Social Pedagogical Eyes in the Midst of Diverse Understandings, Conceptualisations and Activities

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The concept of social pedagogy consists of two parts. The principal term is 'pedagogy' and the qualifying one is 'social'. The word 'social' is used in different ways and contexts. Therefore, there are also many kinds of semantic interpretations of the concept of social pedagogy. This paper discusses discrepancies of the concept of social pedagogy, paying attention especially to different uses of the qualifying attribute 'social'. Attention is paid to varieties of theoretical self-conceptions of social pedagogy within the history of the concept.

The multiplicity of the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy

Social pedagogy has been characterised as something that is difficult to catch (Eriksson and Markström, 2000). From a historical point of view, there have been several splendid efforts to make a systematic analysis of the concept and create an exhaustive theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy from an early stage on (e.g. Natorp, 1899; Nohl, 1935) until these days (e.g. Madsen, 2006 in Denmark; Niemeyer, 2003; Hamburger, 2003 and Thiersch, 2006 – among a very big number of others – in Germany; Mudrik, 2009 in Russia; Quintana, 1984 in Spain, etc.). In fact, there are – with the years – dozens of significant contributions by theorists from different countries. As a result of this, there are several different interpretations, partly without common denominators. Consequently, the concept of social pedagogy is largely a semantic mess and the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy is incoherent.

Compared to some other terms with the ending 'pedagogy', the term social pedagogy does not conjure immediate images of the point. It is quite easy to catch the basic essence of terms like 'school pedagogy', 'music pedagogy' or even 'special education' but the term ´social pedagogy' does not create a clear vision. As Thomas Rauschenbach (1991) puts it, this has been very fruitful for the development of the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy, because from the very beginning social pedagogy has been obliged to legitimatise its existence and create a theoretical self-conception through deep theoretical analyses of the concept. The development of social pedagogy as a science and profession has been tinged with this blessing of unclearness.

Thus, the inner tension and discrepancy of the theoretical conception held by advocates of social pedagogy can be seen as a dynamic platform for its development as an interactive and still debated discipline. The negative point is that social pedagogy has not been developed as a coherent system of theory building, research and education because of this lack of conceptual consistency. The prob-

lem is not only a semantic one; the heterogeneity is also caused by the fact that there are different philosophical views and political interests behind the interpretations. Social pedagogy deals with fundamental questions of societal order, human development, citizenship education and the fight against social problems. Due to this, it is easily influenced by philosophies and ideologies.

Modern social pedagogy is viewed as a social science and as a profession, but it makes sense to say that it is not a professional science because a science cannot be subordinated to professional interests (Niemeyer, 2003). On the other hand, social pedagogy as professional practice across different professional fields can benefit from social pedagogy as a social science. As a science, it has to permanently clarify its basic questioning, subject and concepts. As a profession, it deals with topical issues.

Social pedagogy stands in the midst of diverse country-specific traditions, theory buildings, and systems of education and practice. The concept is used in different contexts with many kinds of horizons of meanings from a particular tradition of educational thought and action or a special theory of education up to a research based professional system arising in the modern society. The analysis of the uses of the attribute 'social' may contribute to the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy, both as a social science and a profession.

Consisting of two parts, 'social' and 'pedagogy', the concept is exposed to different interpretations and understandings. Generally speaking, the term 'pedagogy' is more explicitly referring to a branch of thought concerning the nature of human growth and education in theory and practice. The term 'social' is more ambiguous, and there is a good reason to ask what makes pedagogy 'social'? This question will be discussed in this paper.

Early history of the concept of social pedagogy

Historically, social pedagogy originates from ideas that pushed the process of modernisation ahead and resulted in a new societal order in which the need arose to intermediate, by means of education, the discrepancy between individual autonomy and the expectations of modern society (Mollenhauer 1959; Reyer 2002; Dollinger 2006). In this sense, social pedagogy was dealing from the outset with the problem of social exclusion and a new kind of social disadvantage caused by modernization. The concept of social pedagogy developed to refer to educational theories that consider the individualistic approach, which is restricted only to individual development, as being too narrow and emphasise social issues in educational theory and practice. From the very beginning, it has been connected both with the emphasis on the importance of community in human development and the educational process, and the strivings to help disadvantaged individuals through education.

