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## The Definition of Social Pedagogy in the Context of Socio-cultural Diversity

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### Abstract

The paper titled The definition of social pedagogy in the context of socio-cultural diversity discusses the context of social pedagogy in Europe and its general definition. It also focuses on the specification of socio-cultural diversity in Central Europe. The paper has a theoretical-empirical character and the aim of the research is to define social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity in the Czech Republic by applying the Delphi method. The main purpose of this paper is to define social pedagogy, social and cultural diversity in the Czech Republic and social pedagogy in the context of socio-cultural diversity. These characteristics were obtained through analysis of the experts' opinion on the issue.

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### 1. Introduction

The definition of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic is very problematic area that is not yet anchored. We can meet the various concepts and perspectives from which is this discipline defined. What absent? It is the definition of social pedagogy from the point of view of socio-cultural diversity in the Czech Republic. Within the context raises many questions. What is the socio-cultural diversity? Can be sociocultural diversity defined exactly? How can be social pedagogy anchored in terms of socio-cultural diversity in the Czech Republic? We will try to answer to these questions through this paper, which defines social pedagogy and social and cultural diversity on the

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basis of the research, which was carried out by using the Delphi method. The design of this research and the key findings are presented below. Now we will focus on the basic definition of social pedagogy and social and cultural diversity, which are theoretical bases of the research.

### 1.1. Theoretical Background of Social Pedagogy

Social pedagogy is a new discipline, but it has a long tradition. The first definition comes from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The definitions varies in the context of a changing society. Social pedagogy must respond flexibly to the changing conditions of society and the environment in which the individual exists. It also reflects the different definitions of social pedagogy in the countries in which this discipline occurs. We will present the various definitions of social pedagogy in Germany, Sweden and the Czech Republic, together with a short statement of social education in Poland and the Slovakia. But we must not forget the fact that in none of these definitions is clear what is the role of social pedagogy in the socio-cultural diversity.

We primarily present situation of social pedagogy in Germany, because in this country we can watch longest tradition of social pedagogy in Europe. Development of social pedagogy began since the 19th century in Germany. Currently, the social pedagogy in Germany is viewed in terms of the subject of social pedagogy, which are children and youth. You can find many definitions that highlight the importance of influence of social pedagog on children and youth, on their formation, socialization and personalization. This is a concise definition: "Social pedagogy is understood to be an independent area of educational welfare, whose function should be to absorb the social risks and upheavals, which are not covered by school, family and social security. Additionally, alongside the social welfare benefits, which were usually meant for families, the aged, the ill and the disabled, corrective youth welfare and publicly promoted opportunities for leisure time activities in the form of youth care were developed." (Peukert, 1989, p. 311). Compared to the German definition of social pedagogy, in Sweden we can find complex system of how is the social pedagogy defined. Social pedagogy in Sweden is characterized by three models (adaptive, mobilizing and democratic).

Table 1 Three models which make visible the possible meanings and implication of social pedagogy in a Swedish context.  
(Kornbeck, Jensen, 2009, p. 50)

	Adaptive	Mobilizing	Democratic
Tools	Relation	Action	Dialogue
Methods	Treating methods targeted to the individual	Structural methods targeted to the society	Himation targeted to the group
Attitudes	Individualistic	Collective, change	Practical wisdom
Concepts	Community	Emancipation, empowerment	Bildung, citizen-ship

The most radical model in Sweden is *The mobilization model*, which point out the problems in society and these problems are the cause of the problems of the individual. The second, less radical model is *The Democratic model*, which is based on democratic thinking of the individual and believe, that through dialogue we can change human understanding. The model which is more used is *The adaptive model* focuses on the integration and adaptation of the individual to society. The basic condition for this model is a well-functioning relationship between the social pedagog and the client. These three models were defined by Erikson (2006) through long-term research *Swedish teachers and researcher perceptions of social educators*. However, we didn't find exact definition of the subject of social pedagogy in the theoretical background reflecting the Swedish social pedagogy.

Between other countries where the social pedagogy was developed belong: Poland, Slovakia and France. In Poland and the Slovakia we can observe historical developments that shaped the social pedagogy. The major Polish personalities include: Radlinska, Wroczynski, Kaminski, Kawuli aj. Polish social pedagogy points to the negative social phenomena (unemployment, homelessness, family problems, children's aggression, gerontopedagogy, leisure

time, etc.) (Kraus, 2008). Slovakia is more focused on social pedagogy in terms of social aspects of education. This country is one of the leading experts in social pedagogy: Bakošová, Hroncová, Ondrejkovič.

