

The Rudolf Dreikurs Summer Institute and ICASSI

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Abstract

In 1962, Rudolf Dreikurs initiated an international program for Adlerian training for professionals as well as individuals and families. Following his death, ICASSI became a nonprofit educational organization and followed the structure and purpose of Dreikurs's early summer programs. The 44th Rudolf Dreikurs Summer Institute of ICASSI took place in Hitzkirch, Switzerland, with participants from 25 nations. An international board continues what Adler and Dreikurs had envisioned.

Keywords: Dreikurs, Individual Psychology, international training

Rudolf Dreikurs (1950/2000, 1972/2006) was a psychiatrist who worked for many years with Alfred Adler in Vienna. After Adler died in 1937, Dreikurs worked in many ways to carry on the work of his mentor and more senior colleague. A major goal he had was to continue the international training of professionals in Individual Psychology that Adler himself had begun in the 1920s.

During World War II, Individual Psychology was very much weakened in Europe. Fascism in Germany, Austria, and Italy prohibited the activities of the Adlerians and closed their clinics and schools. Adler himself had come to live in New York in the early 1930s, and few Adlerians remained in countries dominated by fascism. Thus, after the war, the Adlerians who remained in Europe were few in number. The work that had flourished in the 1920s and 1930s was nearly gone. For Dreikurs, the need to reintroduce Adlerian teaching into many countries became a major focus and passion.

In addition to teaching in Greece, Israel, Germany, and many other countries, Dreikurs sought to establish an international summer school to which people from many nations would come and learn Adlerian theory and methods. He laid plans in 1960 and 1961. In 1962, he held his first international summer school in Elsinore, Denmark. The International Association of Individual Psychology and the Danish Center of Individual Psychology, headed by Preben and Ruth Bichel, Danish psychologists who had studied with Dreikurs in Oregon the previous year, sponsored the school. The purpose of the first international summer school was described in the official history of the International Committee for Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes (ICASSI; 1990), with the statement that the summer school provided

the intensive study of Adlerian Psychology in its theoretical and practical aspects with special emphasis on the training of teachers, improving skills in child guidance and psychotherapy, and in clarifying the philosophical implications of Adlerian Psychology for all professional disciplines as well as for everyday living.

Among the faculty were Marcelle Robinson from Los Angeles, and Bronia Grunwald, Adeline Starr, and Rudolf Dreikurs from Chicago.

A second summer school was held in 1963 in Eugene, Oregon, where Dreikurs was teaching at the university that summer. Among the faculty were Dreikurs, Ray Lowe, Oscar Christensen, W. L. Pew, Loren Grey, Adele Davidson, and Erik Blumenthal. Thirty-six full time and 15 part-time students participated. India, Germany, Denmark, and the United States were represented. Summer schools that followed and occurred still during Dreikurs's lifetime were held in 1969 in Crete (Greece) and in 1971, first in Bad Kissingen (Germany) and then in Tel Aviv (Israel). He was already ill when he led the last two summer schools, but he was immensely effective and he was very pleased with the success of the summer school.

The name of ICASSI was given to the organization after Dreikurs died in 1972. The acronym was based on information Achi Yotam used when he advertised the Tel Aviv summer school as being offered by the International Committee for Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes. Following Dreikurs's death, his widow, Sadie E. Dreikurs, asked the three colleagues who were closest to him in his last summer schools to continue the program he had begun. Erik Blumenthal from Germany, Achi Yotam from Israel, and W. L. (Bill) Pew from the United States became co-chairpersons, who organized the next international summer school in 1973 in Oporto, Portugal.

While Dreikurs was alive, he had privately funded the summer schools. He never knew in advance whether the schools would pay for themselves as a function of tuition charged to the participants or whether he would lose money on the ventures. When invited to teach, the faculty knew they would be compensated for their expenses only if there were enough students, yet all were enthusiastic about being instructors in this pioneering Adlerian program. All of the faculty, including Dreikurs, expected to pay for their expenses with their own private money, which represented their *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, or social interest, of wanting to contribute to the expansion of Individual Psychology. They recognized the enormous value of the high quality training they offered in the postwar era.

ICASSI as a Nonprofit Educational Organization

Faculty in the 1973 summer school in Oporto, Portugal, included Israelis Dreikurs had trained in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, like Judy Eloul, Mica

Katz, Chava Kirschner, and Achi Yotam. Additionally, Manfred Sonstegard, Mim and Bill Pew, Bronia Grunwald, Adeline Starr, Sadie Dreikurs, and I came as instructors from the United States. Other members of the faculty included Edna Nash from Canada, Juliet Cavadas from Greece, and Erik Blumenthal from Germany. The summer school was held for 2 weeks. It was a sad time in which memories of Dreikurs and his enormous contributions were shared, but it was also a time for consolidating the knowledge and training he had provided in his last years. The three co-chairpersons followed the pattern of the summer school as it had existed during Dreikurs's lifetime, and the three distinct geographic regions of the chairpersons became the model for how board members were selected in subsequent years. In 1975, ICASSI became a nonprofit organization (Ferguson, 2000) incorporated in the state of Minnesota, where Bill Pew resided. Sadie Dreikurs dedicated the three chairpersons and a board to training and outreach of Individual Psychology in the manner intended, and they were committed to representing different regions of the globe. In time, ICASSI adopted bylaws, governance documents, and a resource book that contained policies adopted over the years for running and governing the organization. When the original three chairpersons died, new people took their place. Current chairpersons are Theo Joosten (Netherlands), representing continental Europe; Anthea Millar (England), representing the United Kingdom and Ireland; and myself (United States), representing North America.

