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Vol. 12, No. 1
April 2009
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BOOK REVIEWS

Child neglect: Identification and assessment, by J. Horwath. Published by Palgrave MacMillan, NY, 2007. (281 pages)

The developing world is experiencing a growing concern and awareness of the criminal acts of physical and sexual abuse against young children. Shocking cases of abuse have been sensationalized by the media, distorting the reality that child *neglect*, as opposed to *abuse*, has steadily become the most frequently reported form of maltreatment of children in the developing world. The reality that neglect is non-overt and indistinct to the untrained eye makes this form of abuse difficult to assess and a particular frustration to practitioners. The author conducted a Health Board study in Ireland on professionals from various disciplines. Results indicated that 67% of non-social work professionals who were afforded, by occupation, close contact with children did not consider themselves responsible for the assessment or referral of child neglect. This included 96% of police officers, 71% of primary school workers, 86% of general practitioners, and one pediatrician. Several other professionals surveyed were of the same opinion. The author explains the critical functions of professionals within this domain of responsibility to protect and safeguard children from negligent families, and the resulting detrimental effects when professionals become negligent. She illustrates her points, drawing from real-life case examples of children who fell victim to professional negligence.

Professional negligence is defined as “failure on the part of a professional to satisfactorily safeguard and promote the welfare of children in line with their professional role and responsibilities” (p. 209). All practitioners whose duties involve attending to children are expected to identify possible cases for neglect and refer them to child care services. Written as a tool for equipping health workers, educators, medical professionals, social service managers, and all those who have contact with children as part of their line of duty, the book discusses various causes of the many barriers encountered within the assessment process,

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and possible solutions and preventative measures that can be taken to reinforce and create an effective child protection task force.

Jan Horwath recognizes the frustration felt by social work professionals in detecting and dealing with forms of neglect. Such frustration lies in the many forces that work against the proper functioning capacity of these practitioners, such as insufficient resources that create an ill-equipped and therefore severely limited setting for professionals to function; demoralization from overwhelming workloads; and unfit senior management. Horwath cites Lord Laming in Chapter 9, who reviewed the unfortunate case of the death of Victoria Climbié and found an “absence of direction, effective procedures and efficient management at a senior level” (p. 221). The social worker working with Climbié at the time of her death was required to complete an inquiry into the possible substantial harm committed against the child that put her in the hospital, regardless of the fact that the social worker had only 19 months’ experience in the field and insufficient support for completing such an assessment. It was also found that Victoria Climbié had contact with numerous professionals before her death who noticed her tattered appearance in contrast with that of her aunt and the display of an authoritative and condescending relationship, but who subsequently made no effort to respond to the possible indicators of neglect. Such forms of ineffective management of cases not only demoralize staff and add to their frustrations, but also jeopardize the children entrusted into their care, as is evident from the review of Victoria Climbié’s case.

Other areas of frustration stem from confusion concerning the true definition of neglect. As discussed in Chapter 1, definitions of neglect reflect the diverse and changing attitudes toward it that have evolved over time. The author discusses how issues of culpability, the fixed focus on mothers as perpetrators, neglect in affluent families and categorizing neglect as chronic, episodic, or a one-off incident all contributed to the difficulty of formulating a proper definition. A result of such ambiguity is to associate neglect with only certain forms, which is a dangerous perspective, since other forms of neglect will be inevitably overlooked. For example, physical neglect cases coming from impoverished families may be given more attention than emotional neglect. However, depriving babies from cognitive, emotional, and social stimuli can cause a reversal in the growth of brain synapses that may never be recovered in later life and is therefore a significant concern.

Horwath explains the ‘overwhelming’ effect experienced by practitioners who may over-emphasize certain aspects of neglect and feel inundated by the extensive number of cases. She also discusses the ‘underwhelming’ effect as when practitioners ‘normalize’ aspects of neglect when it is perceived as being pervasive—as observed from the following comment by a head teacher: *“If I referred every child in this school that I thought was being neglected, then at least half the children would be referred. It’s inevitable—you teach in an area*

like this, you expect children to be neglected" (p. 1). Horwath explores several definitions of neglect and their areas of ambiguity that have provoked contrasting understandings and concepts in regards to the characterization of neglect, and that have also served as obstacles to the effective identification and assessment of cases.