The concept of social pedagogy was first used presumably by the German educationist and school politician Karl Mager in the mid-1840s and in the early 1850s by another German educationist, Adolph Diesterweg. For Mager, the concept meant a field of research and theory of education considering social connections of education, thus distinguishing the term from individual pedagogy focusing only on individual development and state-pedagogy expressing primarily administrative-political interests. For his part, Diesterweg closely combined the concept with social political interests and working-class ideology in terms of fighting against poverty and social misery, and for democracy and social equality.

All in all, different emphases in the use of the concept of social pedagogy can be found right from the start. Already before the turn of the 20th century several theoretical systematisations of social pedagogy were produced in which it was interpreted, for example, as strengthening the process of socialisation, increasing educational democracy, contributing to the welfare of young people through education, promoting social and cultural progress, making the societal conditions of education visible, and organising educational help for people in social and moral distress (Gottschalk,

2005). Most views tried to achieve a balance between individual emancipation and social integration.

Historically, two main developmental lines of social pedagogical thought can be identified. On the one hand, social pedagogy deals with the problem of social exclusion by aiming to improve social inclusion and the welfare of those who are at risk of becoming excluded. On the other hand, social pedagogy aims to contribute to active citizenship in terms of citizenship education. In addition to these two fields of interests, the provision of care to vulnerable members of society could be mentioned as a third area connecting especially to the line of preventing social exclusion in theory and practice. Care for vulnerable adults and children, as a special area of interest of social pedagogy, aims to contribute to welfare through education. It draws theoretical inspiration from the theories of welfare, wellbeing and human needs, which play an important role also in pedagogical theory building dealing with prevention of social exclusion and attempts to foster social inclusion.

From the point of view of the history of ideas of social pedagogy, it is not a question of historical semantics. A dictionary can be very useful but, as George Boas (1969) put it, 'a dictionary aims only to give the meaning of the words, not of ideas' (p. 11). It is true that the word 'social' has different meanings and can be used in manifold contexts in different ways. Correspondingly, it seems that the use of the concept of social pedagogy varies according to different ways of using the attribute 'social'. Due to this, there are different dictionary definitions of the term social pedagogy, as well as different associations connected to it. There is also no reason to assume that the meanings were constant across the 19th century.

Diverse traditions, theories and practices

Since social pedagogy came into existence as a concept, it has tended to discuss and conceptualise education primarily in reference to societal life, welfare, and culture. It has been connected with different understandings of the preconditions for a good society, social development and social wellbeing, and has been reflected differently in different social orders, political systems and cultural structures. Historically, the concept of social pedagogy has developed in the midst of diverse social, political and cultural conditions as well as in different semantic systems.

Social pedagogical thought has derived much from general pedagogy. Many of those early German scholars who have developed the theory of social pedagogy were theorists of education in general, not only specialists in social pedagogy. Due to this, a fundamental question that arises has been how social pedagogy relates to general theories of education, and how it may be distinguished from pedagogy in general. This is still a significant point in the modern German debate (e.g. Niemeyer, 2003), and in other countries the term social pedagogy has also been used in different ways in view of this question. For example, in Russia two main schools of thought of social pedagogy have sprung up since the mid-1990s: on the one hand, social pedagogy as a field of educational theory and practice concerning socialisation and citizenship education in general (e.g. Mudrik, 2009; 2011), and on the other hand, social pedagogy as a field of special education applying to different groups of people with disabilities people and psychosocial problems (e.g. Galaguzova, 2000; 2012). The same competing trends also occur in other countries although there are also significant country-specific emphases.

Country-specific traditions of social pedagogy can be understood, and must be studied, in the context of national histories. The origins of Polish social pedagogy lie deep in the patriotic movements as Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria (Deller Brainerd, 2001), and the development of social pedagogy in Spain took place in the social movements during the era of dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War (López-Blasco 1998). In both of these traditions later social

pedagogical theory building and practice are strongly influenced by the ideas of community action, self-help and popular education.

The concept of social pedagogy is not well understood in the English-speaking part of the world. Recently some non-English authors, who have direct experience of social pedagogy in their own countries, have published materials about social pedagogy in English, for example from the perspective of social work (Hämäläinen, 2003), child and youth care (Coussée et al, 2010), and community development (Eriksson, 2010). Some descriptions of country-specific traditions of social pedagogy offer inspiring views about the current challenges for the theoretical and practice development of all social professions (e.g. Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009; 2011; 2012), such as the innovative contributions to the Polish tradition which conceptualises social work as an integrative and comprehensive system of care that promotes social development and community mobilization (Deller Brainerd, 2001).