Despite the theoretical study of the nature and definition of social pedagogy in these countries, we could not find a theory that would focus on social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity. We will focus on the environment and definition of social pedagogy in Czech Republic, because this is central to our research.

Social pedagogy is defined in the Czech Republic in two concepts - broader and closer. In each definition, we can also observe two levels - social and pedagogical. For accurate determination of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic, we have created a synthesis of the definitions. Social pedagogy is:

- Applied pedagogical discipline that deals with the social aspects of education
- Discipline investigating the influence of the environment on the individual and society, the relationship between the environment and education
- Assistance to all age groups

The exact definition (for the purposes of our research) of social pedagogy presents Hradečná (1998, p.7) as "borderline discipline that focuses on macro-social aspects of education (the nature of society, the overall cultural and political status of the society, including the value system) and micro-social aspect too (immediate environment of the individual – family, school, social groups, etc.)".

### *1.2. Defined Social and Cultural Diversity*

Central Europe, like most populated places on Earth, has been the place of a meeting, coexistence and mixing of different socio-cultural groups.<sup>†</sup> As we have said, socio-cultural diversity in the context of social pedagogy is not properly anchored in European countries.

Some authors point out that within the seemingly uniform "national culture", there are "foreign" experience, subcultures, cultural organizations and various cultural levels, which break down the idea of culture as "coherent", and on the other hand stress the internal differences. This overarching culture breaks to groups of people who share a certain way of communication, perception, values and habits, and thus these groups constitutes the socio-cultural diversity of the environment.<sup>‡</sup> Our paper is based on this concept too and we will explain why.

The perception of culture have evolved from culture, understood as static, obtained and as a product of beauty (Greverus 1978 cit. According Göbel 2007), to the understanding of culture as an organization and way of life of society, to the perception of culture as a historical structure of meanings rooted in symbols, as a system of traditional concepts that are reflected in the attitudes and knowledge of life, and which forms the basis of communication of its members (Geertz 1973, cit. dle Göbel 2007). Culture is no longer seen as something static, as a phenomenon that shapes the individual and is emphasized the interaction of an individual and society with a culture.

What is culture? Explaining the concept of culture is very difficult, because there are dozens of definitions from various fields and disciplines. Culture is the most often defined as a system, which affects the values, perceptions, behavior and way of thinking which is shared of a certain group of people. The classical Herskovits definition (1948, p. 17) defines culture as part of the environment that is created or shaped by human beings. Each man carries certain patterns of thinking, feeling and potential for negotiations which has learned during his life. Hofstede & Hofstede (2006) these patterns compare to "software mind". The sources of one's mental program lie within the social environment in which one grew up and collected one's life experience. The programming starts within the family, it continues within the neighborhood, at school in youth groups, at the workplace and in the living community. A customary term for such mental software is culture. This word has several meanings, all derived from its latin source, which refers to the tilling of the soil. In most Western languages culture commonly means "civilization" or "refinement of the mind" and in particular the results of such refinement, such education, art, and literature. This is culture in the narrow sense.

<sup>†</sup> Socio-cultural group is such a group of people that can be defined on the basis of race, color, nationality, socioeconomic status, gender, language, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap or subcultural affiliation (Buryánek, 2002).

<sup>‡</sup>This definition we know from the concept of intercultural learning in the Czech Republic (Buryánek, 2002).

Culture as mental software, however, corresponds to a much broader use of the word. Culture is a catchword for all those patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. Not only activities supposed to refine the mind are included, but also the ordinary and menial things in life: greeting, eating, keeping a certain physical distance from others, etc. Culture is always collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2006).

In the course of our lives, each of us has to find his or her place in many moral circles. Every group or category of people carries a set of common mental programs that constitutes its culture. As almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories at the same time, we unavoidably carry several layers of metal programming within ourselves, corresponding to different levels of culture. In particular:

- A national level according to one's country (or countries, for people who migrated during their lifetime)
- A regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation level
- A gender level, according to whether one was born as a girl or as a boy
- A generation level, separating grandparents from parents from children
- A social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession
- For those who are employed, organizational, departmental, and/or corporate levels according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2006).



