

INSIGHT REPORT

Social Pedagogy as a Meaningful Perspective for Education and Social Care

Edited by
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KJSH

Verbund für Kinder-, Jugend- und Soziale Hilfen



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About this report

The Insight Report you're reading has been jointly developed by an international partnership between eight organisations from the United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Belgium and the Czech Republic. As part of an Erasmus+ co-funded project, we have spent the last 30 months exploring how our understandings of social pedagogy can enrich social professions. We have found that, despite important differences between countries, our traditions of social pedagogy share important commonalities. These mean that social pedagogy can offer a meaningful perspective for education and social care. Throughout this report we seek to outline in greater detail why a social pedagogical perspective is important in enabling social professions to address contemporary social issues and help individuals, groups and communities to thrive. For this purpose, we have also included detailed examples from a range of practice settings, which we hope offer greater insights into how a social pedagogical perspective can inform and enrich relationship-centred practice.

About us

Our international multi-sector partnership between 8 organisations leading social pedagogy developments in higher education, vocational training and organisational capacity-building has been designed to share innovative practice across linguistic barriers that have frequently prevented cross-fertilisation in social care across Europe. Here are the partner organisations:



ThemPra Social Pedagogy is a UK-based social enterprise and the lead organisation in this project. It supports the sustainable development of social pedagogy through a range of short courses, organisational capacity building and whole-systems strategies. ThemPra has been actively promoting social pedagogy in a number of pilot projects across the UK, providing immersive learning experiences on specific aspects of social pedagogy, such as its core values, understanding the impact of trauma, leadership, reflection, change agency and learning facilitation. The team has also been developing open access educational resources such as the MOOC, speaking at conferences, supporting universities in developing social pedagogy modules, and setting up the Social Pedagogy Development Network.



Universiteit Gent is a socially committed and pluralistic university that is open to all students, regardless of their ideological, political, cultural or social background. It defines itself in a broad international perspective and has been recognised by the European Commission as a “success story” both for Erasmus and for the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. Its Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy has substantial teaching and research expertise in social pedagogy, contributing to its discourse both in Flanders and internationally. The department's research is focused on the study of social work practices, connecting the English-speaking social work tradition with the continental social-pedagogical research traditions, and combining it with a broad educational perspective.

KJSH

KJSH – Stiftung für Kinder-, Jugend und Soziale Hilfen is a large not-for-profit organisation providing social pedagogical services in youth care and VET activities in Germany. The KJSH provides help for over 4,000 individuals and families and employs more than 3,000 employees. Its services range from ambulant family care settings, including units for diagnosing and removing child protection issues, units with pedagogues living in, intensive care units, street work, school assistance, and ambulant care for young people with Asperger's syndrome to treatment units for people misusing drugs. The KJSH also collaborates with other providers and has several joint ventures, including the Ubuntu circus project giving life and experimental space to 16 young people in a fully functioning circus. Ever since being founded in 1991, the KJSH has been committed to the ideas of social pedagogy and promoted the relevant topics in the north of Germany. It is linked in with several universities, organises conferences and aims to continuously develop its approach in everyday life using ongoing supervision and evaluation.



The University of Central Lancashire was founded in 1828 as the Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge. Today UCLan is one of the UK's largest universities. Its School of Social Work, Care and Community is proud of its national reputation for delivering high quality education for social work, social care, the children and young people's workforce, and community leadership and engagement. The School has a vibrant community of research-active staff engaged in a wide range of research activities that make a difference to the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, and which influences policy and practice both strategically and at grassroots level. UCLan has developed undergraduate and postgraduate introductory modules in social pedagogy which run across three different degree programmes. In 2016, it launched its innovative BA (Hons) in Social Pedagogy, Advocacy and Participation. Since autumn 2018, UCLan is also offering an MA in Social Pedagogy Leadership, which has been co-developed with ThemPra.



Masarykova Univerzita, Brno is one of the largest universities for social pedagogy studies and actively involved in sector developments in Central and Eastern Europe. It comprises nine faculties with over 200 departments, institutes and clinics which offer a combined total of more than 1,300 fields of study. Masaryk University offers degrees in a wide range of traditional as well as newly-emerging disciplines and is currently one of the fastest-growing higher education institutions in Europe. Social pedagogy at MU has been developed over more than 20 years at two faculties: the Faculty of Pedagogy, where the focus is on leisure-time education), and the Faculty of Arts, where the Department of Educational Sciences aims at social and career counselling and guidance.



CommonView is a Danish Vocational Education and Training organisation providing coaching and consultancy in social pedagogy, with expertise in cross-cultural learning transfer of innovative social pedagogical practice. It facilitates team development and working processes both for individuals and for groups. CommonView runs professional development courses and training in terms of dialogue, reflection, personal value creation and conflict resolution.



Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona is at the forefront of social pedagogy qualifications and leads the social pedagogy discourse in Spain and Latin America. UAB plays a leading role worldwide in scientific research, and its ample range of disciplines, in both education and research, indicates its multidisciplinary approach. UAB holds a leading position in the most prestigious and influential international university rankings, and, in recent years, this award has been complemented by its growing research impact, constant improvement of the quality of teaching and an ability to attract international talent to the university.



KP (University College Copenhagen) is Denmark's leading provider of undergraduate programmes in social pedagogy, including full-time distance learning courses. It aims to present an internationally recognised study and research environment and to be one of the leading international profiles in Denmark within welfare professions, especially in the field of Social Pedagogy. KP has over 15 years of experience with e-learning, mainly aimed at students residing in Denmark, but more recently expanded to the Faroe Islands and Greenland. The infrastructure that e-learning offers gives students new opportunities in an educational field. The students can maintain their everyday lives while at the same time being able to get an education.

About our project

The project *Developing an Open Online Course in European Social Pedagogy* (Reference number: 2016-1-UK01-KA202-024559) is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Erasmus+ aims to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe. It is open to education, training, youth and sport organisations across all sectors of lifelong learning, including school education, further and higher education, adult education and the youth sector. You can find out more at www.erasmusplus.org.uk.

A central part of the project has been the development of a Massive Open Online Course in Social Pedagogy across Europe. This MOOC is now available on Coursera, the world's biggest online learning platform providing universal access to the world's best education. Learners have completely free access to all learning resources, as well as the option to gain certification from our partners at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona for 43€.

Combining a series of short videos, further reading resources, quizzes, reflective questions and peer-led discussions, the MOOC is aimed at practitioners across all education and social care settings as well as (prospective) students. Learners can self-pace their progression through 8 sessions. We have designed these to encourage learners to explore and reflect on the following themes in relation to their own practice:

WEEK 1:

1. Social Pedagogy and Participation – a transnational perspective
2. Social Pedagogy and Resource-Orientated Practice – a German perspective

WEEK 2:

3. Social Pedagogy and Creativity – a British perspective
4. Social Pedagogy and Purposeful Shared Activities – a Danish perspective

WEEK 3:

5. Social Pedagogy and Prevention – a Czech perspective
6. Social Pedagogy and Social Education – a Spanish perspective

WEEK 4:

7. Social Pedagogy and Social Justice – a Belgian perspective
8. Social Pedagogy in a wider context – perspectives from around the globe

Aims

The key aims of the MOOC are to:

1. Give learners an insight into how social pedagogy has been developing across Europe, highlighting both the diversity and connections,
2. Highlight the importance of valuing every person as intrinsically 'rich', recognising their unique potential and ability to be a valuable member of society,
3. Introduce learners to ways in which they can bring this belief to life in everyday interactions and relationships that support people's learning, nurture their well-being and enable them to feel included in society,
4. Ensure learners are familiar with the most fundamental aspects of social pedagogical practice in ways that are applicable in their own personal and professional life.

More details about our project are available at mooc.social-pedagogy.org.uk. For full access to all learning resources please visit www.coursera.org/learn/social-pedagogy-europe



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I. THE CONTEXT FOR SOCIAL PROFESSIONS ACROSS EUROPE

Gabriel Eichsteller (*ThemPra Social Pedagogy*) and Lieve Bradt (*Ghent University*)

In an interconnected digitalised world, there is new emotive power in social issues and how they are portrayed. Responses, such as the Dutch historian Rutger Bregman's challenge to the global elite at the World Economic Forum in Davos that they must pay far higher tax to address social inequality or the Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg's protest against her government's lack of action over climate change, or the image of Alan Kurdi, the young boy whose body was found on a Turkish beach after his fated escape from civil war in Syria, have shown how quickly social issues can capture global attention. They have created public waves of outrage and empathy for those experiencing the adverse effects of social inequality, cutting through the complexity of social issues that often makes them difficult to understand or relate to. Whilst an important step, public awareness does not automatically equate to social or political action that might address the complex social issues faced across many countries. Waves of public support can easily ebb away or become undermined by populist responses to social issues. For those affected by social inequality, however, the impact is more persistent, making them dependent on any support provided by the welfare state.

Whilst many of the consequences directly affect individuals, the disruptions arising from social issues such as poverty, environmental damage and pollution, ageing societies, cultural diversity, global changes to employment due to the rise of automation and artificial intelligence, are not only occurring at an individual level. In many

countries, these complex social issues with which societies are faced, have also put huge pressure on their respective welfare state to respond meaningfully and to address social inequalities systematically, effectively and sustainably. These are no small challenges for social professions, and the global aspects of these issues as well as their complexity significantly limit professionals' potential to make enough of a lasting impact.

To add to these challenges, in many countries these changes have played out against a background of fiscal austerity since the financial crisis in 2008. At a time when more people are suffering from poverty and relying on the social welfare state, increasingly, the expectations on social professions are to achieve better outcomes with fewer resources and to demonstrate the value they provide. As Hingley-Jones and Ruch note, 'with this concentration on outcome-driven performance the extent to which professional practices and values determine practice has become increasingly constrained' (2016, p. 238). The effect of austerity within social practices has not only been limited to reductions in financial resources for social practices but has multi-dimensional implications. Fiscal austerity goes together with emotional and relational austerity (Hingley-Jones & Ruch, 2016), both for the individuals supported by social professions and for the professionals themselves. As Hingley-Jones and Ruch suggest, "Relational austerity" - practice that is increasingly authoritarian rather than authoritative and combative rather than compassionate - emerges as an unintended consequence' (2016, p. 238) of a financially austere climate.

Austerity and other pressures on social professions across Europe have also led to a conditionality of social rights designed to increase the threshold at which individuals are entitled to access social services or welfare benefits, as well as ensure that rights are tied to specific conditions or responsibilities. Just as there are ideological aspects to austerity, Dwyer notes that welfare conditionality 'combines an inherent hostility towards state-provided welfare, with the view that collectively provided social benefits and services should be regarded not as social rights but as particular and conditional privileges to be bestowed only on active, responsible citizens' (2019, p. 2). Given that human rights are meant to be inherent, unconditional and universal rights rather than have limited applicability only when certain conditions are met, this has undermined social professions as a human rights profession (Reichert, 2003; Ife, 2008; Staub-Bernasconi, 2012; Witkin, 2018). Ife suggests that we must see 'human rights as a discourse that is changing and evolving but still universal in that it is about how we construct shared values about what it means to be human, and about the implications of a perception of our shared humanity for the way people should be treated' (2008, p. 225). This suggests the need for ongoing engagement with, and critical reflection on, the ethical issues that educational and social professions encounter on a daily basis.