In the British context social pedagogy has been conceptualised as 'a point where care and education meet' (Cameron and Moss, 2011), a concept that refers to communication skills in education, especially childcare and youth education (Petrie, 2011). In any case, there is no significant theoretical tradition based on the concept of social pedagogy in the English-speaking countries. Social pedagogy is viewed as a paradigm or a framework for improving children's everyday activities (Cameron et al, 2011) and for dealing with children's developmental risks (Milligan, 2011) in residential care. Drawing attention to the opportunities to improve the working methodology through 'a holistic personal approach' (Petrie, 2011) has been an important theoretical initiative in the British context.

Some semantic issues

Over the course of time, the concept of social pedagogy has been used from many different starting points connected with different concepts of humankind and society, moral issues, philosophies of science, and political ambitions. Thus, the varieties of theoretical self-conceptions of social pedagogy are not only a semantic question, but rather a question of the multiplicity of ideologies. Nevertheless, a semantic analysis may help deal with the complexity of the uses of the concept. One aspect is how 'pedagogy' is understood, the other is how 'social' as an attribute is interpreted. On this basis, three main fields of application can be identified:

1. Social pedagogy as pedagogy in which attention is paid to the *societal* conditions of education and human development;
2. Social pedagogy representing the idea of *community*-based education and highlighting the importance of community in education and human development;
3. Social pedagogy as pedagogy contributing to *welfare*, focusing especially on the underprivileged, poor and oppressed, aiming to prevent social exclusion and advancing social inclusion.

These three views are not categorically distinct from each other, but express very clearly different denotations, and each of them includes many sub-meanings with different nuances and connotations (Table 1).

Table 1. Semantic varieties of social pedagogy

Reference points	Social structures	Social action	Educational aims	Educational means
Society (SP as a discipline dealing with the interconnection between society and education)	Social order -constitutional order -infrastructures -cultural factors	Social action in society -civil society -labour -leisure	Promoting -active citizenship and citizen morals -democracy -social inclusion -participation -social development Preventing -social dysfunctions and disintegrations -social exclusion	Societal conditions as educator Society as context of growing up Adequate social structures for educational aims -school system -other educational institutions -opportunities for participation
Community (SP as a discipline stressing the community-based nature of education)	Personal relationships	Social interaction Community life Family life	Promoting -social skills -communicative culture Preventing -isolation, loneliness -problems in personal relationships	Community-based education Education in, into, for and through community life
Welfare (SP as a discipline offering a theoretical framework for social care)	Welfare system	Social benefits Social aid Social care	Promoting -social inclusion -social wellbeing Preventing -misery, poverty, social and psychosocial problems	Professional social care

All of these three main meanings of the word 'social' are relevant for attributing pedagogical thought. They can also be found in the literature on conceptualisations of social pedagogy. It is important to notice that, although they exclude each other semantically, in real life they can be valid at the same time and complement each other. In any case, the conceptual ambiguity of social pedagogy is linked to the semantic varieties of the word 'social'.

It is not just a semantic point that, from the outset, social pedagogy has been based on the vision that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. Social pedagogical theory building has been significantly inspired by this idea. In this sense social pedagogy deals widely with the mechanisms of social development from the point of view of education. It is a question both of

social and educational thought at the same time. However, there are semantic irregularities in the picture.

In general, two basic developmental lines of the use of the concept of social pedagogy can be identified. On the one hand, it refers 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.

Another semantic problem is that the attribute 'social' can specify the concept from different perspectives. For example, educational action can be called 'social' on the basis of aims, methods, institutions, consequences, the nature of professional activities, or theoretical frameworks. Social pedagogical theory building can hardly be reduced to a set of specific educational methods and techniques or a number of particular educational institutions or to some particular contexts such as institutional care. Correspondingly, social pedagogical practice is primarily an expression of a social pedagogical way of thinking based on social pedagogical questioning. It is about a theoretical view that springs up from the idea of the interconnectedness of 'social' and 'educational' issues in social and individual life spheres and about putting this into educational practice.