Fig. 1 Levels of culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2006)

Therefore, it is necessary to point out that the interaction of cultures is not only a clash of cultures (including group identity) and civilizations, but as well as individual personalities. And nowadays it is impossible to see the man only as a product of one culture. We can talk about the fact that man has several layers of cultural identity and adds the additional layer of identity (new layer does not remove the previous layer) (Hofstede & Hofstede 2006, Mistrík, 1999). We also start from this concept - culture of social organizations and various socio-cultural groups of people sharing with each communication system, values, behavior patterns, social roles, etc. This is a socio-cultural diversity. Diversity is a key category of social pedagogy, because the fundamental objective for social educator is to

learn to deal consciously and optimally with the diversity of cultures and with the variety of characteristics of individual personalities too. Primarily, we analyse diversity and its consequences.

According to Kasíková & Vališová (2007) the diversity between individuals may lead:

- To the beneficial effects (rising power and productivity, creative problem solving, development in cognitive and moral reasoning, shaping the vision of problems from several perspectives, improved social relations, and general cultivation in the interactions and work with peers from different ethnic backgrounds and cultural environment).
- Leads to harmful consequences (lower performance and productivity, rejection of new information, increasing egocentrism, negative relationships characterized by hostility, rejection, separation, bullying, stereotyping and prejudice).

Socio-cultural diversity of the Czech population will continue to increase and it will be very important to maximize the benefits of diversity and minimize the risk of diversity and pluralism. According to Kasíková & Vališová (2007) it means to:

- Admit the existence of diversity and recognize it as a valuable source of progress
- Seek relationships with different individuals in a cooperative context, not in a competitive and individualistic
- Shape personal identity, which includes:
  - personal historical-cultural heritage and view of himself as an individual who respects and appreciates differences among individuals
  - respects and appreciates the historical and cultural heritage of others
  - Putting the identity that unites all relevant groups
- Understand the internal cognitive barriers (such as stereotyping and prejudices) for forming positive relationships with different individuals and working on reducing these personal barriers
- Understand the dynamics of conflict within the group and create the conditions for constructive inter-group interaction
- Understanding the processes of social assessment and know how to shape the process of acceptance and avoid the processes of rejection
- Understand how to deal with conflicts constructively and skillfully use the procedures associated with it.

Therefore it is very important to deal with the phenomenon of socio-cultural diversity in the context of social pedagogy. We presented a theoretical definition of social pedagogy and social and cultural diversity because the basic definition of these terms is necessary for the relevant research. These concepts have become a conceptual framework, which form the basic pillar of research. Our task was not exactly describe what tradition or definition of a social pedagogy in various countries in Europe, or broadly characterize sociocultural theory. The intention was to demonstrate the theoretical background and basic definitions and point to the absence of the definition of social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity.

## **2. Design of the research**

The research focuses on the definition of social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity. Presentation of precise definition of social pedagogy in the socio-cultural diversity is our main objective. From the objective of the research were derived following research questions:

1. How is social pedagogy defined in the Czech Republic?
2. How experts in the field of social pedagogy define the socio-cultural diversity in the Czech environment?
3. What is the role of social pedagogy in the context of socio-cultural diversity in the Czech environment?

To answer the research questions, we used the Delphi method, which is defined as: „method to achieve the consensus of a group of experts in order to obtain a comprehensive view on a matter. Participants will be sent a

letter asking for a solution to the problem. Then the first version of the common solution is processed (with variants), and in subsequent rounds is interactively precising until we will reach generally acceptable solution" (Hendl, 2012, p. 389). From this definition is obvious the procedure of using the Delphi method, which we used for data collection.

#### **Process of the research:**

- In the first stage of the research we contacted the panel of experts from the Czech Republic who are long-term (over 5 years) engaged in social pedagogy. These respondents expressed written consent to their participation in the research study and were informed about the research subject and course.
- In the second stage of the research, we posted the first question to the panel of experts. Question focused on the definition of social pedagogy from the point of view of panel of experts ("Please define social pedagogy in the context of the Czech environment").
- In the third stage, the respondents' answers were analyzed and the common definition of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic was created. On the basis of the degree of agreement or disagreement of experts with a definition, was modified. Subsequently, to the experts could be sent the second question: "Please define the socio-cultural diversity in the Czech Republic". Again the same procedure was carried out as in the second stage.
- In the fourth stage, the respondent answered the question based on previous answers. We asked the panel of experts: "What is the definition of social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity?".

The **research sample** consisted of 15 experts from the academic staff who deal with social pedagogy. Academic degree in research did not play a role. A total of 40 respondents were asked to participate on the research. Willingness to participate in the research was therefore 38%.

