



BOOK REVIEW

Improving Access to Further and Higher Education for Young people in Public Care: European Policy and Practice

Jacinta Birchley, JBIRCHLEY@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Aberdeen City Council

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26203/wtbz-g915>

Copyright: © 2015 Birchley

To cite this article: BIRCHLEY, J., (2015). Improving Access to Further and Higher Education for Young people in Public Care: European Policy and Practice, BY Sonia Jackson and Claire Cameron. *Education in the North*, 22(Special Issue), pp. 84-85



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Book Review

Improving Access to Further and Higher Education for Young people in Public Care: European Policy and Practice
Sonia Jackson and Claire Cameron
London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley (2014) pp.288 Hardback £60
ISBN 978-1-84905-366-2

Reviewer: Jacinta Birchley, Aberdeen City Council

This book represents a benchmark publication as it provides a collective account of a European funded study into Improving Access to Further and Higher Education for Young People in Public Care. This work was based on a series of case studies undertaken in England, Denmark, Hungary, Spain and Sweden on the social inclusion, through post school education, of this marginalised group. The book is extremely informative for those looking to develop policies to improve access to post school educational provision for young people in public care and other vulnerable learners, those who work in the area of social inclusion with this group of young people and individuals wishing to broaden their knowledge of education beyond the mainstream.

The book describes in detail the welfare systems within the five countries, suggests a framework for classification of the regimes so contrasts, comparisons and conclusions can be drawn to show how each supports or hinders the young people wishing to progress within education after their statutory school leaving age. Each nation is defined by specific criteria which include; country background, education system, child welfare legislation, education and children in care, leaving care and after care support, professional views on obstacles to educational progression for young people in care and young people views on their educational progress.

The data presented in this publication was obtained from documentation and interviews with young people who had “educational promise” that is, those young people who wanted to continue with their studies post compulsory school age as well as the professionals supporting them. The researchers attempted to replicate their study as close as they could across the five countries despite their differing features. This proved challenging, however as each encounter was explained, the reader was able to reflect on how the welfare system in place affected young people in public care.

The book is coherently written and follows a logical sequence. It does not have to be read all at once as each chapter can stand on its own. This is a good feature as there is quite a lot of factual information to take in and comprehend. Summary tables are widely used which is of great benefit to the reader. Introductory chapters cover the importance of education to social inclusion and the effects of differing welfare regimes on educational progression post compulsory school age. How the study was conducted is described, and then each of the five countries studied has a chapter where the data derived is presented and discussed. The book concludes by comparing and contrasting the countries and a brief outline of possible ways forward to ensure that young people in public care have the same educational opportunities as their peers. I felt the latter could have been expanded upon in more detail.

Fortunately, the majority of the purposively selected young people in the study managed to access post school education despite, and not because of, the educational and welfare regimes in place to support them. It was disturbing to read the accounts of young people given poor advice from the professionals whose roles were to assist them. This was particularly illustrated by one individual “struggling and wasting” two years undertaking an unnecessary course to reach his goal.

The book truly highlights the complexities surrounding care experienced young people’s journeys to access further and higher education. Although, it is rather depressing to read in parts, it pertinently illustrates the situation some find themselves in. However, it was also heartening to read of the young people who had managed to succeed. Whilst the book is

aimed at a rather specialist audience it would make interesting and informative reading for anyone in an educational role.

Further information on practice that can make a difference can be gained by reading the follow up publication "Pathways through Education for Young People in Care: Ideas from research and practice" (2013) edited by Sonia Jackson (co-author of this book). Critiquing the above book made me buy it!