

Professional preparation of students of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

This paper addresses the professional preparation of future teachers of social pedagogy (social educators) in the context of current tasks which the social pedagogy in the Czech Republic still has. Based on the results of the research which aims to present the professional characteristics of students of social pedagogy, we propose an innovation of the current curricula in social pedagogy study program and thus strengthen the independence of the profession which has undergone a specific development in our country. BIP questionnaire was used to obtain data. The main aim of the research was to analyze the professional orientation of social pedagogy students with the use of the standardized BIP questionnaire. The research has involved 154 social pedagogy students in a chosen Faculty of Humanities in the Czech Republic. Besides the research of the students' professional characteristics, an analysis of the study program Social Pedagogy has been done in order to create a constructive proposal of innovation of the study program subjects. So the authors call the attention to the fact that the study program must necessarily not only respond to the present demands of the tertiary sector (services marketing) but also be adapted to the professional identity of future social pedagogues and the development of students' competences.

Keywords: *social pedagogy, professional characteristics of students of social pedagogy, curricula, professional identity*

Introduction

Social Pedagogy in the Czech Republic is regarded as an academic discipline that has many limitations in real life. In this article we focus on this problem and we describe the position of Social Pedagogy within tertiary education as well as the chances of finding employment as a social pedagogue. Based on an analysis of the study program and professional characteristics of the students, we aim to propose innovating the set of subjects of the study program Social Pedagogy. Thus we expect the potentials of educating social pedagogues in a more efficient manner and improving the study program adaptation to the labor market in the Czech Republic.

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The primary task of this article is to define a social pedagogue, If we are to consider the professional characteristics of students of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic, we should not forget the problem of professional identity of a social educator - who is a social educator? What knowledge and skills (s)he should have and what are his/her employment options on the labor market?

While social pedagogy as a discipline and an academic field of study has found its place in the Czech Republic, as we have already said, it is quite different in practice. Within Czech legislation there is no precise definition of the job of a social pedagogue. Job opportunities for a social pedagogue have been set in these two acts: the Act On Pedagogical Staff and the Act On Social Services. These two acts, however, do not define a social pedagogue as an independent profession; they merely describe the job opportunities in the characteristics of one of possible educational backgrounds for other professions. The Act on Educational Staff no. 563/2004 states that the study program of social pedagogy is an appropriate education for tutors, teachers of leisure time activities and teaching assistants. The Act on Social Services no. 108/2006 states that social pedagogy is a sufficient qualification for the profession of a social worker. It therefore follows that a social educator is: a tutor, a teacher for leisure time activities or a social worker, which however does not reflect the reality and the profile of a social educator. Moreover, it does not satisfy the requirements of the labor market. The society today faces new and new problems and a social pedagogue can react to them . However, law regulations do not enable the practical use of this profession as an independent job. Anyway, in many parts of the Czech Republic this profession came into existence even without legislative support. These are for example: subregions ³ where a social pedagogue works in primary schools. Then his or her activities involve communication with problem pupils, their parents and the school, as this helps better integration of a socially excluded child into the society. This is just one example of a social pedagogue's potential. Now we will concentrate on the theoretical context of social pedagogy: its definition and the concept of the profession of a social pedagogue in the Czech Republic.

Theoretical background

³ Socially excluded localities with higher concentration of minorities.

The theoretical aspect of social pedagogy is rather complicated. It is due to the fact that the theory deals with phenomena which are quantitatively different and thus the relevant theory has to combine educational approaches with the theory and findings of sociology, developmental psychology, law, preventive healthcare methodology, etc. The situation is more complicated by the fact that since 1989, the theory of social pedagogy has not received sufficient attention because the official ideology did not support scientists focusing on marginal groups in the socialist society. (Průcha, 2000)

As regards finding employment in the labor market, not only in the Czech Republic but also in other countries (Slovakia, the UK, Germany), social work is a strong competitor for social pedagogy.

Some prominent experts on social pedagogy conclude that social pedagogy and social work are two overlapping fields because they both deal with educational aspects in relation to individuals who are in danger of risk behavior⁴; they both work with marginal groups of our population, etc. However if we analyze the curricula of social work including the minimal standard in the education in social work, we will find only few subjects related directly to pedagogy. This means that not all experts on social work understand the relationship between the social work and social pedagogy as being as interconnected as is the case for experts from pedagogical disciplines.