### **3. The output of the research**

#### *3.1. The outputs of the research in the second stage*

As was already mentioned above, in the first stage of the research were respondents asked to define the social pedagogy in the Czech Republic. After analyzing the individual responses, was created a comprehensive definition of social pedagogy in Czech Republic.

Social pedagogy is an applied discipline, which deals with the help and support of socially disadvantaged groups, and it happens at social and pedagogical level. It is the upbringing and education of individuals through which they acquire key competencies for solving the existential problems, which they encounter in everyday life. At the same time, social pedagogy strengthens the ability of individual socialization, enculturation and individuation.

This definition has been the cornerstone for the next stage of the research. The definition became the starting concept of social pedagogy for realized research and that we have achieved uniformity of opinion on the role of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic.

#### *3.2. The outputs of the research in the third stage*

In the second stage of the research respondents have been asked to define the concept of socio-cultural diversity. The procedure in this stage was identical to the first step of the research. Some of the statements that have contributed to the common definition of the term are listed below.

Examples of statements of panel of experts:

- "*I understand the socio-cultural diversity as difference or divergence (no reviews whether positive or negative) on the basis of the social and cultural environment - an environment in which the individual grew up and was formalized.*" (Expert 1)

- “Socio-cultural diversity includes social and cultural diversity in human society, which is characterized by individual and psychological diversification. This diversification is given by gender and age, and ethnic, national or linguistic affiliation, influenced by culture, faith (religion), and taking into account the historical traditions.” (Expert 2)
- “Socio-cultural diversity is social (vertical and horizontal) and cultural diversity of society. Social diversity means both the existence of social classes differ in their socio-economic status, and then also the presence of various social groups in the society. Cultural diversity is a cultural heterogeneity of society. Socio-cultural diversity is an attribute of the society reflected in its social and cultural stratification. Socio-cultural diversity is in each country unique. In each country is socio-cultural diversity different and this difference is given by structure and content (eg. Cultural structure).” (Expert 3).

We established a common definition, which was based on answers of panel of experts.

Socio-cultural diversity in the Czech Republic contains unique conditions and the environment of the country, which includes cultural and social diversity, the existence of diverse social conditions in society that are contingent on cultural artifacts, ideas and socio-cultural regulations, along with social and cultural stratification.

From the definition, we can deduce that the concept of socio-cultural diversity represents different areas. Based on this identification we will uncover the areas in which may act social pedagog. This includes knowledge, skills and competences, which should have a social pedagog. What are these knowledge, skills and competencies? This question will not be resolved. It stimulates a continuation of the research, which will not be completed. Currently we will focus on the latest research question, the definition of social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity.

### 3.3. The outputs of the research in the fourth stage

In the last stage of the research, the panel of experts was asked to present the definition of social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity. In this section, the respondents worked with both definitions - a definition of social pedagogy and socio-cultural diversity. The panel of experts combined these two concepts, and they were looking for possible consensus for the setting of the framework this issue. It was not a simple task, a respondent had one month to define of this concept. On the basis of the responses of the panel of experts was conceived the following definition:

**Social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity is applied science, which works with the individual and his environment and his socio-cultural conditions. Operation and effect of social pedagogy in these conditions must respect the unique characteristics of the individual. It also helps remove (eliminate) the negative social phenomena that affect the individual, together with the inappropriately acquired cultural regulations that form patterns, rules and norms of the culture. This all takes the place with the help of education and individual methods of socio-pedagogical work (interview, pedagogization of an environment, group work, situational method, mediation, etc.). Social pedagogy focuses on the all age groups that require an assistance and support in this society.**

## 4. Conclusion

The definition presented above is the outcome of our research. We are still finding the questions that need to be answered. These questions can be used for further research investigations. The following research may process this issue to a comprehensive form:

- How can be social pedagogy defined in terms of socio-cultural diversity in the narrower sense?
- What competencies, knowledge and skills should have a social educator, to be able to respond flexibly to changing social and cultural conditions of the society?

- What exactly constitutes cultural regulations in the Czech Republic?
- Which socio-cultural problems exist in the Czech Republic?
- How these socio-cultural problems are changing with the changing society?

There are many other issues that come to the surface of this issue. The essence of this theme is that we must not forget the ever-changing society. With the changing society is changing our research topic. It becomes more variable, but hard to be anchored. The paper discusses the definition of social pedagogy in terms of socio-cultural diversity. It offers not only look at what is social pedagogy, but also takes into account other key concept, it is socio-cultural diversity.

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