

# **JÓZSEF HADNAGY**

## **GROUP-WORK IN THE EDUCATION OF SOCIAL EDUCATORS**

### **1. The topic of research**

Social education has developed three major working forms. In individual case management the educator helps the client in a face to face meeting, while group work and community work involve more participants in such a manner that the interaction of group members becomes meaningful.

Our experience is that group-work is applied only by a few people, and in its limited applications it is often not applied efficiently in the profession.

The supporting profession seems to require a more wide-spread application of pedagogical group-work, since with the spreading of this work form specialists may take advantage of potentials offered by this form of work and increase the effectiveness of their work, as well as the repertory of their professional roles. Given the scarcity and sporadic nature of technical literature on the subject, specialists who already employ pedagogical group-work may also find the expected results of this research useful in their work.

### **2. The assumptions of the research**

- Preparation for group-work assumes a different perspective and a non-conservative notion of quality in the education of social educators.
- Our understanding of group work is still immature, given that group-work in actual practice does not have anything like a long tradition in pedagogy.

### **3. The programme of research**

To work out the model that may resolve inadequacies indicated in the section on research assumptions. This inevitably involves the researcher's participation in training and development programs targeted at working out and trying out effective group-work strategies and methods as well as

participation in the professional practice of group-work, performed in the field.

#### **4. The methods of research**

##### *Questionnaire*

- questionnaire of condition with instructors and students,
- questionnaire of claim with those who work on a field

##### *Interview*

- individual and collective interviews with senior instructors
- individual and collective interviews with students

##### *Monitoring*

- monitoring of group-work preparation sessions and projects on educational settings

#### **5. Expected results of research**

- A genuinely effective model of group-work that is transferable to practice in the field may be employed by social educators.
- Expansion, enrichment and sophistication of the social educator's repertory of roles.

#### **6. Clarification of key ideas**

##### **a) Who is a social educator?**

The education of social educators and the need for a new system of skills and expert competence arose essentially out of an understanding of the radical changes that significantly altered the life and working of schools following the political transformation in this country. Unemployment, homelessness, the loss of and changes in jobs and work places took many families by surprise and unprepared. Therefore many families cannot cope with the trauma and the serious challenges all those changes present.

Undoubtedly, the social stress does not leave children unaffected, either. The consequences of children being brought up in stressful families are easily noticed in the schools. Conventional principles, approaches and methods employed in teacher education cannot prepare students to meet and cater for the needs of children requiring protection in schools, nor can a

conventional approach empower students to perform effective preventive work in order to decrease the negative effects of social changes or to offer professional help and encouragement to specially disadvantaged or endangered students to help them do better at school and complete school more successfully.

The social educator is a specialist whose pedagogical tool kit not only enables them to mitigate children's social, learning and socialization problems, but also to have some effect on the system, the context in which children exist and function, in conjunction with the participation of social institutions and services. Social educators need to be able to accomplish these goals through individual, collective and community work forms.

#### **b) What do we mean by group-work?**

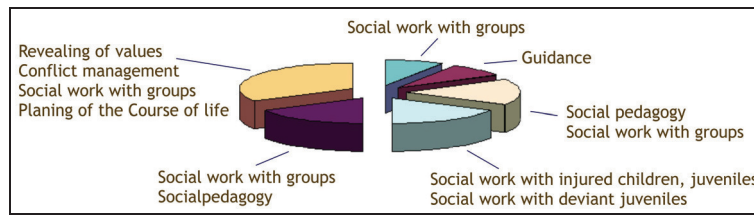
In the case the social educator specialist, group is not merely one of the several possible organizational forms of teaching, but it is a specific, problem oriented and professionally controlled educational setting and approach. The specialist as a group leader helps the group achieve their aims, handle their problems with the suitable set of attitudes through a programme activity, which presupposes the knowing and understanding of elements of group-dynamics.

Groups offer unique contexts and opportunities for socialization, which derives from the collectivity of its members, and, from the perspective members' socio-emotional needs, group experience is naturally highly satisfying. This is why I think that group-work as a form of professional competence has great potentials, and, therefore, deserves more attention in the education of social educators.

#### **7. Presentation of the results of search so far**

This section presents the partial results of a questionnaire that was taken with instructors working in higher education institutions that offer a program in social education. The results of the questionnaire appear to make possible some initial conclusions with respect to the hypothesis.

**Figure 1:** Curriculum subjects relevant for group work in the places of education involved in the research



**Figure 2:** On the basis of available data, the instructors in the six institutions that were involved in the research expressed the following preferences

referring to the content of group-work:	referring to the functioning of group-work:
1. Free-time activities	1. Problem centric
2. Socialization-resocialization	2. Group dynamic
3. Improvement of personality	3. Guided conversation
4. Development pedagogy	4. Open conversation

The analysis of the data suggests that the institutions are homogeneous concerning the particular questions. It is interesting to note that free time activity is placed first on content ranking of group-work, which does not appear to harmonise with „problem centric” ranked highest on the functioning of group-work side.

**Figure 3:** The table below presents informants' opinions on the optimal dignity of methods that are considered the best in the attainment of group-work:

1. Structured games and the controlled discussion of the experiences acquired from them
2. Open interactional conversations
3. Groups that work with personal experiences and their methodology
4. Else (lecture, demonstration, explanation, elaboration of special literature, cognitive technics)
5. Attainment of handworker technics
6. Attainment of creative technics (drawing, painting, music)

*The dignity of the methods according to the informants as it really works in educational practice:*

1. Else (lecture, demonstration, explanation, elaboration of special literature, cognitive technics)
2. Open interactional conversations
3. Structured games and the controlled discussion of the experiences acquired from them
4. Groups that work with personal experiences and their methodology
5. Attainment of creative technics(drawing,painting,music)
6. Attainment of handworker technics

**Figure 4:** *The methodical solutions preferred by the instructors who teach the subjects that support the attainment of group work:*