Community-based education as a common denominator

Although, from a historical point of view, there is 'an indisputable heterogeneity of social pedagogy' (Niemeyer, Schröer and Böhnisch, 1997, p. 9), the concept of community plays an important integrating role therein. In the German tradition, two main lines of development can be identified: the Natorpian and the Nohlian. In both of them, though on a very different ontological and epistemological basis, special attention has been paid to the fundamental importance of community in education. According to Natorp, education takes place only in community and therefore all pedagogy is and should be understood in terms of social pedagogy. Correspondingly, Nohl underlined the educational power of young people's self-governing activities, which he identified in the German youth movement (Böhnisch and Schröer, 1997). On the other hand, Nohl also created a basis for a more individualistic view of social pedagogy in the sense of a pedagogical theory of social help.

Two basic lines of thought can be identified within the theory of community-based education. Firstly, the focus can be on the idea of active citizenship in terms of informal education and human development through social participation and civic activities. Secondly, community education can be seen as formal professional action in terms of a special educational method in professional use. In both lines of thought, community is conceptualised as 'an educator' and participation as the impacting factor. The idea of active citizenship connects social pedagogy with citizenship education, whereas the professional line deals more with social care issues. The concept of community itself is unclear and can be used to refer to very different joint forms of life in terms of size, structures and purposes. There is a good reason to distinguish, for example, small communities from big ones and informal communities from formal ones, such as residential care institutions.

Social pedagogical eyes look at opportunities to strengthen communities through education, and they see educative community as a basis of individual and social development. From the very beginning social pedagogical theory building has applied to processes of human development which both promote and gain benefits from participation, active citizenship, and democratic attitudes. It represents the same ideas which we have learned to call social capital during the last two decades. In this sense social pedagogy can be seen as an educational theory and practice aimed at promoting social capital through education.

In general, the idea of education in community, through community and for community became an early conceptual determinant and methodological principle of social pedagogy. In the later history of the concept of social pedagogy, special attention has been paid to the idea of mobilisation for col-

lective self-development, and in the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century this is still a valid denominator of social pedagogy (Eriksson, 2010). However, there is no reason to say that it is just or only the ideology of community-based education that makes pedagogy 'social'. The concept of social pedagogy is also used in other ways and its range of applications as a profession and discipline varies in different countries (Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009; 2011; 2012). As a social and educational system, as well as a system of thought, social pedagogy has a country-specific character with a special conceptual history varying country by country.

From the point of view of the history of ideas, social pedagogy originates from the idea of the person as an agent opposite to a more fatalistic outlook. Together with political strategies, education was seen as an important method to influence life conditions individually and collectively. From a social historical point of view, social pedagogy originates from the aspirations to prevent and alleviate the impacts of social problems caused by industrialization, urbanization and modernization. From these two historical starting points social pedagogy has developed as a modern social system dealing with the challenges of the changing society.

## A branch of studies and a field of professional action

It is very common to define social pedagogy through its occupational expressions, as a professional system. This kind of specification contends itself with external properties like administrative and organisational categories. One of the first such definitions was offered by Gertrud Bäumer, an official of the Prussian Ministry of Education in the 1920s, who called social pedagogy 'a third area of education, which is not home and school' (Bäumer, 1929, p. 3). On this basis, social pedagogy has taken shape as a particular professional field of social and youth work in Germany and many other European countries. It is not so much a question of the inner idea of social pedagogy as its outer manifestation as a specific social, educational and occupational sub-system of the modern society.

It makes sense to consider the nature of social pedagogical questioning, theory building and action from the point of view of interconnecting sub-systems of the professional activity, especially professional education, policies and practice. What does the tradition of social pedagogical thought provide for the curriculum and didactics of professional education and how does it contribute to professional policies and practice? The answers are complex rather than unambiguous, because social pedagogical thought is shaped by different ideas and interests. A common denominator of different schools of thought might be the idea of the interconnectedness of social and educational factors in human development. In this sense, social pedagogy is based on the anthropology in which human development is considered from the point of view of the importance of the social aspect in education. However, there are different concepts of humankind and theories of human nature causing diversity of understandings, policies and practices.

