill, 2007).

John Dewey had a slightly different view from that than Montessori (De Winter, 2012a). His work focuses more on democracy in a time of industrialization and scientific revolution, because democracy is premised on people living together as responsible and critical citizens. Also, democracy protects a community from social disadvantages, indoctrination, and power struggles. So if we teach children about friendships and respect for other people, it is more likely that they will live a democratic way of life (De Winter, 2012a).

Individualization and democracy

The visions of Montessori and Dewey, as described above, seem more democratic and slightly less individualistic than Langeveld's vision. The current clinical vision is, like Langeveld's, more individualistic than the *pedagogical civil society*.

Current vision

The current vision has an individualistic point of view, in that it states that, in an individualistic society, everyone is free to choose their own identity. This is important because everyone is born differently and therefore it is not optimal for a developing individual to receive an identity ascribed by the wider society. Thus, everyone is responsible for their own fate, and has equal opportunity and freedom (Veenhoven, 1999).

Individualization ensures more freedom and equality for an individual. This development is caused by the decrease of dependence on the direct social environment, social influence and social control in a community. An example of the increase of equality is an increase in anonymity and a decrease in the dependence on the immediate social environment. As a result, the power balance between an individual and his direct social environment becomes equal (Schnabel, 1999).

Furthermore, because people in an individualistic society control their own fates, they experience more joy in their lives. Therefore, the benefits of living in an individualistic society exceed the costs. They also believe that looking for a place in the society will ensure

good outcomes for everyone. Additionally, parents teach children to be socially responsible and to be in control of their own behavior. This will lead to the development of an identity, self-esteem and self-actualization (Veenhoven, 1999).

To sum up, an individualized society enhances equality, freedom and responsibility for one's own fate, and it decreases direct social environmental influences. The role of parents is to teach children to be responsible, in order to develop an identity, self-esteem and self-actualization.

Pedagogical civil society

In contrast, de Winter (2011) states that parents should not have sole responsibility for educating their children to behave in a socially responsible way, but that neighborhoods and schools should share in this responsibility (De Winter, 2011). He believes that this is the most important aspect of a democracy. Furthermore, De Winter (2005) states that the focus of socialization, education, and youth policy is currently too individualistic. The current pedagogical goals are: developing an individual identity and becoming independent. According to De Winter (2005), these goals lack a sense of public interest. Social cohesion and control are important and necessary for the public interest to maintain and create a democracy (De Winter, 2005; De Winter, 2012c).

If a community does not have strong social cohesion or control, there will be more problems because of the lack of public interest (De Winter, 2012b; Hilhorst & Zonneveld, 2013). No one knows what is happening at someone's home and no one feels responsible for anyone else, and this results from a lack of social cohesion. There is no integration and there is no chance to learn socially responsible behavior in the community. In those neighborhoods defiant behavior will go unnoticed. Therefore, the result of defiant behavior is less punished by the society and less harmful to the person who engages in it. Consequently, that person is at greater risk of continuing to engage in such behavior (De Winter, 2012b).

Socially responsible behavior is not automatically internalized, because it could be adverse to one's personal interest. That is why people have to learn socially responsible behavior. Thus, in a democracy, people have to be educated and socialized in order to live a democratic way of life and to learn socially responsible behavior (De Winter, 2005; De Winter, 2012c).

In sum, De Winter believes that individualization is responsible for a decrease in public interest due to a lack of social cohesion and control in a community. This lack of socially responsible behavior creates increased problems in families.

Interventions

The differences in views about individualization are seen in interventions. The family-based view wants to help the individual him/herself or within the family context, while the community-based view, based on the concept of the *pedagogical civil society*, wants to help the individual by means of creating a society where people feel responsible for each other, and where they help each other.

In order to help the individual it is important to correctly recognize and label different problems. By labeling educational and behavioral problems, the most appropriate intervention can be found (Norwich, 2002). The family-based intervention is the most important intervention when a problem is caused by personality characteristics and parental behavior. These can evoke reactions from the environment, but the core of the problem lies within the family. The problems in the family are best solved with help from a professional clinician (Van Leeuwen, Mervielde, Braet, & Bosmans, 2004).

The government prefers family-based interventions since they are evidence-based practices and are focused on prevention most of the time. Evidence-based practices are

interventions with consistent empirical scientific evidence showing a positive effect on individual outcomes. The government prefers this kind of intervention because the probability of achieving the desired effect is greater (Fisak, Richard & Mann, 2011; Drake et al., 2001). An intervention is more effective when it contains a standard manual, training materials, when the intervention can be implemented in the life of individuals, and when the intervention is carried out by a professional clinician (Fisak et al., 2011; Drake et al., 2001). Prevention interventions attempt to promote early socialization and identify development risks to minimize the problems within a family (Hilhorst & Zonneveld, 2013).

Thus, family-based interventions that are evidence-based or preventive in nature are preferred by the government. However, the problem with those interventions is that they are based on the dysfunction of families or individuals, which are seen as the outcome of individual risk factors and pathologies (De Winter, 2012b). Nevertheless, individuals should not be blamed for not being good citizens. Instead, the larger society should be blamed for not creating an environment conducive to developing good citizens (De Winter, 2012c). Problems in families and individuals are mostly social problems and correlated to the social cohesion of a community (De Winter, 2012b). So a *democratic deficit* or a *civic achievement gap* is a better description for those problems than the labeling of individuals (De Winter, 2012c; De Winter, 2005).

Finally, the government needs to look beyond the measurable effectiveness of an intervention (De Winter, 2012b). Interventions should be focused on social or community interventions. Although the effectiveness of an intervention may be hard to measure, it can still be valuable (De Winter, 2005). Social or community interventions should target social ties and integration of families in a community and promote socialization within local civil society. This might enhance the social cohesion of a community, for people as well as for institutions. For instance, if there were more local shops there would be more encounters between neighbors, which increases social cohesion. Thus, while the government should not interfere in individuals' lives, it should promote a better environment and greater social cohesion (De Winter, 2012b).

Conclusion and Discussion

To summarize, the currently dominant family-based view is clinical and individualistic, while the community-based view based on the concept of the *pedagogical civil society* attempts to promote the social responsibility needed for a thriving democracy. The different views also provide different interventions. The family-based view thinks the best intervention is family-based intervention, and involves labeling problems. The community-based view based on the *pedagogical civil society* attempts to promote the public interest and the community collaboration in the socialization of children.

The role of the government in this picture is to create communities. In the Netherlands the government is in the process of establishing Centers for Youth and Family (Centra voor Jeugd en Gezin) in every city. These centers help parents and caretakers with the socialization of their children and can be found in various neighborhoods of a city, making them easily accessible (Hilhorst & Zonneveld, 2013). This is not the only element of the *pedagogical civil society* necessary, but it is a step in the right direction. Such a center will promote the *pedagogical civil society*, as a consequence of the social cohesion resulting from increased social encounters, information sessions and accessible centers in the neighborhood.

Perhaps educational programs in pedagogical sciences should focus not only on helping the family and child, but also on how a neighborhood works, and how to create social cohesion for families in the same neighborhood. This way, in the future a different view will come to be adopted among pedagogical students, and their knowledge will be used to create

closely knit neighborhoods where everyone feels socially responsible for each other. After all, it takes a village to raise a child.

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