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**CHOSEN METHODS OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY IN THE CZECH  
REPUBLIC**

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*Abstract*

The contribution focuses on methods in social pedagogy. The introduction presents conceptions of social pedagogy discipline in chosen European countries. It is followed by a description of the development and current state of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic. The list of individual social pedagogy conceptions suggests that there is no unified conception of the discipline. Also, the methods cannot be generally stated and they must be related to a particular environment and social pedagogy paradigm. Social pedagogy is regarded as a theoretical practical discipline of a transdisciplinary nature. The following discussion clarifies the problems with educational methods and their classification. The principal part of this article describes social pedagogy methods (organizing environment, experiential education, museum education, group work, using life situations and staging method, regime method, animation). Based on qualitative analyses of documents, the specifics of social pedagogy methods are identified. The results are presented in the form of categories and codes and discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

In the Czech Republic, social pedagogy as a field has been intensively developing since the nineties. The specificity of the field is mostly due to its subject-matter and methods. In the pedagogical sciences we can distinguish several kinds of methods according to their purpose. The contribution concentrates on the upbringing methods used in social pedagogy.



## **1.1. The conception of social pedagogy in chosen European countries**

The methods in social pedagogy stem from the conception of the whole discipline. The conception is different in each country and follows the historical development of each particular society.

### **1.1.1. Social pedagogy in Germany**

The theoretical basis of social pedagogy can be found in Germany. The term “social pedagogy” appeared in German professional literature already in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sobková et al., 2015). The foundation of social pedagogy as a scientific discipline is attributed to the educationalist and philosopher Paul Natorp (1854 – 1924). Natorp builds the conception of social pedagogy on moral philosophy (Procházka, 2012). Social events, especially impacts of World War II, brought a new dimension into the forming of social pedagogy – the need to create a system of a social care. The connection with social work is typical for the development of social pedagogy in Germany.

### **1.1.2. Social pedagogy in Poland**

Social pedagogy has a long tradition in Poland. The founder of social pedagogy in Poland is Helena Radlinská (1879-1954). Her most valued contribution to further development of social pedagogy was the creation of the conception of dialectic link between an individual and the environment (Kraus, 2014). Other topics of Polish social pedagogy include prophylaxis and compensation and also the issue of children’s and teenagers’ leisure time (Sobková et al., 2015). The current conception of social pedagogy in Poland is very wide. It comprises the above mentioned topics and moreover occupies itself with cultural education, resocialization and social care. The connection with social work is again clearly visible here.

### **1.1.3. Social pedagogy in the Great Britain**

At the time when social pedagogy started to develop in Germany and other European countries, the field of social work was being established in Great Britain (Sobková et al., 2015). Social pedagogy has no tradition in Anglo-Saxon countries. The process of upbringing is a part of social work in Great Britain. The feasibility of the introduction of social pedagogy in the setting of Great Britain is currently under discussion. The potential of social pedagogy is seen mainly in the fact that it could complete and extend the current concept of social work – the enrichment would reside mainly in personal, social and moral development of an individual.

This holistic conception is represented for example by the company ThemPra. The aim is to create conditions which would enable anyone to grow and become more independent and integrated into the society. There are also things which connect all social educators, namely the way how they think, philosophy and a harmony of values and actions which are connected to different methods. What characterizes social pedagogy in practice depends not so much on what is done but on how it is done and with what rationale (ThemPra, 2017).

#### **1.1.4. Social pedagogy in the Nordic countries**

Generally, it could be said that in the Nordic countries as well the interest in the social pedagogy is rising.

In Sweden, social pedagogy is not a separate discipline but it is winning its way successfully in the society. Its province comprises all age brackets and excluded groups, but the interest is rising also in the sphere of education. It is a part of social work and in this context some social pedagogical methods are used – e.g. community work, intervention.

In Denmark, social pedagogy is always realized on the basis of a unique individual relationship with a particular client. Social pedagogical approach may be understood as a process of development of a human being – this is a reason why it can be directed to all age brackets and also disabled people.