We face a similar problem when searching for a relationship between social pedagogy and etopedy - which is one of the disciplines of special pedagogy. This fact seem to be related to the complexity of the relationship between special pedagogy and pedagogy. Although they are closely related historically and substantively (not only by their name), we have recently been discovering tendencies of special pedagogy teachers interpreting special pedagogy as an independent, fully-fledged, dynamic discipline with a relatively short history and very rich practical experience (Slowík, 2007). However teachers still consider special pedagogy as one of the disciplines of pedagogy.

Based on the facts mentioned above, it may be concluded that the current problem of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic is still the ambivalent subject matter of research. Concerning research tendencies we can view the following research in social pedagogy:

- 1) Research focused on an analysis and description of the relation between social pedagogy and social work (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2016; Kraus, Hoferková, 2016; Knotová, 2014; Hämäläinen, 2003)

⁴ By term risk behavior we mean: alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, aggressiveness, etc.

- 2) Research focused on social pedagogy in relation to chosen target groups: minorities and multicultural competences (Hladík, 2014; Preissová Krejčí, Máčalová, 2014); children and young people (Georgiou, Stavrinides, Nikiforou, 2015; Šándorová, Faltová, 2015; Hrbáčková, Šafránková, 2015; Zemančíková, 2014).
- 3) Research focused on social pedagogy in chosen countries (Knotová, 2016; Sandermann, Neumann, 2014; Kallinikaki, 2015; Öbrink Hobzová, 2014)

We can see the research, which are focused on student (Akar, 2016), innovation and education (Tarman, 2016) or on the teacher (Kılınc, Kılınc, Kaya, Başer, Türküresin, Kesten, 2016). Very few surveys are focused on the academic study of social pedagogy in the Czech Republic. They mostly deal with specific themes that should be included into the academic preparation (Hladík, 2016; Hrbáčková, 2010). Therefore we decided to concentrate on this area and contribute not only to the research tendencies but also to the possibilities of innovating the study program. Professional preparation of future social pedagogues is deeply affected by the fact that research tendencies are not specified and that social pedagogy often overlaps with related disciplines (special education, ethopaedia, social work, philosophy, antropology, pedagogy). So next we will explain our definition of the social pedagogue profession.

The concept of social pedagogy as a profession in the Czech Republic

The term profession means a specific occupation which is based on a long theoretical preparation forming the basics of the professional activity. The social role which is connected with this profession forms a complex unit of some sort of a profession culture. Social educator cannot be defined clearly nor simply (as for example the profession of a teacher). Social educator works at numerous places and in various disciplines, compared to schools (s)he does not have a time constant or any standardized templates (e.g.: curriculum, educational program, etc.). The profession may be closely related to the profession of a teacher or a therapist, however it certainly does not replace it.

With the increasing volume of risk behavior in our society, the profession of a social educator is becoming a necessity. Universities therefore prepare students of the social pedagogy programs according to a continuous and long-term preparation and aim to

encourage the need for life-long learning. The profession of a social educator requires a wide range of interdisciplinary awareness and complex expertise and knowledge.

Authors differ in the concept of a social educator. According to P. Klíma, a social educator is an expert with theoretical, practical and conceptual knowledge who is able to intentionally affect groups or individuals. Such educator works mainly where the lifestyle shows signs of destructive forms in terms of meeting the needs, expressing one's own identity. (Kraus, 2008) However, this interpretation is not comprehensive because it lacks a fundamental preventive function which every social educator should hold in their profession.

Bakošová (2008) associates the activities of a social educator with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Interior, and with family. Hroncová (2000) associates the activities of a social educator with crime prevention; Selická (2004) places it in the context of Romany families; Jusko (2000) relates it to drug addictions; Míňová (2000) connects it with the CAN syndrome. Gregorová (2004) relates social educator with the undergraduate college preparation; Šereš (2004) places this profession into the area of personal relationships and motivation for workers; Határ (2004) sees it as help provided to aggressive children at schools; Emmerová (2005) understands the role of a social educator in terms of risk behavior prevention at elementary schools, in penitentiary care and in working with the Roma ethnic group. Storo (2013) associates this profession the most with social worker and teacher.