As an occupational system social pedagogy covers the whole human life-span in terms of early, youth, and adult educational (more or less broadly interpreted) activities. It concerns both socially oriented educational institutions and educationally oriented social institutions offering a theoretical framework for many kinds of professional activities in different fields such as child care, youth work, and social work. Social pedagogical thought manifests itself as different occupational forms, which vary country by country (e.g. Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009; 2011; 2012). For example, the British debate on the essence of social pedagogy tends to be strongly focused on children's residential care because this has been an important occupational context for the development of the concept (e.g. Petrie et al, 2009; Cameron et al, 2011).

Social pedagogy can be seen as a system of science[1], education and practice (Figure 1). But what kind of science, what kind of education, what kind of practice, what kind of research and theory building, discipline and professional field? Here we are in the midst of diverse understandings, conceptualisations, and activities.

Figure 1. Social pedagogy as a functional system of science, education and practice
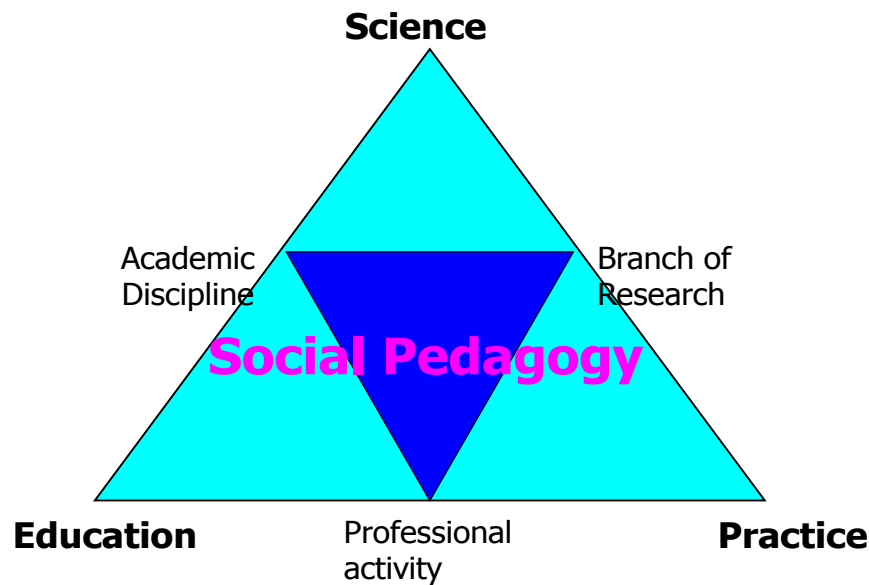
Often social pedagogy is seen as connected with professional interests, either as the foundational discipline for a particular profession or, what seems to be more reasonable, for the field of social and educational activities as a multi-professional whole. In social pedagogy as interpreted in the most general sense, non-professional social and educational activities taking place in civil society are also counted as a part of social pedagogical practice. Accordingly, social pedagogy is understood as an umbrella concept and a general theoretical framework of education in a broad sense including formal, non-formal and informal education. Actually, the decisive point for social pedagogy is that it views education through social glasses while corresponding social realities are seen from the point of view of education in so far as education addresses opportunities to contribute to social life, welfare and human development.

There are reasons to say that it has been a theoretical odyssey to identify social pedagogy with social work, as has been done by some theorists in several countries. This kind of understanding has narrowed the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy to professional issues instead of developing social pedagogical thought on the basis of theory building that applies to education in general. There are attempts to combine these two understandings by viewing social pedagogy both as a

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[1] The ambiguous term 'science' is used here in the sense of a particular system of research and theory building. In fact, it is difficult to make distinctions between the notions of 'science', theory' and 'academic discipline'. The use of the term 'science' implies that social pedagogy is derived from a particular questioning separated from the questionings of other individual social sciences, such as sociology, social psychology, and social policy. In this sense social pedagogy has a particular character in relation to other social sciences. As a science it has a complex nature based on multi-faceted theoretical debate, and it cannot be reduced to one theory only. As a science social pedagogy includes different kinds of various efforts of theory building. It is a question of a particular thought tradition which consists of competing paradigms and schools of thought. The extension of the terms 'theory' and 'academic discipline' is more limited.

profession and a science (e.g. Niemeyer, 2003), but in that case social pedagogical theory-building tends to be reduced to professional interests. In any case, social pedagogy can rather be seen as a part of the social scientific basis of social professions than a science for one particular profession.