Complexity in educational and social professions

There is increasing recognition that both the context of educational and social practices and our direct practice as professionals is characterised by complexity. Payne (2008) notes that different aspects of complexity are in interplay, partly because of the number of individuals, groups or families we might be supporting, with their unique relational dynamics, partly due to the multi-layered issues they might be experiencing, and partly owing to the different professionals who might be involved too, with their respective legal and official responsibilities. Barnett (2004) suggests that we need to recognise that we operate in a 'complex world, [...] a world in which incomplete judgments or decisions have to be made; incomplete either because of the press of time or because insufficient evidence is to hand fully to warrant any particular decision or because the outcomes are unpredictable' (pp. 250-1). He goes on to explain that the uncertainty and lack of security encountered in a complex world challenges us to come to a position where we can 'prosper in a situation of multiple interpretations' (p.251), where we can live comfortably with the unknowability, unpredictability and uncertainty surrounding us.

The difference between a complicated and a complex system is often likened to the difference between a race car and a rainforest. One can be fine-tuned by expert mechanics, whereas the other consists of an intricate ecosystem in which everything is interrelated, interdependent and part of an ever-changing equilibrium (cf. Hood, 2018). Anything that impacts on this equilibrium has both predictable and unpredictable consequences, some that are evident immediately and others that may only emerge a long time after. In complex situations, cause and effect are obfuscated and can only be understood retrospectively. Dave Snowden, who developed the influential Cynefin framework for leaders' decision-making, suggest that complex situations have huge implications for how we make decisions, most notably that it requires collaborative leadership and an approach that enables new solutions to emerge. When there is not just one solution, the only thing we can do is 'probe first, then sense, and then respond' (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Yet, this approach does not always underpin educational and social practices and policy contexts. In the absence of an explicit recognition of complexity as a key factor determining relational practice and human growth within ever-changing social contexts, we find it increasingly tempting to reduce uncertainty and complexity through procedural approaches that offer structure and guidance, as well as an evidence base that promises to achieve consistent and predictable outcomes (Parton, 2009; Devlighere, 2017). Yet, as Snowden and Boone (2007) highlight, looking for best practice as a solution only works well when we're faced with simple decisions on issues that have one obvious solution (see also Biesta, 2007). Where we fail to recognise complexity and expect to find simplicity instead, we end up in chaotic circumstances, which pose huge challenges to leaders, professionals and subsequently the people they are meant to support.

Social pedagogy can provide an integrative theoretical and ethical framework within which to understand and respond to the complexities and uncertainties we encounter through professional curiosity, meaningful dialogue

with the people we support, recognition of the expertise they can offer and constant reflection on the underlying assumptions of our practices. If our aim is to find meaningful ways of improving their lived experiences, it is crucial that we respect people's and communities' life worlds and actively involve them in shaping the support, drawing on their strengths, insights, hopes and ideas.

Implications for educational and social care systems – towards a social pedagogical perspective

The austerity politics in many European countries and the complex nature of social issues have not only increased the challenges encountered by the most disadvantaged individuals and groups within society; they have also created additional pressures for the professionals meant to support these people. Ensuring meaningful responses that make a genuine positive difference over time relies both on our skill as professionals and on the organisational culture and systemic context framing educational and social practices. This raises the question whether we have systems that are dynamic and responsive – or, metaphorically speaking, adept and ever-evolving organisms rather than more or less fine-tuned machines. After all, the ways in which we think about the system of which we are a part reveals the extent to which we recognise complexity or are oblivious to it.

In her insightful report titled 'Kindness, Emotions and Human Relationships' (2018), Julia Unwin argues that public policy must respond to the changes in technology, such as artificial intelligence, automation and big data, and address the increasing disconnect between people and institutions. In order to build trust and confidence in public services, we must bring together the

'two lexicons in use in public policy. There is the language of metrics, and value added, of growth and resource allocation, of regulation, and of impact. And there is the language of kindness and grief, of loneliness, love and friendship, of the ties that bind, our sense of identity and of belonging. Native speakers of each of these languages converse separately perfectly well. They make decisions, and frequently get a great many things done. But so many of the challenges of our time require a more bilingual approach. They require us all to develop a fluency in both languages, and an ability to use the two lexicons without embarrassment or apology, and to move between them appropriately.' (p. 9)

Kindness, Unwin argues, is not simply about being nice or avoiding conflict; it is inherently disruptive: 'Kindness comes from solidarity, and solidarity, in the modern world, demands a significant shift of power' (p.38). It requires investment in relationships and that provide the people we support with meaningful ways of co-constructing how

they can best be supported. Unwin warns that, 'if public policy does not respond creatively and urgently to this challenge, it will rapidly dissipate trust and fail to deliver. The results would be disastrous for us all.' (p. 39) This means that educational and social professions require a coherent framework that supports fluency in both the rational and the relational lexicon.

These calls for a system designed around human relationships and kindness are echoed by Hilary Cottam in 'Radical Help' (2018). Cottam argues that we need a social welfare system that is able to 'create capability rather than manage dependence; it must be open, because all of us need help at some stage in our lives, and when we are thriving many of us have help to offer; it must create possibility rather than seek only to manage risk; and it must include everyone, thereby fostering the connections and relationships that make good lives possible.' (2018, p. 18). Her call for a paradigm shift to ensure that people, relationships and communities are at the heart of the welfare system resonates from a social pedagogical perspective, which includes two developmental lines. Hämäläinen explains that social pedagogy refers, on the one hand, 'to a theory and practice of people's growth into membership of society and community, and on the other hand, to a theory and practice for prevention and alleviation of social exclusion and promotion of welfare' (2012, p. 8). These developmental lines are not mutually exclusive, meaning that social pedagogy is therefore able to provide a meaningful perspective across both paradigms: the welfare system that still focuses on managing the needs and issues of the most disadvantaged and the welfare system that is based on capability, growth and human connection. So what then is social pedagogy?

Social pedagogy – facilitating social change

As we seek to illustrate with this insight report, a social pedagogical perspective can help us navigate the complexities of contemporary issues in many societies in ways that address disadvantage, prevent adversity and promote cultural development through a relationship-centred, educational approach that seeks to support 'safe uncertainty' (Featherstone et al, 2014). Broadly speaking, social pedagogy offers an integrative and coherent perspective on supporting learning, well-being and social inclusion both through relationship-centred practice and structural efforts to address social inequality and promote social change.

There are many diverse interpretations of what social pedagogy is, and definitions necessarily vary depending on the historical, cultural and practice context in which social pedagogy is discussed (Hämäläinen, 2003). Indeed, Lorenz suggests that 'social pedagogy is an important but widely misunderstood member of the social professions' (2008, p.625). Given the complex ways in which social pedagogy has evolved in close relationship with societies – the traditions they cherish, the beliefs they uphold, the challenges they encounter, and the opportunities they seek – it is perhaps understandable that social pedagogy is widely misunderstood, often seen as elusive and or hard to grasp. As Úcar explains, 'you cannot try to limit what by its very nature has no limits, nor

claim to get snapshots of what, also by nature, is dynamic and mobile' (2011, p. 127). Following this line of thought, our insight report seeks to broaden rather than limit understandings of social pedagogy by illustrating how its ideas, principles and practices can be both discovered and nurtured across different cultural and professional contexts.

Whilst its complexity may be inconvenient in some respect, it is also one of the strengths of social pedagogy (Hämäläinen, 2003). It requires contextual awareness, prompting us to re-think its meaning and relevance depending on the socio-political environment and the institutional framework of our practice setting. Moreover, its complexity also implies that any attempts to understand social pedagogy merely at a cognitive level are bound to be reductive. This means that we should take a holistic approach to understanding social pedagogy at a theoretical, philosophical and practical level – with 'head, heart and hands' as one of the influential historical educationalists who has shaped the development of social pedagogy, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, proposed. For this reason, we have aimed to convey social pedagogy both in abstract and concrete terms throughout this report, highlighting the various characteristics that guide social pedagogical practice.

There are various reasons why, in our collective view, social pedagogy provides an essential and valuable perspective for educational and social practices tasked with responding meaningfully and pro-actively to complex social issues. These are outlined below:

1) Social Pedagogy is relationship-centred

Relationships are at the heart of social pedagogical practice and require from professionals to constantly think about, actively build and enable the development of relationships. Human beings are inherently social beings, eager to connect and belong, able to empathise and love. As professionals we are called upon to develop authentic and trustworthy supportive relationships with the individuals, groups or families we support. But the focus on relationships extends beyond this as we must also nurture the relationships people have with those around them to ensure that they have a strong social support network or a rich relational universe (Carter & Eichsteller, 2017) as well as access to resources. Professional-client relationships in this sense mean we're not just the lifeline in crisis, but that we're strengthening people's safety net and helping them recognise that they, in turn, can be part of other people's safety net too.

2) Social pedagogy draws on people's inherent capabilities and potential

Social pedagogical practice is based on the notion that each person is intrinsically rich, gifted with unique talents, capabilities and potential. Where educational and social practices reject a deficit-orientation of human beings and respects the inherent dignity of others as equal human beings, our role changes from fixing what's wrong with other people to creating an environment in which people can thrive, draw on their unique resources and unfold their potential. This recognises the lived experience of the people we support and their expertise in this respect, thus enabling us to both better understand the impact of complex social issues and jointly explore possible ways forward.

3) Social pedagogy is dialogical and participatory

Focussing on capabilities implies a participatory approach that emphasises dialogue. This enables us as professionals to navigate our respective realities and lived experiences, ensuring that the people we support have a genuine voice, feel respected and develop agency. By ensuring that individuals or communities are a valued part of the solution, rather than seen as part of the problem, we can collaboratively develop meaningful responses that bring about sustainable change.

4) Social pedagogy focuses both on practice and structures

Addressing social issues and supporting cultural development requires from us that we aim to affect change both in direct practice and at a structural level. Our focus must go beyond relationship-centred practice in recognition that we cannot limit social pedagogy to 'the conscious use of relationships' as this might risk that the debate on social problems does not go beyond the organisation of care and that problems are merely understood as problems of individuals and their behaviour (Coussée et al, 2009). Social pedagogy aims to act as a 'critical friend' within society, so it has to be able to challenge the status quo and popular opinions by making a coherent moral and theoretical argument for supporting the disadvantaged, disregarded and disenfranchised individuals and groups within society. It also has to justify its existence by demonstrating its relevance in practice and its contribution to wider society in ways that go beyond resolving issues. Social pedagogy should also encourage community-building, help facilitate inclusive intercultural dialogue between different individuals and groups within society and champion universal human rights.

5) Social pedagogy is attuned to social justice issues

Social pedagogical practice must critically reflect upon the ways in which social justice issues, such as poverty or homelessness, are socially constructed and structurally reinforced. Instead of blaming the individuals affected by complex social issues and thus ignoring the wider societal responsibility for how we collectively respond to social changes, we must keep matters of marginalisation and social exclusion at the forefront of our practice and recognise the limitations of our ability as individuals to solve complex social issues, which are far beyond any one person's sphere of influence. By conceptualising our work in this way, we open up possibilities to form alliances and see ourselves as part of a broader movement towards social justice.

6) Social pedagogy offers an integrative and coherent framework

As a perspective, social pedagogy speaks to a broad range of professionals in educational and social practices and even beyond, for instance in health care. Its strong ethical and interdisciplinary theoretical foundations frequently resonate with practitioners in related professions, giving social pedagogy the potential to provide an integrative and coherent framework for inter-professional practice and multi-agency work. Social pedagogy recognises that as professionals we all have a shared responsibility for the ways in which we support disadvantaged individuals, groups or communities – and we all have different insights and roles that, collectively, enable us to navigate the complexities we encounter in practice.