To sum up, the social pedagogue needs to be: flexible, but not indulgent; sensitive, but keeping a professional distance; authoritative, but not oppressive; and energetic and optimistic (Storo, 2013).

Based on these characteristics we conclude that a social educator has a wide range of employment possibilities requiring extensive qualifications which can be gained via high-quality professional preparation.

Methodology

The Research Problem and Research Questions

The main research problem is to *identify professional characteristics of social pedagogy students and analyze the study program Social Pedagogy in a chosen Faculty of Humanities in the Czech Republic.*

The research problem leads to this research question: *What are the professional characteristics of social pedagogy students?* We asked ourselves this research question in order to search for professional identity of a social educator. Since we cannot observe the work of a social educator in practice, we have to focus on those individuals who are currently undergoing professional preparation for social educators. We elaborate on the main research question in several research **subquestions:** What is the professional orientation of students of social pedagogy? What are their professional skills and qualifications? What is the work behavior of students of social pedagogy? What is the psychological profile of students of social pedagogy? What is the concept of the study program Social Pedagogy in the chosen Faculty of Humanities like?

The main objective of the research is to determine the professional characteristics of students and thus formulate recommendations for their future careers. The BIP (Bochum Inventory of Personal Work features) questionnaire was used of measure professional characteristics. We will further describe the questionnaire in the chapter The Research Instrument. The secondary aim of the research is to analyze the study program Social Pedagogy. The aim of this analysis is to show the present-day situation of the study program in a chosen Faculty of Humanities.

Research tools and operationalization of the variables

To find out the level of professional characteristics of the students we use the Bochum Personality Questionnaire (BIP). The BIP questionnaire was designed by Hossiep and Paschen and it was published in 2003 by Testcentrum Praha. The questionnaire diagnoses abilities which are crucial for success in a particular profession. We diagnose 14 personality dimensions which are assigned to 4 areas of professional requirements. These are as follows: occupational orientation (achievement motivation, power motivation, leadership motivation), social competencies (sensitivity, openness to contact, sociability, team orientation, assertiveness), occupational behavior (conscientiousness, flexibility, action orientation), psychological constitution (emotional stability, work under pressure, self-confidence). The questionnaire consists of 210 items that the respondent answers using the absolutely agree – absolutely disagree scale. BIP is standardized for the Czech Republic. For a precise definition of the individual variables observed with BIP we give the operationalization of the variables.

Dimensions	Conceptualization (the meaning of high values of scales)
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Motivation to perform	Readiness to cope with high standards; motivation to place high demands on one's own performance; high readiness to cope with strain and workload; motivation to continually improve one's own performance.
Motivation to form	Clearly defined motivation to alter subjective perception of improper state of affairs and the will to create processes and structures according to one's own ideas; clearly defined readiness to affect and monitor one's own understanding of the concept.
Motivation to lead	Clearly defined motivation of social impact; preference of tasks related to leading and directing; self-assessment - authority and an indicative benchmark for other people.
Conscientiousness	Meticulous work; high reliability; detail-oriented work; high ratings of conceptual work; tendency towards perfectionism.
Flexibility	High readiness and ability to adapt to new and unforeseen situations and to tolerate uncertainty; openness to new perspectives and methods; willingness to change.
Decisiveness	Ability and willingness to quickly implement a decision through a targeted activity as well as to protect a selected option against other proposals.
Sensitivity	Sensitivity towards weak signals in social situations; great empathy; interpretation and classification of types of behavior of others.
Ability to make contacts	Clearly defined ability and preferences to address friends and strangers and making and maintaining relationships; active forming and maintaining the professional and private network of friends.
Sociability	Distinct preference of social behavior which can be defined as friendly and considerate; tolerance for partners' weaknesses; strong desire for harmonious coexistence.
Team-orientation	High assessment of team work and cooperation; readiness for active support of team processes; willingness to suppress one's own opportunities to excel in favor of the work group.
Ability to assert oneself	Tendency to dominate in social situations; efforts to pursue one's own goals despite any resistance, high readiness for conflicts.
Emotional stability	Quickly copes with failure. An optimistic and positive attitude towards life. The person does not feel limited by intensive negative emotions.
Work under pressure	Views oneself as a (physically) strong and robust person; ready to work under high pressure, and cope with it, not avoid it.
(Self-)confidence	(Emotional) independence of the opinions of others; confidence in one's own impact; self-assurance concerning one's own skills and abilities to perform.

