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The development of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic in the past two decades

Rozwój pedagogiki społecznej w Republice Czeskiej na przestrzeni ostatnich dwóch dekad

STRESZCZENIE: W artykule przedstawiono rozwój pedagogiki społecznej w Republice Czeskiej na przestrzeni ostatnich dwóch dekad do dzisiaj. Podkreślono zakres i znaczenie tej nauki. Przewidziano pole badań, metody oraz wyzwania społeczne. Przedstawiono współczesne koncepcje pedagogiki społecznej jako dyscypliny naukowej i zawodu. Na zakończenie zadano pytania o przyszłe zadania i wyrażono nadzieję na dalszy rozwój tej dyscypliny.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Pedagogika społeczna, Republika Czeska, edukacja, badania społeczne, zawód.

ABSTRACT: This article outlines the development of Czech social pedagogy from the political changeover in 1989 to the present day. The scope and magnitude of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic is highlighted. Research fields, methods and social challenges are discussed. Current concepts of social pedagogy as a discipline and a profession are presented, together with the prospective tasks and hopes for the further expansion in the future.

KEYWORDS: Social pedagogy, Czech Republic, education, social research, profession.

The new socio-political situation in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 brought substantial changes to which educational thinking, theory and practice began to adapt. This was expressed by the fact that social pedagogy

started to present itself as an independent educational discipline, study subject and profession.

Prevention of and compensation for negative social phenomena in schools, families and leisure activities became the main issue of social pedagogy. Before 1989 theoretical works on social pedagogy began to appear as well as studies on various types of educational settings, although social pedagogy as a theoretical discipline and profession had not yet earned the necessary reputation, mainly due to the political and ideological burdens that limited its free and independent development. Contact with foreign countries was limited by the Eastern Bloc, specialist literature in translation was seldom published and literature in foreign languages apart from Russian was almost inaccessible.

The notion of social pedagogy has been worded in many different ways in the last two decades. An almost vicious circle of questions about the delimitation of the subject and its content are discussed, basic questions of methodology are addressed, and relations to the sociology of education, social psychology and social work still remain to be clarified. In 1991–1993, the first proponents of social pedagogy (e.g. Haškovec 1991; Klíma 1992; Přádka 1993) published their studies in specialist periodicals (especially in the Czech journal *Pedagogická orientace*¹). Specialist publications and textbooks began to be published (e.g. Klapilová 1995; Kraus 1998) and partial socio-pedagogy research surveys (e.g. Knotová 1995; Němec 1998) were presented in the following years. Both formal and informal contacts were established, mainly to German, Slovak and Polish representatives of social pedagogy (e.g. J. Hroncova, Z. Bakošová, A. Radziewicz-Winicki, A. Nowak, B. Smolinska-Theiss).

Blahoslav Kraus was a leading new figure in Czech social pedagogy. Since then Kraus has systematically dealt with social pedagogy in terms of theory, concepts, methodology and, partially, profession.

In today's research, topics in the field of social deviation are strongly preferred, dysfunctions of various types of educational settings are examined, interest has recently been focused on phenomena such as bullying, truancy, addiction, abuse and delinquency. Subjects of exploration are minority and marginal groups, individuals and at-risk social groups, and people endangered in their development or deviant in their behaviour. Also, partial research into the history of social pedagogy and leisure activities has been carried out.

¹ <http://www.ped.muni.cz/pedor/>

New theoretical concepts are based on various incentives, some of them of German (e.g. H. Huppertz, L.J. Mees, K. Mollenhauer, C. Niemeyer) or Polish origin (e.g. T. Pilch, I. Lepalczyk, E. Marynowicz-Hetka, E. Syrek). The notion of social pedagogy is developed dynamically but approaches to the content and options of its professional application differ. One approach sees the task of social pedagogy narrowly as a theory of education (J. Haškovec) while another is oriented to interactions between the environment and education (e.g. B. Kraus, M. Přádka, D. Knotová). There is also a focus on social counselling (L. Hřebíček, L. Hloušková), on deviations in social behaviour (Z. Moucha, P. Klíma) and, probably most frequent, on educational intervention in socio-pathological phenomena in various types of educational settings (e.g. J. Sekera).

Czech Pedagogický slovník (Educational Dictionary; Průcha et al. 2001, p. 217) defines social education as an applied educational discipline “inquiring into a wide range of problems related to the educational influence on at-risk and socially disadvantaged groups of young people and adults”. *Czech Pedagogická encyklopedie* (Educational encyclopedia, Průcha et al. 2010, pp. 733–737) defines social pedagogy as a trans-disciplinary field engaged in the relation between the environment and education. The key task is support towards the mastering of difficult life situations and making conditions for the best possible way of life including leisure activities. According to Blahoslav Kraus (2008, p. 17) social pedagogy helps to “optimize and regulate life situations and processes, accentuating man’s inner potential and activity”.

To summarize the varying approaches to social pedagogy, there are three different concepts which have gained major acceptance despite the diversity of their philosophical points of departure and related ideas about the profession. Each of them has got specific internal variants.

1. Social pedagogy as a discipline studying the inclusion and integration of individuals and groups which, for various reasons, are excluded. in danger of exclusion or deviant in social behaviour. Procedures of re-education and resocialization are accentuated.
2. Social pedagogy as a discipline studying the interactions between the environment and education. Attention is paid to lifelong learning and education and quality of life, with a focus on leisure-time education and education for health.
3. Social pedagogy as a discipline concentrating on assistance to people in difficult life situations and those affected by negative social processes. This concept has to do with the prevention of social exclusion, social

counselling and various procedures for compensating the impact of negative social phenomena.