7) Social pedagogy nurtures inspiration and motivation

At a time when educational and social professions are under sustained pressure, it is crucial that we provide work environments in which practitioners feel connected to a greater sense of purpose and their own motivations. Its emphasis on human agency, relationships and holistic well-being require us to aspire to embed social pedagogical values within organisational cultures too. Research on leadership across different industries suggests that motivation and inspiration are closely linked to professionals experiencing a sense of autonomy, mastery and purpose (Pink, 2011) and that more and more leading organisations are moving towards a radically more productive and soulful organisational model (Laloux, 2014 'Teal organisations' are characterised by self-managing teams of employees, a concern with the wholeness of each human being that rejects reducing employees to the rational self (the part of us that's 'professional'), and recognition that organisations are complex living organisms with evolutionary purpose. A social pedagogical perspective can support these ambitions and thus enable organisations to create a working environment in which people feel able to be authentic, are intrinsically motivated, connected to a deeper sense of purpose, and trusted to make good decisions that serve this purpose.

These manifold benefits of a social pedagogical perspective mean that organisational leaders, decision-makers and professionals in social and educational practice settings have good reasons to create the conditions in which well-educated professionals feel trusted and equipped to challenge dominant problem definitions and their own practices, try out new ideas, adapt existing approaches and feel empowered to meaningfully support the individuals, groups and communities affected, using a participatory approach to draw on people's inherent resourcefulness. Social pedagogy aims to equip social and educational professions with the theoretical perspectives, ethical foundation, relational and methodological skills required to facilitate situated professional judgment and professional agency.

In the following section, we introduce social pedagogy traditions from across the different countries represented in our project partnership, focussing both on relevant theoretical and practical perspectives to stimulate reflection and dialogue about how social and educational professions can meaningfully respond to both contemporary challenges and reveal new opportunities. The insights into both theoretical and practice developments in these countries draw on our international partnership and ongoing dialogue as part of the project developing our Massive Open Online Course in *Social Pedagogy across Europe*. Therefore, they necessarily represent the perspectives of us as a project team. For the purpose of this project we selected six partner countries with different traditions of social pedagogy in order to show its diversity. Whilst we have also included practice perspective from a further seven countries in the MOOC (Canada, Mexico, the United States, Brazil, Greece, Slovakia, and Poland), this would have been beyond the scope of this report.

We have chosen two examples of social pedagogical practice designed to illuminate the diverse yet congruent character of such responses and the extent to which social pedagogical responses are structurally embedded, commonly found or only just beginning to emerge. Naturally, we could have chosen many more insightful examples. We share these not with the appeal for others to replicate these practices or to suggest that these are necessarily superior to other responses to social issues. Rather, in recognition of complexity, we hope that they illustrate the power of creative responses and ideas of how to stay true to social pedagogical values when social and educational professions are under pressure. Some of these examples might be relevant or applicable to some readers, whilst others may inspire deeper examination of, and connection with, readers' own practice and the extent to which they have succeeded in developing meaningful responses that turn the challenges faced by the communities they serve into opportunities. If you wish to share your own practice example, please feel welcome to contact us.

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II. SOCIAL PEDAGOGY ACROSS EUROPE

Social pedagogy traditions can be found in many countries across Europe and, increasingly, around the globe. Whilst its origins as a paradigm can be traced back to 19th century Germany, many of the ideas are recognisable in the work of educational thinkers and social philosophers even before that. The term *pedagogy* itself goes back to antique Greece, where it was used to describe the ‘guardian whose responsibility it was to lead (*agogos*) the young boy (*paides*) to school. [...] The adult had the task of accompanying the child, of being with the child, of caring for the child. This is a kind of “leading” that often walks behind the one who is led.’ (van Manen 1991, p. 37).

The social pedagogy traditions in the countries represented in this report illustrate that many of these ideas have travelled across cultural boundaries and continue to do so across the world. There are distinct differences between these traditions – necessarily so, given the different cultural contexts – as well as fascinating commonalities. We hope that this report can contribute to the increasing transnational dialogue about social pedagogy by showcasing the richness and potential which this diversity has to offer. This is also illustrated in the practice examples from each country of how social pedagogical professionals have developed effective responses to some of the challenges they are encountering within their specific practice context.



Social Pedagogy as a Perspective in Germany

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Features of Social Pedagogy in Germany

Whilst Germany has a longstanding history of social pedagogy, which dates back to 1844, it is often noted that the German approach to social pedagogy reflects a somewhat undefined concept that attempts to connect several historically changing notions in one term. The term *Sozialpädagogik* appears to represent a rather blurry terminology and, at the same time, a very indistinct idea of one or even more professional fields. This is closely related to, and has its roots in, the over 120-year-old broad discussion of theories of social work and social pedagogy. These conversations were closely connected to attempts to establish an academic discipline in Germany's higher education system. In the 1970s, these attempts resulted in courses being established at regular universities as well as at so-called 'universities of applied sciences'. Initially, social work programmes were located at the more practically orientated universities of applied sciences and social pedagogy courses at traditional universities, emphasising the social pedagogical roots in some of the philosophical approaches of the 19th and early 20th century.

The theoretical debate on social pedagogy has often been summarised as a challenging adventure to find the 'real' identity of social pedagogy. The various attempts still characterise at least three things, according to Rauschenbach (1991):

- An academic discipline under the roof of pedagogy/educational sciences;
- A conglomeration of theoretical perspectives on fields and practices of education, which particularly emphasise their social and societal conditions;

- A collective term for a rather disparate professional field, which Germans traditionally identify as *Kinder- und Jugendhilfe* (child and youth welfare).

Probably the most dominant theory of social pedagogy is the approach of *lifeworld orientation* (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009; Schurgurensky, 2014). It has mainly been developed by Hans Thiersch and his school of thought since the 1970s and was initially called *everyday orientation*, referring to Karel Kosik's thoughts on the dialectics of everyday life. At the core of lifeworld orientation lies the assumption that social pedagogy is above all a practice which is concerned with a deep understanding of the subjective views and everyday life routines of the people it supports. This is relevant to this approach, as social pedagogy identifies individuals' life and coping strategies to understand their functionality as well as to distinguish between strategies that are more or less 'working' for them. Likewise, this approach aims to describe how the process of understanding itself opens up ways for social pedagogy to shape all relevant dimensions of clients' everyday life (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009).

Currently, the 'profession' debate in Germany not longer distinguishes between the terms *social pedagogy* and *social work* (Kessl, 2013). Today, the study of *social care* (Soziale Arbeit) as an overarching terminus, leads to a dual qualification encompassing both social work and social pedagogy.

Areas of employment for people with a social care degree are very broad and widely spread. In the public sector, social pedagogues are employed in social work departments concerned mostly with the areas of child protection and children in care and fulfil statutory functions in these areas. Schools have become a field of employment over the past decades, with a role for social pedagogues to support individuals in the academic efforts, bridging difficulties in the social domain, including students' home, and encouraging group work. In the private and voluntary sector, social pedagogues find employment in day care settings for small children (nurseries, kindergartens) up to the eldest in society, offering support to families and children in contact with child protection social work teams, residential settings across the life span and in programmes and services designed to support various groups and individuals in their respective communities. Given Germany's rapidly ageing population, social pedagogy plays a key role in attempts to develop and provide solutions for the elderly, in community, semi-residential and residential settings. An important lens provided by social pedagogical approaches includes the realistic and appropriate inclusion of client resources and the integration into the clients' respective life worlds.

Social Pedagogy in Practice – Illustrative Examples

The examples given below outline 2 of our services at KJSH, through which we have attempted to respond creatively to the ever-changing socio-educational circumstances in Germany. They show that, in social pedagogy, we aim to ensure that the support we offer starts where the individuals or families are at, not where we need them to be, and that the support evolves in dialogue with them, not along narrow and pre-determined parameters.

Ackerstraße – Residential Crisis Intervention Unit, Berlin

Ackerstraße is a family-activating residential unit in Berlin, which provides a short- to mid-term home for children at risk of being removed from their families, and at the same time provides a living space for the family as a whole. The legal basis for the work at Ackerstraße is the German Law for Youth Care (SGB VIII §34, partly in combination with the §42). This outlines the goals and settings of social pedagogical support to parents in quite a detailed manner. Strictly speaking, the legal basis in this case is residential care for children who are actually at risk of harm, neglect or other forms of abuse. The parents, carers or other people who are seen as helpful to addressing the underlying problems may also live there. They are given guest status. This small difference is important for the work with families, because it aims at two issues that often do not seem to fit together in everyday work. Firstly, the local authority responsible for a child at risk needs to ensure the child's safety at any time. Secondly, the local authority needs to positively assess that the parents of the child at risk have the ability and intention to work on the child protection issues by keeping the relationship with the child and building on that.

The innovative and somewhat radical idea behind this service is that, even though clear child protection concerns have been identified in a child protection assessment, the intervention aims to keep these relatively young children or babies together with their primary caregivers in order to enhance parental capacity where possible while at the same time ensuring the safety and protection of the children.

The structure of the German legislation provides the necessary context for such an innovative intervention, as the SGB VIII seeks to provide parents with a multitude of services, supporting them in their responsibilities in their children's upbringing. At the same time, this legal basis also has an impact on funding, as it means that it is accessible for any parent in need and effectively guarantees long-term financial stability for services such as Ackerstraße.

The service at Ackerstraße has 8 full-time social pedagogues and social pedagogical care workers working on a rota basis to support up to 8 children and their families. This number varies depending on the family situations.

There is one house manager in the team and a manager who oversees 2-3 of similar services, working very closely with the team.

The local authority's crisis team working around the clock will decide if a child may require a place in the unit. When it has been agreed with us as the provider (KJSH Stiftung / KJHV Berlin) that the unit is able to provide ample resources, there would in any case be a short sequence of dialogue (care planning) with the family and the local authority to point out very clearly where the red line is in terms of child protection and what needs to be done. It is clarified that the child is being taken into care and that the parents have 'only' guest status. The aim is to work with the family, but the possibility of the persons with custody (usually the parents) having a crisis is always anticipated. The parents then may move out whilst their child remains at Ackerstraße (as part of child protection) and may move back in again later. The intended timeline for a placement of a child or family living in the unit is 3-6 months. After this, there is a thorough phase of care planning. It is either decided with the family what can be done if the family is not seen as capable of living outside a setting like this. If it is not possible to decide with the family what to do, the local authority would refer the case to the family court for a decision based on the assessment made in everyday life with the parents. If the family moves out to live on their own, intensive outreach care will always be provided.

The approach and the residential crisis intervention unit are fairly new, so long-term outcomes are not yet available. One clear outcome experienced so far is that roughly half of the families who have lived at Ackerstraße are still together 1.5 years after leaving the Ackerstraße and that the child protection concerns are below the legal threshold that would require further interventions.

Ubuntu – die Wagenburg

Ubuntu is a working circus project designed to provide a temporary home for 1-2 years to young people who cannot live with their families. It provides schooling for those unable to attend their local school. The legal basis for the work of Ubuntu is also outlined in the German Law for Child and Youth Care (SGB VIII §34). This is not necessarily a child protection issue, as the law also covers support to children, young people and families in need. On Ubuntu's premises there are two groups, both of which are supported by a team of 12 professionals overall, some of which are qualified social pedagogues, some social care practitioners with a social pedagogy background, including a circus pedagogue and 1.5 teacher positions. There are places for 16 young persons aged 12 or older at Ubuntu.