Figure 1 The conceptualization of BIP questionnaire dimensions

The data were collected in December, 2015. The questionnaires were distributed to students during the classes. All respondents agreed to participate in the survey.

Sampling

The research set involved all universities in the Czech Republic that teach Social Pedagogy. These are: University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Masaryk University in Brno, University of Ostrava in Ostrava, University of Hradec Králové, University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem, Charles University in Prague, Palacký University Olomouc, Tomas Bata University in Zlín. One of these universities was randomly selected for a complex analysis. We do not disclose the name of the university because of ethical reasons; for the purposes of the research we call it University X.

University X teaches Social Pedagogy as bachelor's program as well as postgraduate master's, both full-time and part-time.

The basic research set consists of 166 students of social pedagogy in the full-time mode of study. Our research concentrates on students of the full-time mode of study because we assume that part-time students have already developed their professional identity which would distort the results. The choice of the research set was exhaustive, however, some of the students were not at the University during the survey. That is why the research involved 154 respondents. The table gives a further specification of the research set.

Study program	Women	Men	Total
Bachelor's study program	106	10	126
Postgraduate Master's study program	33	5	38
Total	138	15	154

Figure 2 Specification of the research set concerning the study program and gender

For an analysis of the study program, i.e. to answer the research question: What is the concept of the study program Social Pedagogy in the Faculty of Humanities like? we used an analysis of the subjects' syllabuses in bachelor's as well as follow-up master's study programs. At the same time we analyzed the study plan of the study program Social Pedagogy.

Research Results and their Interpretation

Analysis of students' professional characteristics

To describe the results of the research on the students' professional characteristics we use descriptive statistics and its comparison with the norms given in the BIP handbook. An

essential part of the data analysis is the interpretation of found results from the standpoint of the already specified BIP variables.

Variable	N-valid	Mean	Modus	Min	Max	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Achievement Motivation	154	49.03	43	27	72	8.46	0.06	-0.13
Power motivation	154	41.77	42	26	61	6.18	0.29	0.22
Leadership Motivation	154	47.08	52	22	80	10.78	0.08	-0.14
Conscientiousness	154	51.23	Mult.	26	74	9.34	-0.07	-0.25
Flexibility	154	40.67	41	16	68	9.01	0.04	-0.03
Action orientation	154	44.70	50	18	70	9.01	-0.05	0.05
Sensitivity	154	48.77	44	24	66	6.62	-0.19	0.70
Openness to contact	154	60.90	60	36	83	10.80	-0.11	-0.50
Sociability	154	57.38	Mult.	32	76	8.04	-0.36	0.06
Team orientation	154	40.17	Mult.	15	59	9.30	-0.24	-0.19
Assertiveness	154	43.48	45	24	70	9.21	0.12	-0.11
Emocional stability	154	45.65	Mult.	19	92	13.29	0.32	0.66
Work under pressure	154	38.37	35	17	76	10.51	0.26	0.46
Self-confidence	154	51.52	Mult.	23	82	10.89	0.32	-0.014

Figure 3 Descriptive statistics of students' professional characteristics

To describe the measured values we use in particular the mean, modus, minimum, and maximum. These values that show the achieved level in the individual variables have been complemented by the value of skewness and kurtosis of the research data.

We can see that the variables of conscientiousness, action motivation, sensitivity, openness to contact, sociability, and team orientation have negative skewness, i.e. half of lower values are more distributed than half of higher values (Chráska, 2007). The interpretation can be that most values in the given variables are above the calculated mean. We observe that the variables of achievement motivation, leadership motivation, and flexibility have positive skewness near zero, which proves symmetric data distribution.

In the coefficient of kurtosis we observe data concentration near the median. Unlike skewness, with the coefficients of kurtosis we can interpret positive numbers in the variables of power motivation, action orientation, sensitivity, sociability, emotional stability, and work under pressure. Positive kurtosis shows that most values are near its median. For a further data

analysis and interpretation we need to assess whether the data come from normal distribution. Data normality is assessed by means of Shapiro-Wilk test on confidence level 0.05.

H₀: The data come from normal distribution.

H_A: The data do not come from normal distribution.