These concepts are not strictly delimited and their variants are often complementary. The above differences are mainly expressed in the design of the study subject of social pedagogy and the definition of the profession.

Within the field social pedagogy currently executed researches with the topics e. g. quality of live, institutional conditions (educational) care and resocialization, the quality of social services, causes and consequences of social disadvantage, research environments-rural environment, career and social counseling, leisure time, deviation (pathology), ethnic minorities- Roma minority.

Social pedagogy as a subject of study and profession

Since the 1990s, social pedagogy has been taught as a subject within teacher study programmes at universities (Faculties of Education and Faculties of Arts), but it has also been established as an independent subject. In the Czech Republic it is studied at higher vocational schools and universities. Major centres of university study, with most students pursuing full- and part-time studies towards Bachelor's and Master's degrees, are Masaryk University in Brno, Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín, University of Hradec Králové and the University of Ostrava. Social pedagogy is studying in the Czech Republic in full-time and combined studies, bachelor's and master's degrees at 8 universities – UK Praha (Faculties of Arts, Hussite Theological Faculty), MU Brno (Faculties of Education a Faculties of Arts F), OSU Ostrava (Faculties of Education), UP Olomouc (The SS. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology), UTB Zlín (Faculty of Humanities and Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies), UJEP Ústí nad Labem (Faculties of Education), JCU České Budějovice (Faculties of Education), UHK Hradec Králové (Faculties of Education). Created 3 separate departments of Social Education (Faculty of Education MU Brno, Faculty of Education UHK Hradec Králové, Faculty of Humanities UTB Zlín)

According to Zlatica Bakošová (2008), the curriculum should be designed so that “the student receives knowledge of the personality, development, education, the environment, social policy, care, assistance, and questions of sociology, economics, law, and psychology, as well as medicine” (Bakošová 2008, p. 67). Nevertheless, accredited programmes differ in the socio-pedagogy concepts accentuated by the universities that teach them. Let us demonstrate this by the example of the three largest in terms of student numbers: at Masaryk University, social pedagogy is studied at two different

faculties, as part of two different subjects: *Social pedagogy and Counselling* is based on the concept of socio-educational activities as assistance at various stages in one's career and counselling as an integral part of social and personal dimensions of life and support for orientation in ambiguous situations. The other subject is *Social Pedagogy and Leisure*, which is based on a focus on interactions between the environment and education, with training for education in leisure time and prevention of social deviation. Tomáš Baťa University's programme is focused rather on assistance to people in difficult situations and those affected by negative social processes, highlighting the prevention of social exclusion. At Ostrava, the subject *Social Pedagogy – Prevention and Resocialization* concentrates on the prevention of negative social phenomena and the resocialization of delinquent or potentially delinquent persons.

In order to strengthen the qualifications of graduates and improve their chances in the labour market, some interesting development programmes are attracting financial support from the European Social Fund. Some of these are aimed at the personal development of social pedagogy students. In connection with these projects, a training centre named the Academic Centre of Personal Development-ACOR² has been founded at Masaryk University to provide students with the necessary background for the creation and materialization of the curriculum of personal development and learning based on the reflection of experience. *Experience and reflection learning: support of professional student training* is a current project which offers theory and personal training as well as an introduction to the methodology of programmes of personal and social development and experience reflection learning. The project includes a number of other specialist activities such as the publication of the periodical *ACORát*, counselling, preparation of study material and monographs and organization of a series of conferences named Experience-Reflection-Learning.

It is thus evident that both Bachelor's and Master's programmes educate prospective social pedagogy-educators so that they are ready to practise prevention, counselling, re-education and resocialization with children, young people and adults. Graduates find employment in the social services and social counselling, in both the public and the nonprofit sphere.

The Association of Educators in Social Pedagogy was founded in March 2013. Central theme is the need to promote the profession of social educator in the Act on teachers and the catalog of works. Members of the detail focused

² <http://www.acor.cz>

on the role of social pedagogue at the school and the definition of its key competence in this area.

In 2013 was the start-up issue of the first professional journal, *Sociální pedagogika* (Journal of Social Pedagogy)³, was published in autumn 2013. The journal publishes theoretical and empirical studies on ongoing and completed research, book reviews and information on scientific activities in the field of social pedagogy. Regarding the scientific article, the journal is open to various theoretical concepts and methodological preferences (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methodology design) if they bring new results and interesting views. The journal is placed on the List of non-impact peer-reviewed journals published in the Czech Republic for the year 2014 and included in EBSCO database.

Conclusion

Czech social pedagogy is facing considerable challenges and tasks. These refer in particular to the profession of social pedagogy-educators and the improvement of their opportunities in the labour market. Besides this, there is an urgent need to specify terminology, develop forms and specific methods, establish relations to other humanities and fields (especially social work) and cooperate systematically with institutions and organizations which are active in practice. There is no doubt that these tasks include the development of basic and applied research.

Another important assignment of social pedagogy is to create and offer positive options of education for individuals and social groups, support the social functioning of every social and age group and create conditions for the best possible careers for individuals. Social pedagogy has to address a number of tasks simultaneously, but all of them may facilitate the fulfilment of its potential.

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