According to the Norwegian approach, social pedagogy is very close to social work but it concentrates a little bit more on the process of human formation and upbringing. This is the reason why the main target group is represented by children and teenagers. The experts do not focus on the question of what social pedagogy is, they try to find answers to questions of what it can do and where it could be applied. Methods are connected to a particular situation and it is in the competence of educators to decide which method should be used in a given situation.

In Finland, social pedagogy is a relatively young discipline, it has been developing since the 1990s. It has two branches. For one thing, it focuses on problems of social exclusion (including prevention) and on the other, it contributes to upbringing with an emphasis on active citizenship. In Finland as well, the main aim is not to offer a complete list of methods, but to focus on their use, ethical content and values (Sobková et al., 2015).

#### **1.1.5. Social pedagogy in Spain**

Social pedagogy in Spain is defined so that it encourages personal growth, social maturity and autonomy of young people, disabled people or unadaptable people through pedagogical, psychological and social accomplishments and methods.

There are currently four target areas of social pedagogy: education of adults, non-formal educating, people with specific needs of integration and maladjusted people (López, 2017). As can be seen, the Spanish conception of social pedagogy differs the most from all above described conceptions.

The previous discussion introduced some conceptions of social pedagogy in chosen European countries. It is apparent that the social pedagogy paradigm is always specific and it takes into account the social needs of the particular country. Social pedagogy was usually created as a reaction to the individualistic and psychological conception of upbringing, or to a social situation with problems of social character.

### **1.2. Social pedagogy in the Czech Republic**

The development of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic can be divided into two periods – before the year 1990 and after it. This imaginary landmark is due to the social coup in the then

Czechoslovakia. The change of the regime from socialism to democracy influenced also the sphere of education and new subject fields appeared, among others, social pedagogy.

### **1.2.1. The beginnings of social pedagogical thinking development in the Czech Republic**

J. A. Komenský (1592 – 1670) was the most significant expert in the history of Czech pedagogy. The contribution of Komenský to the development of social pedagogy is noticeable in following areas: the impact of upbringing on the society, the democratic nature of upbringing and education, social role of the school environment and the concept of the correction of the world through the upbringing process. (Procházka, 2012).

Another significant educationalist and philosopher was G. A. Lindner (1828 – 1887). His conception of the upbringing process stresses the influences of natural and social environment. According to him, the aim of the upbringing process is to create competencies for the life of a citizen, the upbringing of the character.

The idea of a social dimension in the upbringing process was supported rather by sociologists than by educationalists in the following decades. A promising development of social sciences was stopped by World War II. After the end of the war, social studies did not significantly develop due to ideological reasons.

The rising interest in social pedagogy was recognized in the late sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1967, K. Galla wrote a book named *Úvod do sociologie výchovy* (“An introduction to the sociology of education”) where he discusses the specifics of social pedagogy which distinguish social pedagogy from traditional pedagogy (Galla, 1967).

Despite the effort of both Czech and Slovak educationalists, a separate discipline of social pedagogy was not established until the 1990s. While in the majority of European countries, social pedagogy developed intensively during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it stagnated in Czechoslovakia. A change arrived after the year 1990.

### **1.2.2. Social pedagogy in the Czech Republic after the year 1990**

The emergence of a democratic society created a demand for social science disciplines which started to develop dynamically in the 1990s in the then Czechoslovakia. The term “social pedagogy” became frequent and appeared in many meanings.

During the nineties, the first publications appeared the authors of which tried to delimit social pedagogy as a scientific discipline. Kraus (2001, 2013, 2014) recapitulates early social pedagogy conceptions of different authors, which were narrowed down to mere partial areas of social pedagogy (e.g. organization of an environment, healthy lifestyle, social aspects of upbringing, social ethics a prosocial behaviour development, institutional care, help for teenagers in risk groups, etc.).

A wider conception of the discipline is brought mainly by the publication *Člověk, prostředí, výchova* (2001) (“Human being, environment, education”) in which social pedagogy is presented as a transdisciplinary science discipline. It focuses on the role of the environment in the upbringing process –

not only in connection with problems of risk, endangered and disadvantaged groups, but also in connection with having a healthy lifestyle, prevention.