Variable observed	Shapiro-Wilk coefficient	<i>p</i>	Conclusion
Achievement motivation	0.99	0.34	The data come from normal distribution. p>0.05 = we confirm H₀
Power motivation	0.99	0.44	
Leadership motivation	0.99	0.81	
Conscientiousness	0.99	0.60	
Flexibility	0.99	0.95	
Action orientation	0.99	0.87	
Sensitivity	0.98	0.22	
Openness to contact	0.99	0.18	
Sociability	0.98	0.12	
Towards team orientation	0.99	0.26	
Assertiveness	0.99	0.49	
Emotional stability	0.97	0.01	
Work under pressure	0.98	0.15	
Self-confidence	0.99	0.28	

Figure 4 The conclusion about the normality of the measured values

As the data come from normal distribution we can compare them with the normalized values in the BIP handbook. Next we will concentrate on descriptions of the individual variables in relation to measured values and the observed research set.

Sociability is the first analyzed factor. Respondents reached an average value. Therefore the following characteristic can be assigned. Students do not belong to the group of people who want to be popular everywhere. It is of little significance to them to be perceived as pleasant and considerate individuals by others. They can criticize and tell the unpleasant truth openly and they can endure offending or hurting somebody by doing so. Low sociability is a rather advantageous attribute for quite a high number of activities. It is associated with high independence of interpersonal harmony which allows people to solve charged conflicts, stay focused on the subject matter and not to disguise it with a compromise or premature agreement. The question is **whether low sociability is a suitable attribute for a caring profession or the profession of a social educator?** Individuals who have a high level of

sociability can respond to the needs of social environment. This ability is crucial and indispensable for the work of a social educator. The identification of needs in the environment and the activity related to the environment optimization is one of the main areas of the social educator's profession.

According to the guidebook for the BIP questionnaire, the sociability is related **to the team-oriented individuals**. Someone with low sociability can have difficulties to integrate into a team without any conflicts. In the team-oriented scale, respondents reached the low level scale. Those individuals who are team-oriented put great emphasis on high autonomy and independence at work. It is important for them to be responsible for their own work results. Low focus on team work is suitable in an environment where the personal performance is crucial. If this area is part of the professional requirements, which can be seen in the social services, it will be necessary for the described individuals to widen their range of behavior: many activities will eventually require not only an independent work but also the willingness to personally conform to successful cooperation in a team.

The ability to make new contacts is another scale in which the respondents reached low to average level. Persons who reached low level tend to be reserved in social situations and they only rarely initiate a conversation. Therefore they are perceived as being shy and restrained. Ability to make new contacts is also an essential social skill in the profession of a social educator. Social educator should be able to make contacts not only with his/her clients, but also with other workers at a facility that provide follow-up care, assistance or support to clients. We can see a good ability to make contacts in our research group. Those who reached a low level should increase it, because it can be modified to certain extent. From the perspective of work activity, this ability can develop with experience in seeking new contacts and with the need to establish such contacts.

The research group reached low level at the **emotional stability scale**. Individuals with low level need some time to overcome failure or defeat. They often feel inadequate or overloaded. This is demonstrated in the questionnaire on subjectively perceived motivation in which the students claimed to be demotivated by a high number of tasks and high workload imposed on them. The question is whether the low emotional stability is the reason students have low aspirations and they choose tasks during which they will not experience insufficiency, failure or defeat. People with high emotional stability can cope with a failure quickly. They can control most of the negative feelings that accompany problems and failures

and they do not let these feelings to affect their activities. These individuals also do not let personal problems interfere with their work or study commitments.

Emotional stability is also related to **one's resistance to stress**. While emotional stability shows mainly emotional coping with difficult situations, the questions in this scale are related rather to mental attributes. Both scales correlate and thus demonstrate the overall stability of an individual. Respondents demonstrate a low level of resistance. They thus show the following characteristic: with a high workload and stress, they reach the limit of their performance quickly. When exposed to high requirements for a longer period of time, they feel exhausted, irritated and nervous. If they work intensively on a difficult task, their performance decreases as well as their overall energy. It would be appropriate to continue this scale with further research and ascertain what is demanding for a student and what is not. The primary objective of such research would aim at finding characteristics of a difficult task and problems observed by a student during his/her studies. **How students perceive difficult tasks. How they describe those tasks.** We are not going to answer these questions nor are we going to deal with meeting the objective. However, we provide an incentive for further research.

