

Abstract

The Family Group Conference is a restorative approach to decision making which is used mainly with families in child protection. It is an empowering process aimed at strengthening the family members and children' right to have a say in matters that concern them, an issue stressed by the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. FGCs are therefore used to help families in finding their own solutions in difficult situations. This thesis investigates the strategies used by families and relatives within FGC in order to solve complex family situations, and compares the specifics of this approach with more common problem-solving method used in this field. In addition, it examines how the family conference is perceived by its actors.

The theoretical part introduces the principles and the main ideas of this approach and describes the process and the roles of its actors. Firstly, FGCs are briefly presented within the international context and then the process of their recent implementation in the Czech Republic is described in more detail.

The data are collected through the participant observation of two family conferences. In addition, semi-structured interviews with the involved actors were used to discover the participants' view of the conference, and to compare this particular approach of decision making with other methods more commonly used in the Czech Republic. The data were analysed using Situation Analysis, while the specifics of the resulting family plans are examined using the Thematic Analysis.

The contribution of this thesis is to present FGCs not only from the point of view of the professionals, but also of the family involved, underlying the ways this tool shapes the different dynamics of power between these actors. In addition, the analysis of the family plans demonstrates the uniqueness and originality of the resulting solutions.