Knotová (2004) adds that social pedagogy has two key functions – preventive (prophylactic) and therapeutic (compensative).

Another author who prefers the wider conception of social pedagogy is Ondrejkovič (2004). According to him, the aim of social pedagogy is to reflect on the state and tendencies in contemporary society and make pedagogy respond to them. This suggests that social pedagogy is more open in comparison with other disciplines and also that its content changes and develops.

From this wide conception of the social pedagogy which is preferred by social educationalist in the Czech Republic right now results the employment of the subject field graduates. They usually find jobs in educational institutions, e.g. in school clubs, children's homes, leisure time institutions or in the field of risk phenomenon prevention.

Social pedagogy graduates find their jobs also in the sphere of social work, particularly in institutions that are designated for children and teenagers, e.g. in low-threshold treatment clubs for children and teenagers, community centres etc.

A problem with Czech social pedagogy which was not solved yet is that the profession is not enshrined in law. According to the current legislation, the profession of the social educator still does not exist. The educators of social educationalists have tried for many years in vain to have the name of the profession listed in the Act on Pedagogical Staff. (Zákon č. 563/2004 Sb. o pedagogických pracovnících, 2016)

The relationship between social pedagogy and social work is also problematic. When social work was outlined as a new discipline in the 1990s, Czech sociologists took as the point of departure the Anglo-Saxon conception which did not cover the existence of social pedagogy. The development of both disciplines diverged in the Czech Republic as opposed to the situation in Germany, Poland, Nordic and other countries where both disciplines developed in parallel and cooperated. |

## 2. Problem Statement

|As the introduction showed, there is nothing like a united conception of social pedagogy in Europe. The situation of the discipline in the Czech Republic is very complicated because attempts to cooperate with related disciplines on the theoretical level fail. Social pedagogy has to be clearly defined if it is to justify its right to exist as a separate discipline. This is what Galla (1967) tried to do and contemporary authors update and develop his thoughts, e.g. Kraus (2014):

- the objects of the upbringing process in social pedagogy are whole groups (professional, communities, minorities, groups of people of the same age)
- the targets of the upbringing process concentrate on altruism, philanthropy, cooperation, reciprocal aid, help for individuals and groups in risk categories, aiming at democracy and humanism
- methods and means prefer indirect procedures which exert influence through environment, relationship, regime etc.

It is necessary to view the methods of social educational influence in the context of the targets and principles of the upbringing process. Contemporary society is characterized by dynamic development. There is a significant change in both natural and social environment. The upbringing process has to react to this fact and prepare individuals for the life in the society. A significant reform in the sphere of the Czech school system has been under way for the last fifteen years. The reform brought the requirement that both upbringing and education should lead to the creation of competencies. The key competencies in the Czech school system were discussed by e.g. Chmura and Malach (2016). These authors define competency as a complex of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values important for personal development and the individual's ability to contribute to the life of the society.

Key competencies should be developed to the highest possible extent during the compulsory education. This is a reason why a new field appeared in the curricula of Czech schools.

From the social pedagogical point of view, the following topics are important: personal and social education, the education of a democratic citizen, the education to think in European and global context, multicultural education, environmental education and media education (Stašová, Slaninová, Junová, 2015). The question suggests itself whether it would not be more suitable to deal with those topics within informal education, in the children's leisure time, using social pedagogy and indirect upbringing and education methods and forms with no directive approach.

### **3. Research Questions**

The issue of social educational methods can be investigated from both theoretical and practical perspective. Considering the fact that the employment of social educators is very diverse (schools, leisure time institutions, children's homes, young offenders' institutions, social work institutions) it would be very complicated to make a comparison of the methods used in practice. For this reason, the contribution focuses on a theoretical analysis of social educational methods used in social pedagogy.