The sixth variable is **(self-) confidence**. The average value was 2.56 points, median value was 3 points. Respondents thus reached low or average values. Therefore the following profile can be assigned. In many situations respondents worry about how others see them and what impression they make. They are dependent on the evaluation of others which has an impact on their behavior and actions. They adjust their behavior and actions according to possible evaluation. From the above mentioned interpretation, the low values of (self-) confidence does not necessarily mean an impediment. Objective criticism may encourage an individual to deliver better performance. The problem occurs when an individual has to deliver a presentable performance which is associated with verbal readiness and emotional stability (low nervousness, ability to deliver a public presentation). It is recommended to these persons to practice this type of task or undergo a training where they can develop this ability.

We are now going to analyze **the work orientation of students** which includes motivation to perform, motivation to form and motivation to lead. Respondents reached low levels in all scales. The first variable we are going to interpret is the **motivation to perform**. Individuals with low motivation to perform are aware of their own performance shortcomings.

They know they can handle some tasks better, however, they are not ambitious enough to comply with high demands. When they see that a goal is difficult to achieve, they do not continue working towards it. This tendency was already evident during the analysis of questionnaires related to the motivation to perform. As stated in the BIP guidebook, these individuals can be described in the economic context as lacking sufficient "**drive**". It is difficult to motivate these persons to demanding or challenging tasks. The motivation to perform is related to the motivation to form. It describes the internal impulses of an individual to engage in changes and reconstruction of his/her environment. The possibility to change the processes of their activities is not an important motivation factor for respondents. The possibility to influence their environment and processes is not appealing enough. In comparison, they adapt very well to the existing structures and structures which provide little room for a change. The third variable in professional orientation is the motivation to lead. Students reached a low level in this area as well. Respondents do not see any special incentive in leading a work team. Compared to the motivation to form, this variable may be interpreted as a social influence. Respondents do not require it. Rather than leading, they focus on their own professional qualification which is the focus of their engagement.

Someone with low **ability to assert oneself** does not tend to dominate others and does not enforce their claims in a group. The research group has a low level in this ability. Therefore they try to achieve their goals through a compromise, not dominance or authority. In situations where they are to convince others of their ideas, they give up more easily than it would be effective for solving a particular matter. Low values also demonstrate social suggestibility and willingness to quickly reach a compromise.

On the scale of **conscientiousness**, respondents reached low to average level. Persons with low values are reluctant to make efforts to deliver a perfect and precisely performed task. Rather, they appreciate a pragmatic solution as they believe that not every task has to be done perfectly. Tasks that are connected with high demands on stamina and thoroughness for a longer period of time are not suitable for these types of persons. Less diligent persons prefer activities that can be done without a long preparation.

In the variable called "**flexibility**" the respondents gained an average value, that is 1.9 points. This scale was also measured within the questionnaire for motivation to perform where the resulting characteristic showed that students are reluctant to changes, they are unapproachable, maladjusted, they dislike overcoming obstacles, etc. According to the BIP

questionnaire, persons with low values in flexibility experience difficulties in adapting to a change or changing conditions. Due to the positive feelings associated with a stable environment, the respondents do not feel comfortable when confronted with new situations. They see themselves as less flexible and they prefer activities in a stable environment.

Decisiveness is the last scale we are going to analyze. Respondents reached low to average level of decisiveness. Persons with low level are described as people who are often insecure in the optimal approach to deal with their tasks. If they choose a specific way of acting, they spend some time hesitating before implementing it. They tend to postpone and delay especially the unpleasant tasks.

The last variable is **sensitivity**. Respondents again reached low to average level. Due to the measured levels the respondents can be described as follows. They are insecure in a number of social situations regarding the perception of partners' feelings and the estimate of proper behavior. They are not always sure how others perceive and interpret their behavior. If they must handle tasks that require a high level of sensitivity (tasks related to leadership, communication with clients, activities with demanding clients), further personal development is necessary. Now we will concentrate on an analysis of the study program Social Pedagogy.