The idea behind Ubuntu is to provide an alternative learning approach with a 'real time' goal. This means that the young people who choose to be placed at Ubuntu go through a thorough part-time acrobatic training. The ideal timing is that they start living at Ubuntu in the late summer, although this is not always the case. When the young

people move in, they are situated in a small circus caravan which they have all to themselves. The young people's education then consists of three parts: School, practices (anything surrounding a circus) and acrobatics. After roughly 9 months, Ubuntu tours the schools of the young people it accommodates. The purpose of this tour is to give the young people's schools a new perspective on this individual as well as enabling the young people to present themselves in a new way. At the same time, around 50 young people who don't live at Ubuntu have already been training for 2.5 months. After the first tour, the groups start to mingle before the whole circus – including Ubuntu residents, their parents if they want, the 50 young people not living in Ubuntu and their parents if wanted – tour the north of Germany for 6 weeks over the summer. After this period, the young person returns home or is old enough to start living on their own.

The rationale for the tours is that, with the natural pressure arising from a tent filled to its capacity of 300, there is less focus on learning issues. This often enables young people to perceive themselves differently, to reimagine who they are and can be. The mix between residents and non-residents is designed to be inclusive, and the people buying tickets for the shows are unaware of the fact that this is partly a residential youth care unit.

For further details please visit www.ubuntu-wagenburg.de

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Social Pedagogy as a Perspective in the Czech Republic

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Features of Social Pedagogy in the Czech Republic

Social pedagogy is currently integrated into the system of pedagogical sciences. It belongs to the applied pedagogical disciplines focussed on the prevention and solution of social problems. It is based on the findings of complementary scientific disciplines, such as social psychology, sociology of education and schooling, pedagogical anthropology, and as such it is a highly interdisciplinary science. There are many disciplines under its umbrella, which had previously been separate, for instance pedagogy of free time, special pedagogy with its current inclusive orientation that emphasises joint education law (i.e. the social aspect), or outdoor education. Therefore, the predominant notion is that social pedagogy is a complex and multidimensional field.

It is necessary to interpret social pedagogy's current conception in the context of historical, cultural, and societal connections, since the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia) was part of the Eastern European, so-called communist countries for more than 40 years. The communist ideology puts emphasis on social equality, with the goal of public policy then being the prevention of social differences, which has led to a strong focus on prevention. These historical connections explain the contemporary concern with prevention and the social goal of education. Primarily, this focuses on people's socialisation and their integration into the community, the prevention of situations endangering human development. In addition, social pedagogy aims to help people in situations of threat and social conflict. Social pedagogy therefore focuses primarily on families and people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion, e.g. those who have educational problems in the family, housing problems or are unemployed.

A characteristic feature of socio-educational traditions in the framework of contemporary Czech socio-educational thinking is the inspiration by German and Polish social pedagogy. The influence of German social pedagogy can be seen in the focus on helping people improve their lifestyle, with an emphasis on the subjective dimensions of life situations, so that they can be understood by those who experience them in their daily reality. Concepts of German social pedagogy have been resonating in the socio-educational discourse of the Czech Republic since the 1990s (e.g. Klíma, 1994; Kraus & Poláčková, 2001). Before 1989 – a year of crucial socio-political reform when the communist party lost power in the Czech Republic due to the so-called ‘Velvet Revolution’ – socio-educational thinking was developed under the influence of Polish social pedagogy as a pedagogy focusing on the environment of education (e.g. families, school). This influence also remains visible in the focus on environmental pedagogy (Knotová, 2014; Kraus, 2008; Procházka, 2012).

The opinion that social pedagogy is one of the perspectives (or paradigms) of social work (Hämäläinen, 2003, 77) is not shared in the Czech Republic. Social pedagogy has established itself as a discipline close to social work, though not entirely interchangeable with it. Unlike social work, it is primarily targeted at prevention, targeting the reduction in risky behaviour among all age groups, the elimination or minimalisation of educational and parenting problems and helping families avoid the danger of social marginalisation or social exclusion.

Over the last two decades, there has been an alienation between social work and social pedagogy, as cooperation has been stuck in a stalemate at the academic level. However, in practice, both disciplines cooperate in many NGOs and institutions working with similar client groups and using similar methods. Overall, social pedagogy is a field which, thanks to a strong socio-scientific multidisciplinary basis, has a good position and allows for the performance of various social professions around important issues such as social inclusion, social and cultural diversity, equal opportunities, social ecology, and community development.

Whilst ‘Social Pedagogue’ is not currently a regulated profession in the Czech Republic, graduates of social pedagogy degrees easily find multi-professional employment in various job positions. They can be free time pedagogues, pedagogue assistants, educators, educators-therapists in prisons, and very often they can be found as special prison pedagogues, for whom higher education in the field of pedagogical sciences is prescribed, or at different positions in the Police of the Czech Republic. Upon completing the (legally stated) requirements, they can also work in the Probation and Mediation Service. Graduates are also employed in departments of Social and Legal Protection of Children and in the field of foster care. Graduating in social pedagogy is currently a qualification prerequisite for pursuing the profession of a social worker. This variety is partly enabled by the inclusion of several social work units in the social pedagogy course plan. On the other hand, the social work course does not include any units from social pedagogy.

At present, social pedagogy as a field of study is taught in secondary schools (attested by a baccalaureate diploma) and is accredited, in particular, at ten faculties of the eight Czech universities in their Bachelor or postgraduate studies. Among the university faculties in which the programme is being studied are typically the pedagogical, philosophical, theological faculties. This field of study has long been of interest among students; over the last decade, more than 14,000 students have graduated in social pedagogy from universities (Lorenzová, 2017).

Auspicious support for the development of social pedagogy was brought about by the establishment of the Association of Educators in Social Pedagogy in 2013. The Association began to cooperate with the Czech Pedagogical Research Association, School Psychology Association, and many different local authorities, the Prison Service, the Probation and Mediation Service, and non-profit organisations. The Association set its aim to develop social pedagogy as a field of study and science, including its applications in practice, to develop educational standards in the field of social pedagogy, to strive to anchor the profession of a 'social pedagogue' in education, and to create conditions for the social pedagogue profession also in the social sphere (Hladík, 2014). Within a short time, it has managed to prepare the standards of the social pedagogical curriculum and to involve the members of the Association in proposals for legislative changes in order to establish the profession of a social pedagogue in the education department and the department of social affairs.

Social pedagogy is evolving as an academic discipline and can thus be described as 'knowledge that is being created' (Caride, 2016, p. 96). However, whilst discussions are repeatedly being held at an academic level about its conception and theoretical basis, insufficient attention is paid to contemporary trends and concepts of theories of science. The theory of social pedagogy would be enriched by constructivist, discursive, phenomenological, or structural concepts, which have appeared in social pedagogy traditions abroad. Also, attention should be paid to strengthening the professional community and its role in applying social pedagogical knowledge in practice. The solution to the relationship between social pedagogy and social work is an evergreen.

Social Pedagogy in Practice – Illustrative Examples

In this section we present two examples of how social pedagogy is applied in practice in the Czech Republic to respond to social challenges. The first example outlines the activities of Drom, an organisation established to support socially marginalised Roma families with the direct participation of social pedagogues. Having been one of the first such organisations in the Czech Republic, Drom's work is still very much needed, as unfortunately polls show that attitudes towards Roma amongst the wider population have not changed much – they are the least popular minority and are therefore still one of the most heavily marginalised social groups. This is despite the

long-term governmental programme Roma Integration Strategy for 2020, which has focused on key areas of life: culture, education, employment, housing, health and safety.

The second example is a recently-started project, The Rapid Rehousing Project in the city of Brno. This project provides a municipal flat and intensive 'housing first' case management for up to 50 families who were previously living in private hostels, shelters or other forms of homeless accommodation. The project is led by Brno city council in cooperation with several NGOs actively employing social pedagogy in practice. In the Czech Republic this area is not explicitly covered by law and thus the project is unique in involving the cooperation of both government and NGO actors in this area.

Drom - supporting Roma families, Brno

Established by the city of Brno (the second largest city in the Czech Republic with 400,000 inhabitants), Drom started its activities in the 1990s. It is located in a city district with a predominant Roma population. Roma form the largest ethnic minority in the Czech Republic, making up approximately 2.2% of the total population, and Roma communities are frequently marginalised due to their low social status, high rates of unemployment, and typically low levels of education. The aim of Drom's work is to support their integration, to adopt approaches leading to the elimination or minimisation of social exclusion impacts, to analyse the problems of a socially excluded locality, and to cooperate with non-profit organisations in community social work. In the Czech Republic, the activity of the NGO sector is regulated by the Civil Code. Community planning is an obligatory part of the planning of social services at local and regional level and is coordinated by local authorities.

The organisation's workers provide a unique spectrum of services to clients of pre-school to senior age, with more than a thousand clients per year. In the context of field social work, Drom deals mainly with debt problems, as their clients are often at risk of loss of standard housing and long-term unemployment. One of the major services provided is free social counselling. The organisation also operates a community centre, which focuses on helping victims of crime and the reintegration of offenders. Within the community centre, a community garden, a craft and sewing workshop have been formed, informal communication at the neighbouring level is preferred. The organisation also offers comprehensive services and uses therapeutic approaches aimed at stabilising families, supporting single mothers and foster parents.

The majority of activities provided by the leisure time centre fall under preventive activities provided in low-threshold facilities for children and youth. The leisure time centre is open every weekday afternoon and, in addition to assisting with preparation for school and tutoring, it organises recreational activities and hosts various occasional and seasonal events. The centre provides a safe environment in which young people learn to be the

co-creators of their programme and partners in dialogue. Drom has had a positive effect on the Roma community, e.g. by increasing the participation of parents in their children's education, changing their attitudes towards the importance of education and raising their interest in the educational outcomes of their children.

For further details please visit www.drom.cz

The Rapid Rehousing Project, Brno

Our second interesting example of how social pedagogical approaches can be applied is the Rapid Rehousing Project, which started in 2017 and aims to address social housing issues. The project helps families in housing distress, who may live in an inadequate sublease (where there is little space, many occupants, poor quality of housing) or risk being evicted from their tenancies. This project is significant because the support for social housing (the so-called Social Housing Act) is not legislatively resolved in the Czech Republic. Whilst this topic has been discussed for more than 20 years, there has not yet been any agreement at political and legislative level. This has left a vacuum for practice, which the Rapid Rehousing Project aims to fill.

The project has enabled 50 socially excluded families in housing distress to obtain rental housing and thus create stability. A family homelessness registry week was conducted in Brno in 2016, and 421 families living in private hostels, shelters or other forms of homelessness were registered. These families are typically considered not fit for housing by both private and public landlords, with the consequence that they have little access to housing. The Rapid Rehousing Project is the first attempt in the Czech Republic to influence the quality of life of families by providing adequate housing. It is based on the concept of safe living as a basic human need. The project offers social counselling, with the active involvement of social pedagogy students.