The most important questions to be answered are the following:

- Which social-educational methods are used in social pedagogy?
- What are the specifics of those methods?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the contribution is to describe and analyse methods of social educational impact that social pedagogy uses in the Czech Republic. The emphasis is put on the definition of the specifics of the methods, conditions and limits of their use.

Considering the width of the conception of social pedagogy, the investigated subject are chosen methods of social educational impact. The methods were chosen based on being more typical for social pedagogy than for other disciplines.

#### **4.1. Pedagogical methods and their classification**

In previous chapters, it was explained what social pedagogy is about. The targets of the discipline follow from the above mentioned paradigms. To reach the targets some methods have to be used.

Methods used in pedagogy could be divided according to many criteria. Kraus and Vacek (1992) mention some criteria for the classification of pedagogical methods.

One of the criteria is the universality of use. On the one hand, there exist methods that can be used in all phases of the educational process and also in a research. Such a method is e.g. an interview. On the other hand, some methods exist that can be used only under particular conditions.

Based on the function that the method fulfils in pedagogical theory or practice, there can be three basic circles of methods: diagnostic, upbringing-educational and research methods. The contribution focuses on analyses of upbringing-educational methods.

Based on the source of cognition, the following methods can be distinguished: methods of immediate cognition (sensory perception of the world, illustrative methods) or mediated methods (verbal methods, narration, explaining, explanation, description, etc.).

Sobková et al. (2015) and Kraus (2014) point out one more important categorisation of educational methods – methods of direct educational effect, i.e. intentional methods (e.g. explaining, persuading, exercising) and methods of indirect educational effect, i.e. functional methods (e.g. example, role play, group work) which are based on sensitive approach of the educator, who creates conditions for influencing the situation, not the pupil.

#### **4.2. Methods used in social pedagogy**

The transdisciplinary character of social pedagogy suggests that the employed methods will partly overlap with the methods used in related disciplines. Kraus (2014) writes that social pedagogy could not exist without classical educational methods (e.g. explaining, persuading, exposition, example, rewards, punishments, etc.) but it has also its specific methods.

The key method in social pedagogy is **interview**. According to methods typology, interview is an universal method, but simultaneously it can serve various functions and purposes (diagnostic, consulting, education, therapeutic). It is intentionally presented as the first method because it is a basis of some other methods.

A frequently used method of social pedagogy is the **method of organizing (pedagogization) the environment**. The question how much the environment influences the life and development of an individual has been the subject matter of many discussions and researches for centuries. The effects of the environment manifest themselves differently and individually. For this reason, it cannot be unambiguously said to what extent the environment influences a particular person.

Kraus (2014) distinguishes two basic functions of the environment in the upbringing process: situational and educational.

The **situational function** of the environment means that the upbringing process always takes place in a particular environment (at school, in the club, in the family, on the playground, etc.). This creates some outside conditions, something like a stage set. This applies to material, spatial but also personal (relationship) aspects of the situation.

The **educational function** consists in the fact that the environment strongly influences the actions of both children and adults. Different behaviour can be observed in a classroom, on a trip, in a group of people of the same age, in a stadium, in a theatre.

To organize the environment means to use the environment as a means of upbringing. By making changes in an environment we affect a person and influence her or his actions.

In connection with environmental organization, two branches of education representative of this domain can be mentioned: experiential education and museum education.

**Experiential education** is usually connected with another discipline - Pedagogy of leisure time, but the process of personality formation through experience is usually connected with the organization of environment. Experiential education uses many various games and game-like activities, an important part of which is feedback. Through feedback the educated child becomes aware of the new experience which is transmittable to future situations (Činčera et al., ed., 2009).

**Museum education** has a tradition in many European countries, but above all in the USA where first museums for children were established at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first museum for children in the Czech Republic was opened in 1992. A museum for children is not only a cultural institution; it is a link between a museum, a school and leisure time.

Jůva (2004) assumes, that a key element is the relationship of the museum with social pedagogy. He characterizes museums for children comparing them to the traditional ones as follows: creative, experience orientated, interactive and flexible. There is a friendly open atmosphere. Typical of those museums is the effort to achieve active participation on the part of the visitors, e.g. by having workshops offering experiments in the museum.

