

Study Review

Selected Methods of Intervention Suitable for Work Social Educator with Children at Risk of Social Exclusion

The author of *Selected Methods of Intervention Suitable for Work of Social Pedagogue with Children Endangered by Social Exclusion* deals with a significant topic: the introduction of social work methods into pedagogical practice. In my opinion, there is an increase in the number of pupils that can be labelled socially disadvantaged as defined by the education legislation (this is true not only for the socially-disadvantaged locations referred to by the author, but also in connection with the rise of social benefits receivers, overindebtedness, and an increase in poverty of the majority of single-parent households). The importance of skills and knowledge connected to social work is growing in pedagogical practice. Social pedagogy can thus play an important role in introducing methods into school practice or in creating cooperation of the non-profit sector with primary and secondary schools.

I see a problem spot in the study in the interpretation of the culture of poverty leaning towards the *underclass* concept where the author refers to the propositions of Murray. The partial responsibility for the problems of poverty (and its reproduction) lies, according to Murray, with the expenses of a social state that allows for the certain adaptation and life strategies of the underclass (see Mareš, 1999, pp. 175–184). In the political context of the United States, the given interpretation served to justify cuts in social benefits.

I do not believe that restrictions in social expenses can help poor and poverty-endangered people in any way. A recent experience with the so-called social reform of minister D. Drábek allows us to learn a lesson about what practical consequences of moralization can be seen in connection with poor people, together with the effort to cut down social benefits that in this particular case led to the repression of poverty (e.g., public service and the DONEZ project).

The growth in the number of socially-handicapped families can be blamed, in my opinion, on the economic crisis together with the insensitive social policy of the Nečas government in 2010–2013. The receivers of social benefits became one of the neoliberal rhetoric topics of the Nečas government, despite the fact that the real expenses of paid social benefits form no significant burden for the state budget. The stigmatization of the receivers of social benefits served the political goals of the government that introduced a policy of restrictions as a recipe for surviving the economic crisis.

Social benefits are by no means an ideal solution for poverty, and a former colleague of mine (a social curator) compared their effect to sedatives. Unless we have a more efficient cure, is there a reason to get rid of this kind of help? Generational passing of the “culture of poverty” pattern is a problem, and discussions looking for more efficient solutions of poverty than social benefits are clearly necessary. Restrictions in social benefits are not the correct step. The road from socially-excluded locations to a different life is not easy, and we cannot expect children from such environments to accept our values (the values of middle class Czech society). Fulfilling these values (high school leaving exams, university diploma, work enabling securing a mortgage, etc.) is more difficult for children that were born into the environment of Czech “ghettos.”

What prevents integration of socially-excluded citizens apart from discrimination in the labour market, the so-called trade with poverty or the anti-Romani mood, is the culture described above, life strategies of adapting to a marginal social position and the significantly lower cultural capital of the majority of the mentioned citizens. It should be social pedagogy that knows how to work with this handicap.

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Reference

Mareš, P. (1999). *Sociologie nerovnosti a chudoby*. Praha: Slon.