She also stresses the importance of an evidence-based approach that reduces levels of subjectivity and remains 'child-focused.' She acknowledges that practitioners are human beings who have their own personal standards, feelings, and values of how 'good enough parenting' appears. She encourages the use of an evidence-based approach that considers the developmental needs of each child and remains child focused despite practitioners' predispositions. The book examines several circumstances where practitioners were at risk of becoming vulnerable to the influences of their subjectivity in dealing with caregivers. Such cases have resulted in the detriment of the child in question because of a loss in child-focus. Subjective practice is labeled as 'practice-moral activity', whereas an approach that makes use of empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks as a basis of assessment is labeled as 'technical-rational activity'. It is acknowledged that effective practice requires a balance of the two, but also a leaning toward 'technical-rational activity'.

While the reading recognizes the ways in which professional practice of effectively safeguarding child welfare is impeded, Horwath provides several practical tools and frameworks that help manage such dilemmas and obstacles and ensure that practice remains child-focused and evidence-based.

Jan Horwath is professor of child welfare at the University of Sheffield and has published a collection of books on the subject of social practices and policies related to child care and protection. She presents a broad knowledge-base, as well as a vast collection of current literature that provides the latest research on the subject as well as real-life case studies as illustrators. Her approach is mainly theoretically-based, but she has successfully achieved applying theory to felt issues and problem areas within real working contexts of professionals. Taking an objective and non-judgmental approach, Horwath provides an accessible and handy resource-book with problem-solving techniques for practitioners who are busy, overworked, and anxious for solutions.

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Beyond the balanced scorecard: Improving business intelligence with analytics, by Mark Graham Brown. Published by Productivity Press: NY, 2007. (233 pages)

Mark Graham Brown—the author of two previous books on performance measurement titled *Keeping score: Using the right metrics to drive world-class performance* (1996) and *Winning score: How to design and implement organizational scorecards* (2000)—has been consulting in this field of measuring and improving performance for more than 25 years. His clients vary from federal and state governments to military organizations, as well as many *Fortune 50 companies*.

The first three chapters of the book describe existing scorecards and the need to develop new ones. Chapter 1 is a summary of the 1st-3rd generation scorecards and metrics giving 10 guidelines for creating your own. Chapters 2 and 3 talk about *Analytics (a new form of metrics)*: a new way of tracking organizational performance and what new metrics the scorecard should contain. Chapters 4 through 8 describe metrics that answer questions about organization performance in 5 key areas: Customers, External Environment, Employees, Operations, and Strategies & Financials. Chapter 9 looks at recent developments in knowledge with respect to performance management that emphasize the importance of a scorecard in addition to its being a reporting tool--such as that the scorecard not only tells whether you are performing up to standard, but also shows you where to improve performance.

The “Final Thoughts” section emphasizes the fact that as leaders and organizations become sophisticated due to their own development, so too must the measures whereby performance is assessed. Therefore we must be careful in developing scorecards that reflect true organizational performance that it is not overly simplistic or complex. We should shift from performance measures to performance management, where performance is regulated, measured, and improved.

The appendix section provides examples of scorecards using the analytics mentioned in chapters 4 through 8 in a variety of organizations. These examples help to broaden our horizons on how to apply these scorecards metrics within the organizations we are in as well as see what performance measures we are missing

This book is well designed, with a clear layout that allows readers to track and comprehend the various ideas of the author. The thoughts, ideas and information are well written in *easy to understand English* making difficult concepts and ideas easy to understand. This book is very useful to organizations--especially the decision-making tier. It introduces measures of organizational health that are not addressed in most organizational scorecards such as ethics,

and the external environment. Moreover, it quantifies difficult performance measures—ethics; customer/supplier/employee relationships; and diversity (to mention a few)—making them measurable. Putting these ideas into practice would allow an organization to track current performance, rather than depending on historical data (lagging indicators) as performance measures. In addition, the book uses real life examples involving both organizations ranging from profit to non-profit and private to public (government) organizations, combining both theory and practical illustration on the use of scorecards. Not only does it allow managers to see the level of organizational performance but it also shows how to improve performance.

Organizational performance is a concern, especially in this time of business recession. Although it is sometimes costly to measure performance, its benefits far outweigh its costs. An organization that does not measure its performance or measures it poorly is in danger of losing its focus with regards to its vision and mission; goals and objectives; as well as its accountability to stakeholders in the use of organizational resources. Successful organizations who apply these techniques will have meaningful measures of performance to gauge their performance against industry standards or competitors. The various ways we can meaningfully measure organizational performance while incurring the least cost but still providing a holistic view of the organization as a whole is the major thrust of this book. As such, it will be very useful to anyone in a decision-making capacity regardless of the management or the type of industry/organization.

