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Non-governance in time of crisis: the lack of policy evaluation and its impact on the way Israel deals with the COVID-19 crisis

Ron Tzur¹ and Nissim Cohen²

This article advocates the adoption of a comprehensive and uniform model for the evaluation of effective public policy for the real-time management of the COVID-19 crisis. It calls for the immediate application of “During Action Review”, which requires a series of decisions to be made in the process of managing the crisis and as part of an orderly long-term policy, offering a present-oriented and sober perspective that also looks ahead to the future. A necessary adjustment since policy decisions taken to date and the ensuing measures implemented have neither solved the crisis completely nor provided an adequate response to its immediate and future consequences.

At-risk children: revisiting myths in the risk discourse in light of a context-informed perspective

Dorit Roer-Strier³ and Yochay Nadan³

This article proposes a context-informed perspective to the study of children’s risk and protection. This perspective was developed from our large-scale qualitative research project in Israel that explored perceptions and constructions of child risk and protection among parents and children of various cultures and communities in Israel, and also among the social workers who serve these communities. We present three correlations – racism and exclusion, religion and spirituality, and political conflict and violence – to illustrate our conceptualization. We revisit the ontological nature of the categories of child risk and protection by deconstructing three

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prevalent myths identified in the risk discourse. We discuss the complexity embedded in risk assessment in a diverse, multi-cultural and multi-context reality, and we elaborate on the discrepancies and differences between parents and professionals, in their values, on the positionality of the observer and on the power relations between them.

Violence against social service providers and coping mechanisms at the frontline – the case of teachers and social workers in Israel

Maayan Davidovitz¹ and Nissim Cohen¹

Frontline workers who provide social services are often exposed to violence from their clients in many places around the world, including in Israel. Our article identifies the types of violence to which frontline workers are exposed and the various coping mechanisms they adopt in response to their clients' physical and verbal violence. We examine this phenomenon empirically through in-depth interviews and focus groups with 101 Israeli frontline workers (teachers and social workers). Our research findings demonstrate that clients' violence, both verbal and physical, is a common phenomenon in the duties of frontline workers. In response, field-level workers use several coping strategies: carefully selecting their words when interacting with the violent client; expressing their empathy and support towards the violent client; meeting violent clients' demands; setting boundaries; severing contact with the violent client and calling for backup from functionaries in the organization. We found no significant differences between the social workers and teachers in terms of the type of violence to which each group is exposed and how they cope therewith. We offer a number of possible future research directions as well as practical recommendations for reducing the phenomenon.

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Human rights, terminal illness and imprisonment: the case of compassionate release

*Netanel Dagan*¹

Early release of seriously ill and ageing prisoners (hereinafter: “compassionate release”) can be granted based on criteria specified by law in many penal systems. The aim of this paper is to present the views and experiences of 20 Israeli Parole Boards’ Chairpersons on compassionate release using qualitative semi-structured interviews. The interviewees argued for compassionate release on the grounds of illness and old age, citing different humanitarian, utilitarian, and retributive justifications. The interviewees also indicated tensions in their decision-making process: compassionate release may be in conflict with retributive justice (and public opinion); the legal criterion for such release is vague and its process may be manipulated by unqualifying prisoners.

Standards are a prerequisite for equality, standardization is its enemy

*Smadar Ben-Asher*², *Israel Sorek*³, *Eldad Shidlovsky*⁴ and *Ya'arit Bokek-Cohen*⁵

Standardization is a mechanism designed to create uniformity, which reflects the equal status of the citizens of a State vis-à-vis its institutions. However, when standardization in certain areas of life ignores essential differences between groups and individuals, it may intensify inequality, prejudice the principle of justice, and create overt or covert discrimination. In this article

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we expose the erroneous identification between standardization and equality, when dealing with unique life contexts and complex human situations.

The connection between standards and justice is examined using three perspectives: philosophical, economic, and social. As a case study, we bring the Bedouin IDF widows who are adversely affected by the standardization of rights granted to IDF widows in Israel, since the rights granted by law are not adapted to their way of life. We demonstrate how standards that are not culturally sensitive create distortions that undermine distributive justice and prevent particular groups, usually marginalized and excluded, from receiving the benefits and resources they deserve. We argue that only policies that segment personal, social and cultural needs adequately, are reflective of a democratic and substantive equality that goes beyond technical uniformity in mechanisms of implementation.

Culturally competent policy practice in multicultural societies

*Hani Nouman*¹

Cultural competence for engagement in policy shaping processes is necessary to promote effective engagement of social workers in policy practice in cross-cultural political situations. Although cultural competence played a prominent part in the literature of the past decade, most papers on the subject have focused on the intercultural encounter between social workers and clients, and on the therapeutic context, with emphasis on the practitioner and the client belonging respectively to the dominant Western culture and the “other” less dominant culture in the society. This article attempts to fill the gap by developing a theoretical culturally competent policy practice model to examine different dimensions of cultural competence required for the engagement of social workers from different ethnic groups in the policy arena. The basic assumption of the conceptual framework discussed below is

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that social workers' ethnic origin, cultural values, status and social identity, and political and ideological stances are likely to be expressed in the relationships with their clients, in their perceptions of social structures, and in the way they act in the policy arena. Therefore, the development of cultural competence in policy practice is necessary for effective work in cross-cultural situations.