The project is evaluated by researchers using a randomised control trial to collect evidence of its impact. The information is provided through media, expert and political panels and has the potential to be adopted by other cities and non-governmental organisations across the Czech Republic. In its pilot phase, families could access support through the project on the conditions that they lived in the city of Brno and were willing to cooperate with a social worker. Families were selected randomly by means of a lot, as part of a randomised control trial. The evaluation showed that families gained a sense of security and certainty, it activated several families towards work opportunities, and some children showed improved behaviour and school results. 12 months later, families were able to meet the rental conditions, and no family had withdrawn from the project. One mother described the impact as follows:

'When we were staying in a dormitory my daughter was seldom communicating, she was always quiet ... looking around with a hollow gaze and not following what others were saying. Now that we have a flat to ourselves she

has begun to talk, she now has her own room; and really her progress very much surprised me: she has started to communicate, she is actively learning, she is happier.'

For further details please visit <https://hf.socialnibydeni.org/rapid-re-housing-brno>

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Social Pedagogy as a Perspective in Denmark

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Features of Social Pedagogy in Denmark

In Denmark social pedagogy is based on a long tradition rooted in the notion of equality and is continuously developing in relation to societal currents. The origin comes from the idea that the structures within society consists of a range of factors that can cause exclusion on different levels, and therefore society also has an obligation to provide opportunities and support to make sure that marginalised groups or individuals can find their way back into the community.

Social pedagogy is both an academic discipline and a profession in Denmark. As an academic discipline, it can be studied at university colleges providing BA programmes and, at postgraduate level, at universities. It has been one of the most popular courses for many years. Given the close link between social pedagogy and pedagogy in Denmark, after their first year of studies, students can choose their specialism in kindergarten pedagogy, leisure pedagogy or social pedagogy. As a profession, social pedagogues work in a range of practice fields focussed on relational 'hands-on' work with people across the whole age range.

A central way of looking at social pedagogy in Denmark is by seeing it as a two-headed creature where theory meets everyday practice. There is a wide use of methods, with social pedagogues preferring various participatory methods such as inclusion, which can be used with communities of all kinds. The professionals have theoretical knowledge and expertise, but the individuals they support are seen as experts in their own lives.

The concept of 'inclusion' has gained a strong foothold over the last 10 years and is used as an overall framework in social pedagogy as well as in other professions such as social work, health service, occupational therapy and

teaching, meaning that in practice social pedagogues are working in a multi-disciplinary setting. Inclusion is a broader concept than integration and emphasises that society and communities have to be flexible and operate smoothly in order to be able to include individuals at risk of being marginalised in the community. The theoretical angle implies that social pedagogues have to work with the community, so the individual does not see him- or herself as marginalised. The responsibility for marginalisation – and for addressing the issue – is therefore placed upon the group or community.

Currently there is an increasing use of the term ‘evidence’. Evidence-based practice is rooted in best practice and has been developed in institutional settings where social pedagogy is practised and where the impact of social pedagogy is difficult to measure. This means that social pedagogues are increasingly expected to work by a best-practice method, which has proven to be efficient in other areas of social pedagogy. Transfer of knowledge into local settings and institutions has proven to cause substantial difficulties and therefore social pedagogues have to trust – and use – their critical sense and rather than not simply adopt the idea of evidence-based practice. Civil service employers and politicians have determined that specific methods must be used to measure outcomes.

When working with ‘evidence-based methods’ social pedagogues have to rely on their own professional judgement. Evidence-based methods can be illustrated as a three-legged stool where social pedagogues must rely partly on the evidence, partly on their own professional judgement and partly on the persons they are working with.

The field of social pedagogy is also experiencing an increasing use of psychological and psychiatric diagnoses. Social problems are often connected to different parts of diagnosis, and social pedagogues have to work within the special frame which the diagnosis offers. On the one hand, this gives social pedagogues an understanding of the person’s problems, but on the other hand it curtails their professionalism.

The social pedagogical profession is facing a new target group of people with substantial mental health issues related to anxiety, depression, eating disorders etc. Children and young people from the socioeconomic middleclass are increasingly appearing in the social pedagogues’ daily jobs. Social pedagogues meet them on the streets where, instead of being at school or at work, they are experimenting with drugs and crime – and this at a scale never seen before. It could therefore be said that social pedagogy has moved from institutional practice to the everyday life of families in their homes.

The profession is represented by SL, the national union for the 39,000 social pedagogues. SL is working towards creating a more solidary society in which everybody, regardless of their daily challenges and problems, is able to live a life being an important part of Danish society. SL and other professional bodies representing specific practice fields such as residential child care seek to enhance the working conditions of social pedagogues by

influencing the political level of society. These organisations are often invited to political debates because of their knowledge regarding specific areas of social pedagogy.

Social Pedagogy in Practice – Illustrative Examples

Throughout their education, social pedagogues are encouraged to explore new ways of practicing, use creative ways of responding to emerging social issues and draw on their own interests in connecting with the people they support. One of the current ideas is to create more social enterprises and thus provide inclusive working opportunities to marginalised people. This is illustrated in our first example, the Sports Project, which has gained national recognition. Chrysalis Schools, our second example, shows that social pedagogy offers a helpful perspective in educational settings, ensuring that professionals support children holistically, recognising them as unique human beings.

The Sports Project (Idrætsprojektet), Copenhagen

One of the more innovative and inclusion-based practice developments throughout Denmark is the Sports Project. This project started 10 years ago with one social pedagogue having a vision of how engaging in sports could support and motivate young people in residential care. Today, it is anchored in the social administration of the municipality of Copenhagen and linked to the 'Centre for vulnerable and crime endangered young people'. It aims to build bridges between leisure activities, school, education and adults. The core team is multidisciplinary and consists of more than 100 full-time and part-time employees with a variety of professional backgrounds. They are mostly social pedagogues, teachers and sports science graduates; however, social workers, physiotherapists and occupational therapists are represented too. A large number of volunteers forms an important part of the project. It is a large community where everybody is welcome and where young people, through the relations with others, can unfold their potential. The possibilities are manifold and the sky is the limit.

The Sports Project has pioneered and refined a unique method based on 5 principles, which form the foundation of everything they do. No matter who they collaborate with or what the objectives are, these basic principles are reflected in the effort/performance:

1. Voluntariness

Participation is voluntary, hence all participants must agree to collaborate. However, a collaboration with the Sports Project can begin with the coach simply trying to gain consent from the participant by doing intensive outreach work. The concept of voluntariness is the foundation of the individual's experience of being an active

participant in their own life and enables the individual to move in a new direction and take ownership of the process.

2. *Patience*

Patience is reflected in all facets of the work and in all cooperative relationships with children, young people, adults, families, networks, business partners, associations, etc. They patiently and persistently keep on even when facing long-standing resistance and multiple rejections.

3. *Flexibility*

Flexibility is expressed through 4 parameters: (1) the Sports Project's working hours are flexible to accommodate wishes for activities; (2) the Sports Project always engineers the effort according to the individual's needs and does ongoing adjustments if these needs change; (3) the Sports Project always includes the individual's network in the effort and, where possible, adds on a holistic effort including the whole family; (4) the Sports Project accepts and respects the different procedures and methods carried out by the cooperative relationships and is aware that all efforts are done in collaboration with others.

4. *Motivation*

The Sports Project is pursuing the dreams and wishes of the participant, and the motivational work is based on those dreams and wishes. The objective is to provide an opportunity for the participant to experience their own desire to work out, learn and participate. The Sports Project is not using any form of force or unnecessary pressure, instead they keep on insisting on just being together.

5. *Belief, hope and comfort (peace of mind)*

The Sports Project believe in the participants – believe that everybody has resources and potential. They offer prosocial communities – schools, leisure life, education and occupation – and hope that the participants will join them. It creates a safe environment as a foundation for development, learning and well-being.

The Sports Project operates from bases in five different locations in Copenhagen. These different locations entail equipment for a variety of activities, learning hubs, kitchens and administration. All locations provide a lot of opportunities for shared activities with the coach or with other children, young people and adults.

For further details please visit <https://idraetsprojektet.kk.dk>

Chrysalis Schools

Our second example illustrates how inclusion underpins social pedagogical practice even in specialist settings. Chrysalis Schools is the largest special needs school in Denmark combining education and treatment as well as respite care, adult education and a treatment centre. The school provides aim-directed education for over 300 children and young people with multiple diagnoses such as autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, cognitive disorders, personality disorders and PTSD. New pupils are admitted to one of Chrysalis's 16 schools, which specialises in the particular form of pedagogy and approach that they believe will most benefit the child. Under the framework of inclusion, their work focuses on creating opportunities for the pupils to return to mainstream schools wherever possible. Alternatively, there are still inclusive opportunities at each Chrysalis department/unit.

All the pupils have a need for individual schooling according to their treatment, and all schooling takes into consideration their personal, academic, social and treatment aspects. The team believe that all children and young people have the opportunity to have a valuable and self-providing adulthood. There's a clear philosophy: 'we never give up! Because all our pupils have inherent potential for development'.

The employees are divided between social pedagogues and school teachers, both working together in aiming for the best pedagogical solution for each pupil at Chrysalis Schools. This means that even though it is a school, they are convinced that the contribution from the social pedagogues is equally important as that of the school teachers.

The school also works closely with the families of its pupils, for instance by offering guidance, making sure that the new competencies learned by a child are recognised and supported by their parents at home, and supporting new initiatives both at home and in school.

What's particularly interesting about Chrysalis Schools is that it includes a treatment centre, which consists of a health care unit, a diagnosis unit and an out-patient clinic. This is where all knowledge of psychological, psychiatric and health professional treatment is brought together, and as such it provides a centre of knowledge and competencies with an overview of all the pupils circumstances and developments. It is a unique resource for Chrysalis Schools, and all the individual units have access to the centre.

For further details please visit <http://chrysalisschools.dk/>

Social Pedagogy as a Perspective in Spain

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Features of Social Pedagogy in Spain

Social pedagogy as a discipline arrived in Spain at the end of the 19th century. The existing relationship between Spanish and German philosophers made social pedagogy known early in our country. It would not be until the 1950s, however, that it became an academic discipline in some universities. Although it initially focussed on marginalised children and young people, it soon extended to other ages and life situations, probably due to the influence of other theoretical and practical educational movements that arrived in those years from other countries such as France, England and some Latin American countries.

Due to the influence of these movements and in the context of an increasingly permissive dictatorship, numerous initiatives of community educational work were spontaneously implemented in many neighbourhoods around Spain in the 1950s and 60s. An extraordinary variety of social agents appeared, including socio-cultural animators, specialised educators, local development agents, leisure educators, popular educators, and others. At this time, it was not clear which professional and academic field they were located in or part of regarding the activities that spontaneous professional agents developed in the neighbourhoods. In fact, the fields that claimed them for themselves were diverse: education, psychology, sociology and social work among them.

At the end of the 1980s, Spanish universities reorganised the university degrees of pedagogy and education. It was at this point that the university studies of social pedagogy and the spontaneous socio-educational initiatives of the neighbourhood converged. The fact that social pedagogy was not consolidated as a science and that it had been alien to the popular movement around education in the neighbourhoods and with socially and culturally

disadvantaged people allowed associations and diverse groups to position themselves in favour of establishing some social education studies that were clearly professionalizing.

The result was the approval, at the end of 1991, of a 3-year Diploma degree that led directly to the profession of social educator. These studies could have three different profiles, as agreed in 1988 in a macro state conference in which academics, researchers, professionals and municipal training schools participated. These were: (1) sociocultural animation and leisure pedagogy; (2) specialised education and (3) adult education in its three possibilities: (a) literacy (basic adult education); (b) sociocultural animation of adults, and (c) occupational/labour training. Since then, it has been clear that these professional actions are part of the academic and professional field of education.