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Managing Knowledge to Fuel Growth, Published by Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA, 2007. (158 pages)

Managing Knowledge to Fuel Growth is a collection of short articles presented by The Results-Driven Manager. The main topic of this book is the concept and importance of knowledge management, its impact on productivity, and how companies can create mechanisms for creating and transferring knowledge across different operating units. The book also offers strategies that companies can employ to store and retrieve relevant knowledge before its best and most knowledgeable employees leave the organization.

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Furthermore, this book presents the concept of competitive intelligence, and the contribution of technology in enhancing the management of the knowledge that exists within a company. Professors, managers, writers, and consultants in the field of Knowledge Management have written this book; some of them will be introduced below.

The first two articles of the book were written by the editors, and present the concept and importance of knowledge management along with its implementation in the organization. They explain the obstacles that organizations have to overcome in order to implement knowledge management successfully.

One of the most important writers in this book is Thomas Davenport. He is the President's Distinguished Professor of Information Technology & Management at Babson University. He has authored, coauthored, or edited 11 books, two of which have become best-sellers. In his article, Davenport presents how knowledge has an impact on the level of productivity of the company. Organizations must be aware of the implication of knowledge work. He points out that "for too long, knowledge work has been ignored by organizations seeking to enhance productivity" (p.45). He insists that organizations must be engaged in designing an environment that allows the utilization of knowledge in decision-making process, thereby enabling the organization to be more efficient.

Mattison Crowe, a contributor to Harvard Management Update, discusses the value of intellectual capital in the organization, and addresses the topics of human capital, structural capital, and customer capital and how they are critical in managing companies. The underlying aspect in his article is that organizations need to effectively combine human knowledge and skills, develop a strong technological structure, and provide excellent service to customers if they want to be more competitive.

David Boath, a partner in Accenture's Health & Life Sciences practice and David Y. Smith, a partner at Accenture Learning, encourage companies to design mechanisms for creating knowledge communities that learn and transfer it across the organization. In this way, they understand that companies can store relevant knowledge just in case the best employees have to leave the company. In this sense, knowledge communities allow companies to continue learning and sharing critical knowledge among their employees.

Rebecca M. Saunders, a contributor to Harvard Management Update, presents practical steps for managing the knowledge in the company. From her standpoint, in order to maximize their knowledge, companies must follow several steps, such as "to choose a process, find and enlist the right people, make sure technology supports your data, invest in training knowledge workers, etc." (pp 74-78). All these steps will aid the company in the application of knowledge in its management processes.

David Stauffer, a Montana-based business writer, introduces the concept of competitive intelligence, which he considers is based on gathering and disseminating significant information throughout the company. In order to be competitive, this information must be contextualized and applied strategically for adding value for customers. In the current business scenario, companies need to continuously increase their competitive intelligence as a guarantee of remaining in the market and being profitable.

Currently the world is living in a knowledge-based economy, which entails that companies have the imperative of knowing how to incorporate relevant knowledge in their administrative practices so that they can remain competitive in the market. In this context, knowledge management has emerged as a topic regarded as critical for managing successful companies. Despite the fact that many authors have addressed the topic of knowledge management, this discipline is still young, and many companies are not obtaining or preserving the best of the knowledge they are utilizing in their operations.

In this regard, this book offers practical recommendations that can facilitate the administration of knowledge in a company. The best contribution of the book is that it can give the readers an overview of knowledge management in a form that is easy to understand and apply. Through examples of several companies employing knowledge management techniques, readers can grasp the main ideas of this vital topic. Since there are various expert authors in the field of management, the perspective of the readers can be greatly enriched. This type of book is recommended for those who are interested in having a practical concept of knowledge management. Moreover, the content and format of the book will be of great value for the readers because it is easy to read and to follow.

In spite of its practical approach, some articles in the book are very short which means that they do not offer enough of a theoretical basis for novice readers on the topic of knowledge management. A general summary from the editors of the book is missing, which would have been beneficial to give readers an integrated conceptual scheme concerning the application of knowledge management in a company. However, this book is useful for those who are interested in acquiring a practical understanding of knowledge management and how it is making a great impact in the way managers must lead companies in this 21st century; it is a worthwhile read.

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