An analysis of the study program Social Pedagogy

Within the study program of social pedagogy one can see the transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity of social pedagogy as a scientific discipline. The perspective of the study program of social pedagogy shows that it is primarily focused on general disciplines which are directly related to social pedagogy. This includes: philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, medical disciplines and social work. Students attend these classes mainly during the first year and the content of lectures is rather general. In the second and third year they focus on the mentioned disciplines more closely, namely on the developmental psychology, modern pedagogy, social politics, multicultural education, etc. And of course we must not forget social pedagogy.

General discipline	Subjects portfolio	General discipline	Subjects portofilo
Psychology	General Psychology	Pedagogy	Modern Pedagogy

	Development Psychology I		Special Pedagogy
	Development Psychology II		Introduction to Didactics
	Social Psychology		Education of Adults
	Educational Psychology		Leisure Studies
Social Policy and Social Work	Sociology	Social Pedagogy	Social Pedagogy I
	Social Work		Social Pedagogy II
	Social Policy		Methodology of social pedagogy I
	Social Services I		Methodology of social pedagogy II
	Legislation in the Social Field		Bachelor Thesis Seminar

Figure 5 General disciplines and Subjects portfolio of Social Pedagogy Studies

The students can choose from several optional subjects that improve their competences for work with a specific target group. These subjects are: lecturing skills, quality standards in social services, counselling, methodology of playing, methods of work with problem children and young people, and others. However, the concept of the study program lacks continuity of work with a specific target group. Each term the student chooses one or two subjects which might not have any association with optional subjects in the following term. This often means that the student acquires a theoretical knowledge of one target group but does not develop his or her competences for work with this group.

Work experience is an essential part of the study. 1st year students go on educational excursions when they visit organizations according to their own decision and they take part in the workshop Social Pedagogy in Practice where they discuss the possibilities of finding employment with social pedagogy experts. In the 2nd year they have practical training in an organisation (80 hours) and they get more work experience in the 3rd year (160 hours). The recommendation is that the students choose various kinds of organisations so that they can get to know the activities of the institution where they might get a job when they graduate. Within the innovation of the study program we appeal for more hours of work experience every year of the study because we think it is the vital part of education.

Based on the analysis of the professional characteristics of students and study program analysis, we designed an innovative undergraduate training of social educators.

Innovating the study program Social Pedagogy

This part of the article aims to supplement the concept of this academic discipline with innovative subjects. As the professional characteristics of the students show low team orientation, sociability, conscientiousness, action orientation, and assertiveness, we have added marketing and social services management as subjects that help grow these qualities. In particular we appeal for the development of managerial skills such as leadership, motivation, decision making, problem solving, creativity and innovation, awareness (empathy and sensitivity), change, accountability and informatic (International PMA, 2017). Other elementary parts of the innovative curriculum are critical and creative thinking. In this way a student can get a knowledge necessary for helping professions (Gambrill, Gibbs, 2009). Critical thinking also develops and supports students' mental flexibility (Lunney, 2009). Other characteristics that should get more attention are emotional stability, work under pressure, openness to contact, and self-confidence of the students. These can be developed especially by means of the subject Presentation and Rhetoric, followed by Lecturing Skills. In these subjects students focus on the development of communication competences and skills connected with public performance.

