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**Review of *The Handbook of Children's Rights: Comparative Policy and Practice*. Bob Franklin (ed). Reviewed by Joseph Wronka, Springfield College.**

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social development content in social work policy and community practice curricula.

Martin B. Tracy  
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Bob Franklin (Ed.) *The Handbook of Children's Rights: Comparative Policy and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 1995. \$59.95 hardcover; \$17.95 papercover.

This book has four objectives: to explore the various contemporary debates concerning children's rights; to evaluate impact of British legislation on children's rights; to examine recent British policy initiatives intended to secure these rights; and to offer a comparative perspective on children rights in select countries. It accomplishes these tasks extremely well, providing the reader with an excellent comprehensive and insightful appraisal of recent developments in children's rights, now even more timely with an almost explosive acknowledgement worldwide of human rights documents, like the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Given the book's comprehensivity, a wide audience could benefit, including, but not limited to educators, social workers, social policy analysts, politicians, philosophers, psychologists, lawyers, juvenile justice and children's advocates in general.

After a moving preface by T. Hammarberg, a member of the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child and former Secretary General of Amnesty International, calling for implementation of the *vision* of the Rights of the Child, B. Franklin in Part I gives an overview of children's rights. Like the rest of this work, the scholarship in this overview is strong, giving a reasoned analysis of basic issues surrounding admittedly, a controversial area, which may include, for instance, the child's right to vote.

Part II discusses the changing legal framework of children's rights. T. Jeffs, decrying among other things, the increasing commercialization of education, makes compelling arguments for student participation in policy formulation for securing a child's basic human right to education. C. Lyon and N. Parton then consider basic provisions and the impact of the Children Act 1989, noting that ultimately children have now become reconstituted

from welfare, to legal objects, whose voices need to be heard more in judicial decision making. B. Anderson then cites relevant criminal justice acts, reminding the reader through numerous examples "how few rights children in the criminal justice system possess." M. Freeman continues to cite select articles of the Rights of the Child, suggesting how English law and practice may be improved, for example, by funding voluntary-aided Muslim schools, not merely Church of England, Catholic, or Jewish schools.

Part III emphasizes implementation of children's rights in British settings. The first three chapters argue for Children's Rights Officers (CRO's) (S. Ellis and A. Franklin), a Minister for Children (J. Lestor), and a Children's Rights Development Unit (G. Lansdown). Roughly, a CRO would investigate children's reported problems and provide support, advice, and advocacy; a Minister, acting as a general overseer and policy coordinator could serve as a catalyst for social change; and a Development Unit could monitor implementation and raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Next chapters then give exact, but often disturbing, descriptions of lives and policies surrounding children who are often "elected" to act as caretakers for "loved" ones (J. Aldridge and S. Becker); children in their early years (i.e. before age 8), often victims of "poorly accommodated . . . staffed . . . and equipped" services, as evident in many day cares and playgrounds, for example (G. Alexander); and disabled children who, in contemporary times are arguably forced to deal with an "ideological legacy," from Germany's "respected" hospitals equipped with extermination facilities for people with disabilities (M. Kennedy).

Part IV gives comparative perspectives on children's rights sharing American (C. Cohen), Scandinavian (M. Flekkoy), Australian (M. Rayner) and Russian (J. Harwin) experiences. Noteworthy, is J. Harwin's admission of the growth of social problems due to economic restructuring in Eastern Europe and Russia, arguing that perhaps "Russian people may well look back nostalgically to the socialist era." P. Newell also discusses the child's right to physical integrity giving an assessment of some major worldwide initiatives to deal with physical violence against children. J. Ennew's essay on street children is most provocative as it

cites, for instance, the many limitations of the Rights of the Child, calling for other rights more appropriate for this population, such as the right not to be labelled, the right to have their own support systems respected, the right to control their own sexuality, and the right to be protected from secondary exploitation, which includes what the author calls "NGO voyeurism."

While this author would have liked more discussion of the reasons behind some of the structural causes of some of violations of children's rights, like the global maldistribution of wealth, or a prevailing "war," rather than "peace" culture, admittedly such issues, often referred to as solidarity rights, are still in the process of conceptual elaboration. Also, this book has a "euro-centric" quality, arguably, however, often characteristic of human rights publications in general. No chapter, for instance, deals substantively with an African country. Two other minor points are that this is not America. It is the United States *of* America. Also, copies of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act 1989 would have been helpful in an Appendix.

If information is power as this book posits, then this handbook should well serve as an invaluable reference to anyone desiring to improve the lives of children by translating the social construct "human rights" into reality.

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