This is the potential of social pedagogy which could be used in cultural educational institutions such as museums and galleries, alongside school institutions.

**Group work** is a method that is used in school environment, leisure time institutions or in a therapeutic way in etopedy institutions. An important means of education is group opinion. The chance to use a formative influence of the group in a positive educational direction is necessary to know the structure and dynamics of the group (e.g. by using sociometric methods).

**Methods using life situations and staging method** allow the educator to influence the course of action in the desirable direction. In the case of using life situations, the basis is a coincidence of external circumstances which occurred in the person's life. The staging method uses model situations that were created artificially. In any case, it is necessary to analyse the situation in relation to educational targets and needs of the individual. Model situations are used e.g. in prevention of risk behaviour or for the development of ethical education (Kraus, 2014; Vacek, 2008)

The **regime method** consists in time management of particular activities. The regime is usually connected to a complex of standards created by the institution (school, family, young offender's institution). The regime brings order into the children's life (Vacek, 2008).

**Animation** is a non-directive method. Interpretations of the meaning and conceptions of the method differs, but usually it is paraphrased as "enlivening" or "filling with life" (Kaplánek, 2013). Smith (2009) mentions three models of animation: creative-expressive animation; socio-cultural animation; and leisure-time animation.

Animation places emphasis on the release of creative potential of an individual or a group and on participation. An educator – animateur encourages the participants to find their own way of doing things



and creates conditions for their initiative. The voluntariness, the possibility to choose and limits of the participants are respected (Kraus, 2014).

Some methods used in social pedagogy were introduced. It is not a complete list, other existing methods could also be used as an object of research e.g. mediation, community work, streetwork etc. In the Czech Republic, these methods are used in other disciplines – e.g. social work, which is the reason why they were not included in the present contribution. |

## 5. Research Methods

|The contribution is based on qualitative-interpretative analysis of documents together with the application of elements of Grounded Theory. The qualitative data are analysed and codes and categories are created on the basis of the analysis. (Hendl, 2008)|

## 6. Findings

|The topics which are the subject of our research gradually emerged during the analysis. Based on the analysis of documents – texts dedicated to social pedagogy methods, the following **categories** were created (C1 – C5):

### **C1: Social pedagogy methods are delimited by the context of the complex social pedagogy conception**

#### **Codes:**

- The conception of social pedagogy (including methods) as a reflection of the historical development of a particular society
- the methods well worked-out in countries with a continuous social pedagogy tradition
- the interpretation of the word “social” (in Czech) is problematic (the word refers either to social help for people who got into a complicated life situation or simply anything related to society)
- social pedagogy is seen as a theoretical practical discipline of a transdisciplinary nature

**Discussion to C1:** If we search for an answer to the question which methods are used in social pedagogy, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of methods. In each country where social pedagogy is “alive” as a discipline, its possibilities and limits are given by the conception of social pedagogy in the particular country. The same rule could be applied also to the methods. In European countries, where social pedagogy is historically connected with social work, there are some methods which are e.g. in the Czech Republic usually used in the sphere of social work.

### **C2: Is the wide conception of social pedagogy an advantage or a disadvantage?**

#### **Codes:**

- the wide conception allows to react to actual social changes

- the wide conception offers an opportunity to draw on knowledge from other disciplines
- orientation on different age categories
- a wide conception allows to apply social pedagogy in different environments
- the risk of the wider conception consists in unclear definition of the subject and methods and an overlap with other disciplines
- the wide conception of social pedagogy allows a wide employment of discipline graduates

**Discussion to C2:** Countries in which social pedagogy has a long tradition (e.g. Germany, Poland) prefer the wide conception of the discipline. In those countries, social pedagogy in practice relies on many different methods which are chosen flexibly by social educators according to the particular situation of an individual or a group. The stress is mainly on the use of the methods, ethical content and values.

On the one hand, a wide conception offers more methods to be used, on the other hand, it puts bigger demands on social educators, who have to evaluate the particular situation in the right way and to choose such methods that will help to reach the educational targets.