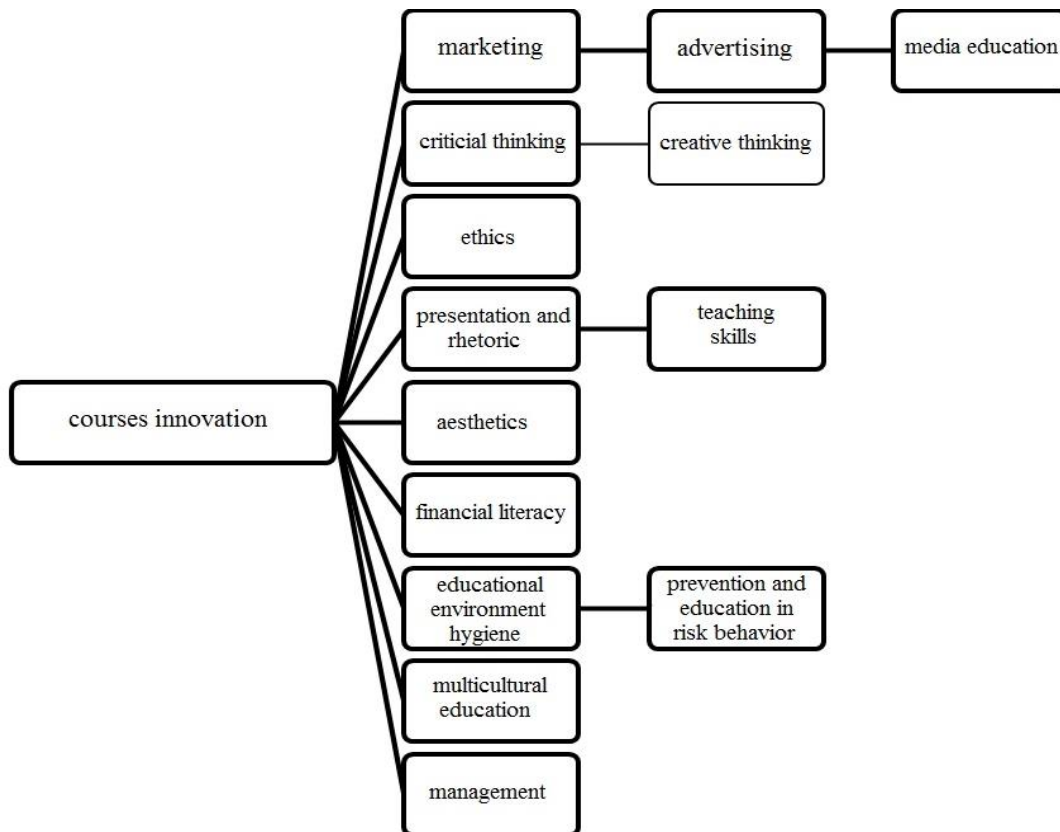


Figure 6 Inovative subjects of social pedagogy’s preparation

When drafting this proposal, we were guided by the idea of a social educator, who for example presents healthy lifestyle to young people in an appealing and convincing way, who participates in or creates a media campaign warning against risk behavior, who is able to perform a follow-up analysis, to propose other measures; who offers consultant and advisory services to schools, educational facilities and others for example when establishing or furnishing interiors and exteriors while taking into account the stimulating effect of the environment, etc.

Conclusion

In our opinion, it is irrelevant for a social educator to specialize in social work, etopedy, etc, as is the current trend. Our aim is to find employment options for social educators as independent professionals in the Czech Republic.

The research showed that the lack of an answer to the question of: Who is a social educator in the Czech Republic? accompanies and significantly complicates the preparation of future social educators. Our research referred to the fact that there are often first-year students

who lack the requirements not only for an assisting profession, but in general for any university studies.

We consider the following quota to be necessary:

- the need to clearly define the subject of research of the social pedagogy
- to develop working methods and forms for social and educational activities in the field of social pedagogy
- to clarify the employability of a social educator in order to achieve the independent status of this profession

Our appeal is based on the respect for the tradition of this field, which it undoubtedly has, and based on the justified request to strengthen the social and educational activities in schools and in society in general, which goes hand in hand with the request to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession as such.

We also appeal for a change of the concept of the study program Social Pedagogy so that it can react to the demands of the labor market (that is the demands of social services and educational facilities) in a more flexible way. We often hear the opinion that graduates are not sufficiently prepared for doing their job. Institutions do not complain about students' insufficient theoretical background but they complain that graduates lack personality preparedness and soft skills. Therefore we have decided to widen the concept of the study program as described in the article: we have added innovative subjects. It is vital that the students are more internally motivated to develop their capacities and skills, and at the same time the subjects on the curriculum help them improve their communication skills (openness to contact), adapt to the ever-changing situations in the society today (flexibility), and improve their work orientation (achievement motivation, formation, and leadership).

Present-day research in social pedagogy does not focus on the development of the concept of the study program. As stated in the introduction of this article, the focus of most research is on a specific target group or on the diversification of social pedagogy compared to social work. That is why the present research becomes an original examination that might inspire further research on the evaluation of the concepts of study programs.

The aim of this article was to outline Social Pedagogy as a study program in the Czech Republic, especially its concept and the job of a social pedagogue as an independent profession. What we consider to be vital is constant innovation and sophistication of academic

programs in accordance with the labor market's demands. This is how we can enhance employability of graduates and also win a good reputation of the University with graduates well prepared for real life.

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