Initially following the death of Dreikurs, the summer school was held every 2 years. Later, the board voted to meet annually. At the recommendation of Erik Blumenthal, the summer program was named the Rudolf Dreikurs Summer Institute, and various other programs were offered by ICASSI in some years. In the 1970s, the ICASSI summer schools were held in Austria, Netherlands, Greece, Switzerland, and England. In the 1980s they were held in Israel, United States, Austria, England, Italy, Germany, Canada, Netherlands, Greece, and Switzerland. In the 1990s, a concerted effort was made for ICASSI to go to new countries and to help develop Adlerian work there. Following the departure of the Russians from occupied lands, ICASSI in 1993 was in the Czech Republic and in 1998 in Lithuania.

The umbrella organization of ICASSI offered the summer school, and for many years "mini-ICASSI" programs were additionally provided. These were given in different countries in seasons other than summer, when a small number of selected faculty members went to give workshops varying between 3 to 5 days. If a country wanted to establish and expand its Adlerian activities, leaders in that country requested the ICASSI board to provide such mini-ICASSI offerings and ICASSI funded the training in those countries.

In that way, countries received Adlerian training at the early stage of developing their Adlerian work. This was successfully accomplished in the

Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta, Romania, Lithuania, and Bulgaria. ICASSI paid for faculty members to give training workshops in those countries and in addition some faculty members on their own initiatives and paying their own expenses went to give Adlerian training in newly emerging countries. Frank and Kathy Walton and Roy Kern from the United States, Helmut Heuschen from Germany, Theo Joosten from Netherlands, Yvonne Schürer from Switzerland, and Edna Nash from Canada were especially active in these efforts. Joyce Callus from Malta and Erika Echle from Switzerland spent many summers training teachers and university professors in Bulgaria and Romania. Various ICASSI faculty members paid their own way to give workshops in India, Uruguay, Malta, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Hungary. After several years of such workshops, active societies emerged and several countries were able to host the annual summer school. As a result of the efforts of many people and years of dedication and contribution, ICASSI was able to have effective summer schools in Ireland, Malta, Lithuania, and Romania as an outgrowth of the prior mini-ICASSI workshops. Moreover, these countries developed strong Adlerian societies and by 2011 several of them became members of the International Association of Individual Psychology.

When Dreikurs first began the summer schools "on a shoe string," only a few participants attended with only a few countries represented. By the time of the 44th Rudolf Dreikurs Summer Institute in 2011, over 200 participants from 25 nations attended.

Programs Offered in the Rudolf Dreikurs Summer Institute of ICASSI

Whereas in the early years the topics and options for courses were limited, by 2011 there were many offerings and options. In the beginning, Dreikurs opened the summer school with a plenary lecture that included demonstrations. He was devoted to Adler's efforts for community-based child guidance programs, in which family problems were discussed in front of an audience so that the audience as well as the family being counseled would learn new methods and learn together as a community. Thus, morning lectures and demonstrations in a plenary session became standard as part of the summer school program (for an example of plenary topics, see Ferguson, 2008). Later in the day, participants attended courses of their choice. After Dreikurs died, the early summer schools consisted of 2-week courses. Later, ICASSI adopted a more flexible set of options. Participants now can attend for 1 or 2 weeks, and they can choose all-day courses that meet in both morning and afternoon or they can choose two courses that each meet for half the day. Consistent from the beginning is the pattern of

having a plenary at the start of the day, classes during the day, and an evening program that involves interactive activities, such as games, dances, and singing. Independent of the classes, there is an additional block of time during which participants can share their own projects and areas of expertise.

Courses and plenary sessions address the content areas of Adlerian practice. Topics would deal with counseling the adolescent, behavior problems in school, application of Adlerian methods to the workplace, spirituality, addictions, case supervision for practitioners, understanding emotions, methods to improve communication, class meetings, couples counseling, group dynamics and working with groups, methods of encouragement, coaching, sexuality, psychodrama, life transitions, art therapy, aging, and working with the elderly.

From the beginning, ICASSI focused not only on training professionals but also sought to train individuals and families. The summer school has an excellent program for children (ages 4–11) and for youths (12–17) led by well-trained Adlerian faculty members. In this way, children and youths learn Adlerian principles and methods, and the young receive considerable self-awareness training.

The summer institute puts into practice the principle of diversity in age, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, and national origin. The aim is not only to teach but also to practice *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* in a highly international atmosphere. Dreikurs and Adler sought to implement the Adlerian methods of cooperation between people from all over the world. In the summer institute, participants learn that people, in spite of their differences, have many aspects in common regardless of their nation of origin. Individual Psychology comes “to life” for them in ways they never imagined. Adler and Dreikurs had high aims for reaching peoples of the world. They were convinced that everyone could learn methods of human interaction based on social equality, mutual respect, cooperation, and contribution. They believed without any doubt that when individuals and professionals practiced the principles and methods of Adler and Dreikurs, human problems at home, at school, and in the workplace could be solved peacefully. ICASSI trains professionals to fine-tune their clinical methods and additionally helps to bring the vision of Adler and Dreikurs to many people around the world.

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Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, PhD (efergus@siue.edu) was trained in Individual Psychology by her father, Rudolf Dreikurs. She attended his courses at the Alfred Adler Institute in Chicago, had practicum training in his office, and collaborated with him in research and writing. She first attended the summer school of ICASSI after his death, when she contributed to the 1973 summer program in Portugal. She became an ICASSI chairperson after the death of W. L. Pew and received her ICASSI training from Achi Yotam and Erik Blumenthal. She is the author of several books and many journal articles and is professor of psychology at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. She has an active research program and, among other courses, she teaches Individual Psychology.

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