In 2012, social education became a four-year university degree. From then on, social pedagogy has the discipline studied as part of the social education degree. It is considered within the scientific framework that elaborates the theoretical and practical principles that guides the action of social educators. Social pedagogy is the disciplinary and research framework, and social education is the university degree and the profession.

Social pedagogy and social education work with individuals, groups and communities throughout their entire lifespan. The socio-educational intervention of social educators seeks to accompany people to help them learn and acquire resources allowing them to live their lives in a dignified way in their socio-cultural contexts. Currently, it faces the same challenges that other developed societies do. As a human rights profession, it seeks to support people in coping with or overcome the social problems they experience as well as in growing and developing socially and culturally. In Spain, social pedagogy and social education have always fought against inequalities in a humanistic framework.

The social-educational relationships developed by social educators occur within the framework of the daily life of individuals, groups and communities. This means that they act in the very diverse and heterogeneous, informal, organisational and institutional spheres in which people spend their lives – from socio-educational work with young people on the street or in leisure centres, to work in prisons, or also through work in residential centres for children, young people or the elderly or, finally, in schools. In recent years, social educators have begun to be included in schools.

Across all the Autonomous Communities of Spain there are professional associations of social educators that are grouped in the General Council of Associations of Social Educators of Spain (CGCEES). It is estimated that there are currently around 12,000 registered social educators.

Regarding academia, we must highlight the *Sociedad Iberoamericana de Pedagogía Social (SIPS)*, a scientific society with more than 35 years of history. Over these years, it has launched 31 Inter-University Seminars

(annually) and 5 Ibero-American Conferences (every 4 years, in Chile, Portugal, Brazil and Mexico). SIPS also publishes a journal, *Pedagogía Social. Revista interuniversitaria*, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2017. It is currently open access and has recently been included in the SCOPUS Database. Over the last two years both SIPS and CGCEES have been advocating for the creation of a National Law on Social Education.

Social Pedagogy in Practice – Illustrative Examples

The examples presented below show how a social pedagogical perspective ensures a proactive social change perspective with a strong focus on empowerment – either of communities as in the first initiative, RUA XIC, a community education project in a few neighbourhoods in Barcelona, or of specific disadvantaged groups as in our second example, En Trajecte, a project supporting young people's employability. Whilst youth unemployment remains a key social pedagogical issue, there are many other areas of social pedagogical work with young people, for instance around creativity, mobility, housing, leisure, health and prevention risks, global youth policy, inclusion. The following link <https://www.joventut.info/bonespractiques/> outlines further noteworthy projects from across the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

The RUA XIC project, Barcelona

The RUA XIC project is a community education initiative promoted by the cooperative ART&Coop. This entity is based on the idea that art and social education cause social transformation and community empowerment. The initiative seeks to improve the coexistence between residents and socio-cultural entities in the neighbourhood with the main aim of co-creating and performing a high-quality art show once a year. The methodology used is based on collaborative work and networking among all the community agents involved. The first RUA XIC project took place in 2011 in Barcelona's Poble Sec neighbourhood and has been steadily growing both artistically and from an organisational point of view, to the extent of them doing a different show every edition. Now in its 6th edition in Poble Sec, the RUA XIC project is currently also taking place in Sant Martí for the first time.

The main aims of the RUA XIC Project are to:

- Promote citizen participation and to establish links between sociocultural entities and people, create network and cohesion in the neighbourhood,
- Generate spaces for coexistence in diversity, in the broad sense of the term: intercultural, intergenerational, gender, socioeconomic, etc.,
- Identify different dynamics and any potential problematic situation in the neighbourhood and critically and actively reflect on them (raising awareness of collective aspects),

- Democratise culture, giving access to creative processes to people who generally do not have it as well as occupying the cultural facilities of the city with community art and education,
- Perform a quality art show, through a collective creation.

The project works on the belief that art facilitates the positive development of individuals and communities, and addresses the challenge of participation, which is a fundamental issue in processes of social and community education. From this point of view, various levels of artistic participation are promoted. The activities are free and adapted to the needs of each group. The creation process lasts several months and culminates with a presentation on the street or an indoors show.

The specific methodology of each edition varies according to strategic and contextual elements but follows the same structure:

1. Collaborative diagnosis of needs and interests
2. Choice of the centre of interest and dramatic creation of the show
3. Programming and dissemination of the artistic and lead group workshops
4. Performing thematic workshops (e.g. plastic, social theatre, percussion ...)
5. Community trials of the show
6. Performing the show
7. Evaluation meeting with all the people involved in the process

For further details please visit <http://ruaxic.blogspot.com/>

En Trajecte, Terrassa

'En Trajecte' (On The Way) is a programme run by Terrassa City Council's Service for Youth and Leisure Time under the Law on Youth Policies of Catalonia (2010). The service aims to increase youth employability by offering young people guidance in accessing some sort of education or training, and to provide them with information regarding scholarships and grants, how to plan trips, proposals for their free time, etc. It is addressed at young people aged 16 to 20 who have interrupted or discontinued their studies and are identified as being exposed to a particular risk such as poor social adaptation, unemployment or school dropout.

En Trajecte's content is based on a social pedagogical approach. The programme promotes their return into the educating system by identifying which professions the young people are interested in. Therefore, in order to prevent youth unemployment, which affected 32.7% of under-25s at the end of 2018, and school dropouts, the programme intends to rebuild young people's academic and professional itinerary providing individual support,

self-knowledge, competence reinforcement, guidance and experiences in the world of work. Specifically, the main aims of En Trajecte are to:

- Identify young people's needs according to their vocational decisions,
- Avoid young people disconnecting from the education, training and labour market,
- Promote their personal development, self-knowledge, and their vocation through their competence development (self-knowledge, communication, emotional management, team work, conflict resolution, active participation and decision making),
- Design a formative and professional individual project,
- Help them develop a more positive attitude, self-esteem and to empower them to be active agents in the development of their life and professional trajectories.

The project also seeks to promote young people's autonomy for them to be able to search and manage information to make decisions about their academic and professional itineraries, considering all the resources and community services available in their context.

In terms of the methodology used, the programme combines individual and group activities. Young people attend group sessions twice a week (total of 6 hours weekly, 90 hours overall). The sessions feature team building activities, workshops run by external expert professionals, visits to different community services and organisations, etc. Therefore, the professionals involved in these group sessions are the social pedagogue, who is the reference point for the young people, and the external professionals who collaborate on the training. In addition, young people have 10 hours of individual tutoring with the social pedagogue, who provides guidance and orientation through the whole process.

In the first three editions of the programme, 94 youths took part, 58 boys and 36 girls. The majority of them had been disconnected from their studies or training for 6 months to a year. By the end of the programme, 73 of them had re-entered the education system through professional training, occupational courses, etc. thus demonstrating the effectiveness of En Trajecte to positively affect young people's future career trajectory.

For further details please visit www.casabaumann.cat

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Social Pedagogy as a Perspective in the UK

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Features of Social Pedagogy in the UK

Social pedagogy is an emerging field of practice in the UK and has been heavily influenced by research, theory and application throughout Europe and further afield. Pedagogy is a more familiar term in the UK and often used in the context of formal education. Whilst social aspects of education linked to personal and social development as well as well-being are commonly used within formal education and some social care settings, the term social pedagogy is still relatively new for many practitioners in the UK (Charfe & Gardner, 2019). Currently social pedagogy is not viewed as a distinct profession or discipline; instead it is recognised and adopted by organisations and practitioners in a variety of settings, at a range of levels and in different ways. This includes local authority projects and models across the UK but most notably in Scotland, where the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 forced a complete overhaul of the youth justice system focussing on child welfare rather than punishment. In turn, the social pedagogical principles underpinning this shift started to have a wider impact on children's services generally in Scotland and could be argued to have led to a more child-focussed practice (Smith, 2012).

Over the last ten years there have been many developments within social work organisations and educational institutions embedding and extending the use of social pedagogy into social care practice. Many organisations have spearheaded these developments with the provision of short courses and capacity building activity (mostly facilitated by ThemPra and Jacaranda), national networking events and conferences, as well as qualifications aimed at promoting social pedagogical practice and skilling up the social care workforce in using social pedagogy as a practice orientation. Additionally, the work of Professors Pat Petrie and Claire Cameron at the Thomas Coram

Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education, has supported the development and application of social pedagogy to social work in the UK.

In 2009, Helen Chambers and Pat Petrie developed the Learning Framework for Artist Pedagogues for artists working with 'looked after' children after the success of three large scale arts-based projects in the UK. The framework based on social pedagogical principles, aims to give practitioners guidance on the principles, values, skills and knowledge needed to support creative ways of working with children and young people (Chambers & Petrie, 2009). Not only is this framework important for practice, but it helps to highlight the importance of creativity in social pedagogical practice in building confidence, the development on boundaries within the 3Ps framework, well-being, participation and reflective practice (Charfe & Gardner, 2019). There have been several successful creative projects that have built on the framework, such as the Creative Mentors scheme run by Derbyshire County Council. Creative mentors work with school children who are at risk of exclusion or struggling to engage in school. Based on the Common Third theory, they use creative activities to build relationships which will then focus on supporting children to participate in directing their re-engagement in education.

Social pedagogy as an academic discipline has slowly started to grow in UK higher educational institutes over the last ten years. Currently there are only a few programmes or modules relating specifically to social pedagogy, mainly located within social care and social work departments. It is hoped that the implementation of the Social Pedagogy Standards for Education and Training (SET's) along with the Social Pedagogy Standards of Proficiency (SOP's) will increase interest in social pedagogy as a choice of study and drive confidence in future employability, a key focus for students undertaking university study.

The launch of these standards, developed by the Social Pedagogy Professional Association in partnership with Jacaranda, ThemPra, Crossfields Institute and members of the Social Pedagogy Development Network, sets out a philosophy underpinning social pedagogy along with expectations for practice. This has supported a far greater understanding of the theoretical and practical application of social pedagogy in the UK. In particular, the standards align well with the revised Code of Ethics provided by the British Association of Social Work in 2012, emphasising a commitment to three basic values of human rights, social justice and professional integrity.

Many practitioners in education, social work and social care recognise social pedagogical principles in their own approach and have found the language and insistence on a values-based rather than procedurally driven approach liberating in their own practice (Charfe & Gardner, 2019). In a climate of austerity dominated by a performance-driven culture, ill-equipped to meet changing demographics and increasing need, organisations and practitioners have become increasingly frustrated with a lack of opportunity to support individuals in a way that reflects these values as well as supporting positive changes in people's lives. Examples of this can be seen in the formation of *The People's Assembly*, a national campaign against austerity that seeks to challenge the

government response to what they describe as ‘the growing humanitarian crisis caused by austerity’ (www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk).

Against this background of limited resources, high demands on public services and a growing dissatisfaction from both people receiving social care and support to the professionals providing it, it is of no surprise that there is a renewed interest in alternative approaches to practice. There is a real appetite amongst the social care workforce to engage in practice that is committed to self-determinism, is asset-based and relationship-centred, and takes a creative approach to practice in order to promote independence and interdependence, resilience, growth and well-being. Because of this, social pedagogy appears to be resonating with policy-makers, organisational leaders and practitioners and is providing an opportunity to re-engage with legislation, policy and practice in more creative ways.