As a science social pedagogy is closely connected with other social sciences (Figure 2). It gains benefits both from social ethics (aim questions) and sociological and social psychological knowledge (reality questions) as well as social policy (action questions).

Figure 2. Social pedagogy as a part of the social scientific basis of social professions

SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AS A PART OF THE SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF SOCIAL PROFESSIONS
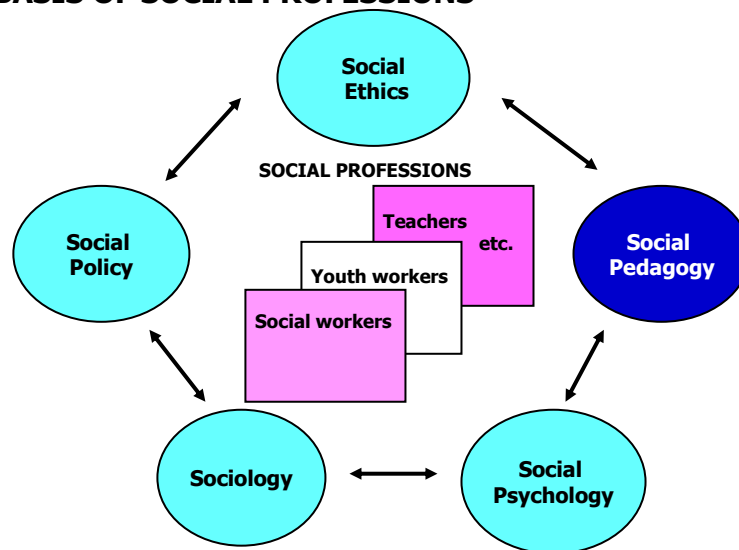
As a particular field of social action, social pedagogy is linked to the action theory that requires understanding of both aims (values) and reality (conditions). As the German theorist Herman Nohl stated in the 1920s, politics and pedagogy relate to each other like inhalation and exhalation. Where politics influences through legislation, institutions and corresponding external considerations of society, pedagogies deal with internal factors such as culture, values, morals and corresponding elements influencing through the processes of human growth. Generally speaking, social pedagogy and social policy are reciprocally interpenetrating elements of social life with common aims – contributing to welfare and alleviating misery. Only their methods are different.

Social pedagogy is not just an approach but it consists of many kinds of approaches connected to different concepts of man, society, and knowledge. In this sense the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy is contradictory and inconsistent. It is not a single theory of education but a range of many competing theories, paradigms, and attempts at theory building. Some theories take a special interest in professional affairs and others discuss the nature of social education in general without professional aspirations. Correspondingly, the field of applications, social pedagogical practice, can be seen taking place both in formal professional and non-formal non-professional contexts.

As a science social pedagogy has a practical character (*phronesis*) in the Aristotelian sense of the word. It deals with the processes of human growth concerning social integration and participation, development of social skills, and strengthening wellbeing. The pedagogical activities aimed at promoting these processes and preventing problems are the focus. Social pedagogy can be called an action science because it is closely connected with the challenges of pedagogical action, either professional or non-professional, in theory and practice.

A way of thinking instead of a toolbox

Having the problems in person-society relations as its focus area, social pedagogy has traditionally and necessarily dealt with questions of normality and deviance. Even social exclusion has sometimes been viewed as a form of deviance because it expresses deviation from the socially defined common standards of the normal course of life (Madsen, 2006). A special risk for social pedagogy as a social system is, in theory and in practice, to narrowly conceptualise the dysfunction of person-society relations as defects in people or as deviant behaviour that should be repaired, corrected or healed by pedagogical means. Several theorists have cautioned about this way of thinking, reminding that, from the outset, one of the characteristics of social pedagogical thought has been social criticism, although there have also been tendencies to integrate people into society through pedagogical repairs. Modern social pedagogical theory building and debate are significantly influenced by critical social theories.

Social pedagogy is not a toolbox of pedagogical methods. It is, rather, a way of thinking in which social and educational considerations are united. The methods are not the point, but rather express a particular concept of humankind in which attention is paid to the social preconditions of human growth and to the pedagogical opportunities to influence and help (Hämäläinen 2003). In this sense, social pedagogical thought means a certain perspective on humankind and society and the relations between these. In any case, social pedagogical thought can also be classified from the point of view of methods: for example, community-based, activity-based and experience-oriented methods. In general, social pedagogy does not have methods of its own that could be distinguished from pedagogical methods in general. It is rather about ethics and values than methods and techniques. In any case, creative methods are often used and developed in terms of activity education in a framework of social pedagogical thought.