The situation of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic is affected by the fact that while on the theoretical level the wide conception is preferred, the practice is influenced by rival disciplines (social work, special education, psychotherapy, etc.).

### **C3: Methods used in social pedagogy in the context of the typology of methods**

#### **Codes:**

- social pedagogy uses not only traditional education methods (interview, explaining, example) but also specific methods (organisation of environment, staging method, animation, etc.)
- social pedagogy prefers the methods of immediate cognition
- social pedagogy methods count on more participants being present, some are even based on the impact of the group (group work, organization of social environment, animation) but methods of working with individuals are also used (e.g. interview)
- the main aspect of social pedagogy methods is that it aims at an indirect (functional) impact; as opposed to education at school where the methods of direct impact prevail

**Discussion to C3:** Social educators in practice use a range of methods which they “borrow” from other disciplines (pedagogy, educational psychology, social work, etc.). On the other hand, some methods exist that are typical for social pedagogy. The most significant feature of social pedagogy methods is that unlike traditional pedagogy it strives for an indirect impact – this is the reason why the methods of functional impact are used (environment organisation, animation, transformation of life situation to educational ones etc.).

### **C4: Methods used in social pedagogy in the context of educational principles and rules**

#### **Codes:**

- the activity principle consists in activation of an individual or a group (typical of the animation method), it is necessary to stimulate through a suitable motivation
- the illustrative principle relies on sensory perception, personal experience (typical of experiential education methods, museum education, organisation of the environment etc.)
- the adequacy principle requires that the content, methods and forms of education should be in harmony with the specific needs of an individual (it determines the choice of particular methods in the concrete situation)
- the emotional principle means to arouse adequate emotional experiences, to keep an amiable climate
- the rule of connecting the upbringing process with real life is the basis and the target of the whole pedagogy

**Discussion to C4:** Social pedagogy methods could be viewed through principles and rules that are defined by general pedagogy (Grecmanová, 1999). Some are better fulfilled by upbringing and educating at schools, but, contrarily, others are better realized in social pedagogy. The codes capture the educational principles which are fulfilled by social pedagogy. Considering the practical orientation of social pedagogy, its biggest potential is in the connection of upbringing and real life.

#### **C5: The requirements for a realisation of social pedagogy methods and social educator's competencies**

##### **Codes:**

- creativity is required not only in the approach of the social educator but also on the side of the educated
- participation of the upbringing process participants is achieved e.g. during work in groups
- flexibility and ability to improvise
- thought-out motivation to activities is the principal part of the upbringing impact
- communicative skills, active listening are included in all other methods
- keeping ethical rules

**Discussion to C5:** From a certain perspective, the position of the social educator is more complicated than the position of the teacher at school. Considering the fact that social pedagogy is often realized in leisure time and on the principle of voluntariness, the motivation provided by the educator is of vital importance. The requirements on the educator are very high because in social pedagogy, the point is to produce a complex influence on individuals or groups. The educator has to react to the changing conditions and needs of individuals or society. The personality of the educator can harbour a potential for another method – personal example. Social pedagogy works with non-directive methods, democratic upbringing and places emphasis on the relationship between the participants of the upbringing process. Social pedagogy methods should develop altruism, prosocial behaviour, participation and prepare the individual for the life in the society.

## 7. Conclusion

The contribution tried to introduce and analyse methods used in social pedagogy. The first research question investigated which particular methods the discipline uses. The description of social pedagogy conceptions in different countries including the Czech Republic suggested that it is not possible to provide a definite and comprehensive list of methods. Besides the traditional educational methods, there are also some specific methods typical for social pedagogy; those include e.g. organization of the environment, work in groups, staging method, animation etc.

The other research question found out the specific features of those methods. Such typical feature is an indirect impact. Social pedagogy methods place demands on the educator's personality. It shows that apart from knowing the methods, it is also important for the educator to be able to evaluate each particular situation correctly, flexibly react to changes and to put creativity and ethics into the use of the methods.

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