Social Pedagogy in Practice – Illustrative Examples

Although social pedagogy is still an emerging field of practice in the UK and is not yet regarded as a professional discipline, many individuals and organisations embed social pedagogical principles and approaches in their work. Some organisations have formally adopted social pedagogy as their practice framework and are leading the way in asserting value-driven practice, which promotes well-being, growth, choice and interdependence. The following two organisations portrayed below provide examples of how social pedagogical principles are being recognised and embedded within the design and operation of their work. These organisations have been chosen as they highlight the positive way social pedagogical practice has been used to address some of the contemporary challenges faced in their particular area of social care practice.

Wellbeing Teams

It is well documented that the UK has a growing population of older adults placing greater demands on health and social care provision and services. The leading piece of legislation, the Care Act 2014, called for a greater emphasis on preventative approaches to delivering social care in trying to address this challenge, whilst working with the focus on the commissioning of personal care services for older and vulnerable adults. There is also growing recognition of the negative impact of task-orientated personal care on vulnerable and older adults’ health and well-being, with growing research identifying the need to return to a relationally based approach to practice. In response to this, Wellbeing Teams have established a more flexible and person-centred approach to provide support focussing on well-being and happiness rather than a traditional ‘care’ approach. This is a fundamental shift away from the ideology of delivering welfare to the promotion of well-being and community

connections, which are placed at the centre of any care plan. Not only are Wellbeing Teams driving forward innovative practice, they have also taken an innovative approach to how they are organised by becoming 'self-managing' teams (Laloux, 2016). The well-being of the professionals is as important as that of the older adults they support.

Wellbeing Teams were established in 2015 by Helen Sanderson, drawing on the model of the Dutch healthcare provider Buurtzorg. Recognising the pressure on home care services in the UK, Sanderson wanted to change both the way services were being delivered to people and the working conditions for carers. She therefore put three aspects of self-managing organisations (Laloux, 2016) at the heart of Wellbeing Teams: enabling carers to bring their 'whole self' to work, a focus on evolutionary purpose and self-managing teams. Wellbeing Teams work with commissioners and other care support providers in a number of areas across the UK to deliver support to adults with care and support needs under the Care Act (2014). The model aims to provide person-centred care and support to people and to connect them with their community. Given reduced budgets and cuts to services and support in many local authorities, one of the innovative ways in which Sanderson has addressed reduced funding in her own organisation is to experiment with new technologies to support living at home and connecting with communities whilst at the same time retaining the relational aspect in their practice. The teams are small, neighbourhood-based and provide a flexible and responsive approach to meeting individual needs, focussing on outcomes and building up support networks. As self-managing teams, planning and decisions are made by each team themselves, meaning that they are close to the people receiving and delivering the support rather than in a hierarchical structure. This approach is far from common in the UK and challenges the way social care support is usually funded and commissioned.

In recognition of the centrality of relationships, Wellbeing Teams have six core values: compassion, responsibility, collaboration, curiosity, creativity and flourishing. The teams support individuals to take risks and learn rather than adopt the more traditional focus on making people *safe* and *cared for*.

For further details please visit www.wellbeingteams.org

St Christopher's Fellowship

In a different area of social care practice, St Christopher's Fellowship is taking an innovative approach to working with children and young people against a backdrop of various high-profile public enquiries into child abuse and sexual exploitation and the failings of the child protection and 'looked after' care system (Munro, 2011; Jay et al, 2018). The impact of these high-profile cases on social care practice has been the shift in focus of children and families social work to concentrate on outcomes, risk management, procedures and the over-emphasis of managerialism. Subsequent government responses have also forced social workers and other professionals working with children, young people and their families to focus on accountability, safeguarding and risk management. All of this has led to a 'rational-technical' approach as described by Professor Eileen Munro, who led one of the most high-profile inquiries (cited in Trevithick, 2014). To counter this and meaningfully improve outcomes for children and young people, St Christopher's Fellowship has worked with ThemPra to train the majority of their staff in social pedagogy so that relational practice is at the centre of all the work they do. Drawing on research and project evaluations from organisations based in the UK, they have developed social pedagogy throughout the work they do with vulnerable children and young people and are seeing more positive results (St Christopher's Fellowship, 2019).

St Christopher's Fellowship is a charity founded in 1870 and works with children and young people across the UK and Isle of Man. They provide a wide range of services including children's homes, supported housing, fostering and specialist support services, all designed for young people in care, on the edge of care, or leaving care. The aim of their work is to work alongside young people to support their development, grow their confidence and reach their full potential. The ethical principles of social pedagogy have been embedded within the organisation as a whole, and their 'Haltung' of being able to see the potential in each child or young person is at the centre of any work undertaken. This doesn't just stop at direct practice, as there is an on-going training programme for staff at all levels to receive training around social pedagogy and its application to practice.

A recent project development that highlights innovative and social pedagogical practice is their Safe Steps Children's Homes for girls aged 12 to 17 years who are at risk of child sexual exploitation. As mentioned above this has been an issue of national concern with various government inquiries and initiatives. Local Authorities' Children's Services often respond to any safeguarding concerns by placing vulnerable young people in residential care, foster placement or secure units that are often miles away from their families, friends and communities. This is not only costly but also increases the vulnerability and isolation of these young people. Often very little educational work is done to address and reduce the safeguarding or risk factors, and risk management is the main focus of any care plan put in place.

St Christopher's Fellowship has taken the radical approach to addressing the needs of these vulnerable young people by setting up the Safe Steps homes in local communities. Using social pedagogical concepts such as the Relation Universe (Carter & Eichsteller, 2017) to ensure a focus on interdependence instead of independence, the emphasis is on developing and maintaining positive networks of support whilst addressing and educating the young people to detect and identify negative and harmful relationships. All of the support is built on social pedagogical concepts such as Head, Heart and Hands in that relevant theories around power, exploitation and sexual abuse are used to underpin support plans and direct work, whilst forming positive relationships and an emotional connection are central to these. Finally, young people are then taught the skills they need to be able to build positive relationships in the future and keep themselves safe. Creative practice is also a fundamental part of the work St Christopher's Fellowship undertakes, and social pedagogy has enabled staff to think 'outside of the box' and develop innovative ways of working that promotes the well-being and growth of each young person that they are working with.

Social pedagogical practice seeks to respond creatively to emerging social issues, and St Christopher's Fellowship have recently developed the Trusted Relationship project which aims to help reduce serious youth violence – an area of growing public and government concern. This new service has been co-produced with young people, who have been involved in shaping and developing all aspects of the service. By building a trusting relationship with a key adult, young people involved in the project are supported in addressing their social isolation and other issues that leave them vulnerable to being groomed by adults or become involved in gang activity. As with Safe Steps, this work is done in the heart of the communities where children and young people live to support them to build positive connections and networks that will help them flourish.

For further details please visit www.stchris.org.uk/services/safe-steps-home-cse

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Social Pedagogy as a Perspective in Belgium (Flanders)

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Features of Social Pedagogy in Flanders

Within Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, social pedagogy is not considered as a separate profession, and 'social pedagogue' is not a regulated professional title. Social pedagogy focuses on the relationship between the individual and society and how this relationship is/can be influenced through education. As was the case in many other European countries, the origins of social pedagogical ideas in Flanders are grounded in the societal transformations of the 19th century Industrial Revolution, which made clear that the traditional socialisation mechanisms (i.e. family, church and the local community) were no longer adequate to realise social cohesion. There was a growing need to develop additional pedagogical interventions aimed at the social integration of individuals in society. However, in the development of social pedagogical practices, the focus was clearly on children from the lower classes, as those practices were believed to compensate for the lower standards of schooling and for less beneficial educational conditions at home. Taking care of young people became a high priority in order to maintain the social order and fight social diseases such as criminality, epidemic illness and unemployment.

Within the development of these philanthropic initiatives, two streams can be distinguished. The first was a focus on preventative health care and a concern for social hygiene. These initiatives were connected to international developments within the field of social work and were intended to compensate for the developmental deficits of children from the lower classes. Secondly, there was a focus on adult education. These initiatives were connected to the 'volkshogeschooluitbreidingen' (Extended Universities), aimed at educating people within the upcoming labour movements and the dissemination of scientific knowledge amongst people. In these initiatives, the focus was on the emancipation of the working class through education.

Both developments resulted in 1920 in the establishment of a specific programme of social work, recognised by the Ministry of Justice. After the second World War, these social work programmes were assigned to the Ministry of Education and evolved into practice-oriented programmes at university colleges. Between the 1960s and 1970s, social pedagogy as an academic discipline started to gain ground in Flanders. Again, two developments can be distinguished.

At the Catholic University of Leuven social pedagogical research was initially mainly aimed at the development of methods within adult education. Later connections were made to the field of youth research and critical social pedagogy (influenced by the ideas of Paolo Freire and Oskar Negt). Under the influence of the 'planning of change' approach, professionalisation also became an important topic. From this perspective, social pedagogy is approached as 'learning for the group and through the group' and as the emancipation of 'the lifeworld' from 'the system'. Today, 'social and cultural pedagogy' is one of the options within the Educational Sciences Master's programme, with 'social and cultural pedagogy' being one of the courses within both the Bachelor's and Master's programme.

At Ghent University, more specifically the then Department of Social Welfare Studies (now the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy), social pedagogy has been strongly connected to social work. Social pedagogy is one of the courses within the Master's of Social Work and the Master's of Educational Sciences. Both in relation to research and teaching within the Master's of Social Work (which was established in 2004-2005), social pedagogy is currently approached and developed as a perspective on social work, which is a unique approach within the Flemish academic field. Within the Department, the research mainly focuses on the study of social interventions (in the broad domains of youth work, youth protection, social-cultural work and community development), in which pedagogical and social work practices are deliberately connected to underlying social and political assumptions and objectives. The research is aimed at analysing these underlying assumptions as well as gaining more insight into how social and pedagogical practices intervene in the life conditions and lifeworlds of children, young people and adults. Social pedagogy as a perspective implies the following elements: firstly, a re-evaluation of the pedagogical and political character of social work; secondly, the interrelation between private issues and societal choices; and thirdly, the interconnection between all sectors, methods and professional fields that are aimed at social integration and dealing with the tension between respecting diversity and realizing social cohesion within a changing society.

From a social pedagogical perspective, the issue at stake is not merely to find the best solutions to a given social problem, but rather – before thinking about solutions – to continually re-examine in participatory ways what the problem might be and whether our practices question or confirm prevailing understandings of the problem. This perspective is considered valuable, as the social professions are increasingly challenged due to, amongst others,

pressure on the realisation of human rights as the foundation of social work practices, an increasing outcome-oriented focus on practices instead of a focus on processes, and a tendency to specialisation rather than developing a generalist approach.

Social Pedagogy in Practice – Illustrative Examples

As mentioned before, we approach social pedagogy as a ‘perspective’ on social interventions. Key in this is the ‘deconstruction’ of given definitions of social problems and the way social professionals intervene in relation to these problems. In that vein, we give two examples of what this perspective can mean in practice. Our first example concerns the notion of ‘invisible care’, whilst the second example refers to the notion of ‘pedagogy as the construction of pedagogy’ in a practice setting called ‘The Phoenix’.