Because social pedagogy came socio-historically into existence as a pedagogical reaction to the social questions of the 19th century, it still deals with this challenge. Social exclusion is today's big social question. It is closely connected with the complexity of the modern high-tech information society in which, increasingly, people encounter problems in fulfilling occupational career expectations and managing their lives (Hämäläinen, 2009). As a modern social system, social pedagogy develops pedagogical means to prevent and alleviate the social ills caused by the social processes and structures of today's society. Professionally, this means that social pedagogy has to be able to deal adequately with different kinds of social and psychosocial needs of today's people, in the sense of appropriate professional specialisations.

Social pedagogy deals widely with many kinds of social and psychosocial problems in theory and practice, seeking opportunities to prevent them. Professional specialisation needs to address different issues, such as misuse of intoxicants, juvenile delinquency, integration problems of immigrants, disaffected violent youth, child abuse and neglect, mental health problems, and long-term unemployment. Dialogue, communality, and interaction are often seen as basic methodological principles, which must be applied creatively and innovatively in different contexts and with different target groups, for example with children at risk.

Methodologically social pedagogy is based on understandings drawn from anthropology according to which human beings are understood as active and creative subjects who are capable of self-education. The basic mission of education is to make people aware of their opportunities to take their earthly destiny into their own hands and influence their own life conditions, whatever these are, as an individual person, a family, and a community. At the same time the importance of political action is seen to play an important role in improving people's life conditions and opportunities to fulfill their individual and collective interests.

Application to education in general and social care in particular

Generally speaking, the same criteria of classification have to do with social pedagogical theories in particular and theories of education in general. The same schools and trends of educational thought and ideological interests and backgrounds can be found in social pedagogy and in general education (Hämäläinen, 2012). Following the classification of the trends of modern philosophy of education (Burbules and Raybeck, 2003), social pedagogy can be seen to branch from prescriptive, analytical and critical schools of thought. Some conceptualisations take a normative stance on pedagogical action, whereas some others aim at analysing and understanding it from a social pedagogical point of view. The varieties are connected with different philosophies of science.

It has been clear right from the outset that social pedagogical questioning is essentially connected with philosophical anthropology – as belonging to pedagogical theory building in general. It is about how we understand human nature, how we see the child, what we think about youth as a stage of life, and corresponding anthropological questions. As a science, social pedagogy is not an expression of any particular anthropology, social theory or philosophy of science but a particular area of scholarly debate and argumentation. In this sense, social pedagogical thought is influenced by the same trends as are the social sciences and humanities in general. In the German tradition, for example, the original theory building based on philosophical anthropology was, in the 1960s, mostly replaced by a sociological focus based more on a realistic knowledge production (Thiersch and Rauschenbach, 1987). In any case, it is rather difficult to picture any pedagogical theory without an anthropological questioning dealing with theories of human nature. In general, social pedagogy associates two aspects of human existence, *homo educandus* and *homo socialis*, and 'social pedagogical eyes' consist of the awareness of the togetherness of these.

The social pedagogy which deals with discrepancies between individual autonomy and the expectations of society is closely connected with the theory of socialisation and has sometimes been conceptualised as educational theory and practice in terms of child welfare, dealing with the tension between the older and younger generations in modern society (Mollenhauer, 2001). Its questioning is focused on educational opportunities to promote the processes of human growth in social performance, participation, active citizenship, initiative, and corresponding qualities, and the problems that people may have in the processes of growth to achieve a good relationship with their society.

In fact, the pedagogical activities for preventing social exclusion and promoting active citizenship are closely linked. Social care is especially needed for people who do not get sufficient care from their natural social networks, especially families. From this point of view, social care is a special field of social pedagogy but is not isolated from aspirations to promote social inclusion and active citizenship. Otherwise, social pedagogical thought and the tradition of social pedagogical theory building provide a particular view of education in the modern society – 'social pedagogical eyes' – applying to all kinds of education throughout the educational system, covering all educational institutions and organisations of modern society. In this sense, it is about a general rather than a special theory of education.

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