Invisible care

In Flanders, policy-makers have introduced ‘vermaatschappelijking van de zorg’, a policy strategy that is difficult to translate but comparable to similar ideas such as a ‘Big Society’ in the UK and a ‘participation society’ that has been formally introduced and implemented in the Netherlands (see Grootegoed, Broër & Duyvendak, 2013). The policy rationale of ‘vermaatschappelijking’ embodies the connotation of organising care and support *with/in* the community and society, thus shifting the paradigm in pursuit of an inclusive approach towards so-called vulnerable citizens such as elderly people, disabled people, and people in poverty, ‘allowing them to acquire their own meaningful and particular place in society while embracing both their vulnerabilities and strengths, supporting them in this venture where necessary, and organising care and support with, and integrated in, society as far as possible’ (Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family Affairs, 2013, p. 4). The underlying viewpoint in these policy developments entails that the public responsibility for the welfare of citizens who need (long-term) care and support in their everyday lives should be rebalanced with the private responsibility of the individual, their natural social networks (such as family members) and the community/civil society (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2015). In the international realm, this idea squares with the idea that an increasingly significant level of provision should also come from the local and ‘informal sector’, meaning from families and communities (Williams, 2001; Dean, 2015). Here, ‘everyday care and support that people provide for one another within households and neighbourhoods’ (Dean, 2015, p. 14) is supposed to be reconciled with the responsibility of the state as a provider of welfare resources and services. Although there is supposedly no hierarchy but complementarity between informal and formal care, this development of ‘vermaatschappelijking’ also reflects the underlying viewpoint that the public responsibility for the welfare of citizens, for economic gains, should again be

rebalanced with and possibly returned in a stronger way to the private responsibility of the individual, their natural social networks (such as family members) and the community/civil society (Dean, 2015).

In that vein, the current emphasis in social welfare policy in Flanders on principles and practices of ‘invisible care’ entails an interesting, and potentially innovative, development from a social pedagogical perspective. Where social interventions are traditionally organised with a focus on the person and their network from a categorical perspective (children, elderly, the disabled), the attention to invisible care might provide a more interesting social pedagogical strategy to rebalance public and private responsibilities in the provision of care, as it can cut through boundaries of a categorical perspective and define problems less as private and more as public issues. Invisible care refers to ‘care being intrinsically integrated into social and urban life, embedded in everyday life and social interactions’ (Vlaams Bouwmeester, 2014, p. 80). Invisible care entails interdisciplinary collaboration between social welfare actors, architecture and urban planners, and local policy makers. It is inspired by a socio-spatial approach that adopts the idea that space is not only a place where things happen, but rather enables social interactions and allows that social relations are interwoven between diverse citizens (Warming & Fahnoe, 2018).

As an example of the way invisible care can be pursued, a current action research project in Flanders is implemented in a residential care facility for people with multiple disabilities. The project aims at a reorientation from having all the characteristics of a ‘total institution’ both in terms of architecture and mindset, leading to the segregation of disabled people from mainstream society. The efforts done aim to open up the residential care facility in the local community according to a socio-spatial perspective, while changing the architectural conditions and mindset of disabled citizens, professionals and the local community. On the condition that invisible care consists of in/visible care, with reference to both ‘visible’ (care with a public mandate) as well as ‘invisible’ social welfare arrangements (architecture and spatial and structural resources that allow and enable community and informal involvement), practices of invisible care might therefore disrupt categorical approaches in care and allow for intergenerational and productive social interactions between citizens with diverse life worlds in the community.

The Phoenix

Our second example is ‘De Vuurvogel’ or ‘The Phoenix’. This is a youth care practice working with youngsters and families with a difficult care trajectory. Often these are youngsters with a long and bumpy care trajectory, who have been diagnosed and labelled with a number of disorders such as borderline, autistic, psychotic, psychopathic, etc.. Where many youth care interventions in Flanders focus on a remedial strength-based approach with attention on treatment of diagnosed youngsters, The Phoenix changes the way in which diagnosis

is approached. Instead of focusing on the diagnosis of the young person and their family, they focus on the diagnosis of their own point of view as social professionals. They question which ideas they have about the situation and how their perspectives relate to the perspectives of the young person and their parents. The idea is that youth care is not about finding solutions, but first and foremost about looking for meaning, even in very difficult situations with very troubled youngsters and parents. As such, for instance, when a young person has committed a crime, this fact is not ignored, but it is analysed by the team from a broader social perspective in which the meaning of what happened (instead of only the idea that they should not do it again) is always a concern and topic of discussion. Hence, The Phoenix approaches 'pedagogy as the construction of pedagogy'. This means pedagogy is a radical dialogical intervention in which social workers, youngsters and parents try to find out together over and over again what the meaning of their interaction is and how youngsters and their families can be supported to live a life of human dignity. As a consequence, the care trajectory is always prepared to leave the beaten path and to look for new ways of working. As such, practices of art, film-making, etc. are introduced as innovative ways of finding meaning in situations that are often diagnosed as hopeless. The result is not a univocal success story. Care remains difficult and challenging. Yet the radicalisation of openness and honesty can throw light in otherwise dark trajectories as youngster and parents feel respected. This alone can be a major shift and innovation in their lives.

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III. EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES

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As the different ‘images’ of social pedagogy across the six countries show, social pedagogy offers a rich and diverse history of attempts to better understand how social issues are culturally constructed, how they affect individuals, groups and communities, and how we can meaningfully address these through educational and inclusive practices as well as structural change. The traditions from many countries show that, as a perspective, social pedagogy is not only focussed on resolving or preventing problems, but also emphasises the importance of community development, of building inclusive societies in which every person feels connected, enabled to thrive and can make a meaningful contribution to their community. This is reflected, for instance, in the Wellbeing Teams and their focus on connecting older people to the wider community. As the example of RUA XIC shows, socio-cultural animation has much to offer in weaving a stronger community and celebrating culture through the arts. At a time when social and educational professionals are under enormous pressure, this aspect may sometimes feel like a luxury we cannot afford or don’t have time for. However, it is crucial that our perspective on practice remains positive and hopeful rather than deficit-orientated, that it encompasses a focus on the difference we can make – and that our belief in the power of human potential is present in our interactions.

As the illustrative examples from the six countries demonstrate, when we place relationships at the heart of our practice and facilitate learning, well-being and belonging, the impact can be profound. It can be nothing less than

life-changing for the people we support, and it can make all the difference between a demotivated and disempowered workforce going through the motion and a determined, energetic team that takes collective ownership, feels supported and finds creative ways to turn challenges into opportunities – because the impact of placing relationships at the heart of our organisational cultures can be equally profound. It is therefore paramount that we create practice conditions in which professionals are trusted to draw on a broad conceptual and methodological understanding of their practice, connect their own value-base and motivation with the organisation's ethos and purpose, and try out new ways of responding to changes in society. This is particularly evident in the practice example of St Christopher's Fellowship and the ways in which they have successfully developed social pedagogical responses to some of the most significant child protection challenges.

It is important to highlight that, whilst the focus on relationships is central to social pedagogy, we must also consider how we can change the way in which social problems are conceptualised and dealt with on a societal level. The emphasis on inclusion and supporting marginalised communities as well as challenging the way in which these are perceived in mainstream society highlights that a social pedagogical perspective seeks to keep the wider picture at the forefront of practice. Many of the examples presented above illustrate the importance of challenging the ways social problems are defined and how they are dominantly being solved. This is demonstrated by the Flemish residential care facility adopting invisible care to 'deinstitutionalise' the care experience, the Rapid Rehousing Project countering family homelessness to tackle a social issue in the absence of a legal framework, and Ubuntu, the circus project offering young people the opportunity to reject social conceptualisations and redefine who they are. They show the need for creativity not just in what we do but how we seek to reconceptualise our work within its broader social context. Whilst we may not be able to change some of the stigmatising attitudes encountered by disadvantaged groups, we can succeed in creating an environment where there is no space for labels.

Where we actively challenge marginalisation and promote social inclusion, we can make a lasting difference not just for the people we support but for the wider community. The Danish Sports Project provides a good example of how sports can be used to facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups of young people, offering them an opportunity to make a positive contribution to their community and a fresh outlook on their own lives. As the example of Drom and its support of the Roma community in Brno shows, it is crucial that we are by the side of those experiencing stigma and offer support designed to challenge stereotypes in wider society. En Trajecte highlights that group work can play a central role in reducing the sense of isolation that can often result from being marginalised and thus make an important contribution in connecting individuals to others who experience similar issues. The example of Chrysalis Schools as a specialist institution is interesting in this respect as it highlights that the aim of inclusion can also be pursued in settings that are targeted at specific groups.

In grappling with the complexity of the social issues faced by many disadvantaged groups, a social pedagogical perspective provides a clear framework to respond effectively. The example of Ackerstraße highlights the importance of working closely in dialogue with everyone involved to identify the hidden resources both in the family and their wider support network, ensuring that interventions are reflective of the family's lifeworld, build on and further strengthen their resourcefulness to address the challenges they encounter. The work of The Phoenix emphasises that what matters most amidst these complexities is our willingness to leave the beaten path and explore what gives meaning to someone's life, what makes them feel respected as an equal human being. In this sense, it is the subjective experience of complex social issues that guides social pedagogical practice.

Working in ways that are frequently counter-cultural and designed to question the status quo is an ongoing challenge and requires critical reflective support. The practical application of social pedagogy is strongly shaped by professionals' Haltung – their ability to practice authentically, using their own ethical compass. Through ongoing and consistent reflection on their Haltung, both individually and at team and organisational level, they gain a deeper awareness of themselves and their impact in interaction with others, clients and colleagues alike. Crucially, the greater self-connection enables them to stay connected to the experiences of others, their unique perspectives and potential. Practice that emerges from this form of connection is more reflective of the life experiences of everyone involved and thus stands a greater chance of being 'lifeworld orientated' in ways that make a meaningful difference.

Towards a transnational social pedagogical perspective

Recent research (Janer & Úcar, 2016; 2018) has shown that, from an epistemological, ontological and axiological common core, social pedagogy develops in harmony with the social and cultural characteristics of each context. Even in countries with a longstanding tradition of social pedagogy, such as Germany, there is ongoing debate about the purpose, scope and relevance of social pedagogy, with a variety of different viewpoints. This critical self-reflection on social pedagogy's identity is crucial as it keeps the dialogue between (and within) academia and practice alive, enabling new trains of thought, ideas and responses to social challenges to shape its evolution. This means that there is not one social pedagogy tradition that is more noteworthy than others, nor one country that has more to offer than the rest. There is, we think, much insight and inspiration to be gained from each country. And there is a need for a continuous and fluid communication between different countries to exchange information and experiences, highlight our diverse traditions and learn from each other. This is also what we want to stimulate with both this insight report and our MOOC. We don't claim to have developed *the* social pedagogy but hope that the panoramic overview of the various traditions can contribute to the wider debate.

With growing interest in social pedagogy across the globe, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries and across Latin America, but also places as diverse as Japan and Israel, it is vital to further the cross-national discourse and to find a way of building a transnational perspective of social pedagogy together. In our view this cannot be a rigid perspective but should showcase the many diverse contributions of each country's social pedagogy tradition – the Czech emphasis on prevention, the Spanish focus on community development and socio-cultural animation, the UK efforts to reclaim relationship-centred practice in a procedure-driven policy environment, the German emphasis on lifeworld orientation, the Danish focus on social inclusion, and the Flemish concern with social justice issues, to name but a few. With an increasing number of publications and learning resources such as our MOOC available in English and Spanish, the scene is set for greater dialogue and meaning-making beyond the national borders. A transnational perspective on social pedagogy needs to reflect the complexity of our world and social pedagogy itself. If we don't expect social pedagogy to be like a complicated machine that can be fully understood but rather see it as a complex organism that evolves reflexively within the socio-cultural environments that we are part of, then the question is less about how we define it and more about how we can live it.

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