

Social pedagogy as a study programme

Social pedagogy at the Department of Education at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague Czech Republic

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History of the field

Social pedagogy was introduced into the study plans of the Department of Education at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University (FA CU) in the mid-1990s. For the first ten years, until 2005, it was one of the compulsory elective specialties, within the five-year master's study program in the field of pedagogy, which students chose in the second half of the program. The specialty directed graduates towards employment in helping professions, educational institutions and social prevention institutions, and also in the field of social services. Apart from pedagogical and sociological disciplines, it consisted of an array of subjects focused on social policy, the management of institutions within social pedagogy, philosophical-anthropological reflections on humanity, the theory and methods of social pedagogy, social deviation issues, personal and social education and cooperative aspects of social education, as well as counseling and diagnostic aspects of working with children, adolescents and problem clients. Professional practice in social institutions also came to the fore. The focus of the specialty was subsequently also reflected in the final state examination.

Since 2005, in accordance with the Bologna Declaration, the transition from a five-year master's degree in pedagogy to a divided bachelor's and master's degree had begun. It was decided that social pedagogy would be implemented at the department as a separate master's degree program, which would be offered to graduates of bachelor's studies in pedagogy and related fields from all over the Czech Republic. In this context, a separate accreditation of the field for full-time and part-time study was prepared. The first graduates entered the labor market in 2008 (there are currently 240 graduates). As part of the study program reform, a mandatory long-term assistant internship in the institutions of the helping sector was introduced; socio-pedagogical or counseling practice, along with some other subjects in the fields of social law, crisis intervention, systems for working with drug users, ethics, lifestyle, etc., was reflected upon by students. A separate final exam consisted of two compulsory areas (social deviation, socio-pedagogical theories and methods) and three compulsory electives (counseling, social management, personal and social education). The accreditation of the field was subsequently extended twice as part of the accreditation process (2010, 2016).

In 2010, there were only slight changes. In 2016, in addition to maintaining the current orientation, more emphasis was placed on social education and its potential to support personal development, moving towards life satisfaction and learning to live in diverse social contexts. The newly included subjects, such as Practice of Social Education and Primary Prevention, also illustrate this. The final exam was reconstructed and thematically divided into three basic areas: social pedagogy, counseling, and education theory and practice. The last change in accreditation took place at the administrative level, during the transformation of study fields into study programs (2018). The basic concept of the study, as well as the construction of the state exam, were retained.

Cooperation with experts from practice has been monitored since the beginning of the field's existence. It is typically implemented by inviting experts to lectures or involving them in the position of external lecturers (e.g. for Roma issues). The connection with practice also enables contact with graduates, many of whom occupy important positions in institutions and organizations of the governmental and non-profit sectors.

For the necessary development of the field, attention is also paid to the education of young researchers. Dissertation projects in social pedagogical topics are carried out within the doctoral study program of pedagogy (guarantor doc. PhDr. Jaroslav Kořá). Topics include, for example, exploration of the competencies of people leaving children's homes for job success, and the influence of the primary anti-drug prevention program on the development of specific competencies of pupils and students.

Current profile of a graduate of the study field

The study program is designed to be both theoretical and professional. Graduates master the theoretical models and methods of social education and counseling work, and become familiar with socio-pedagogical institutions and professions, as well as pedagogical and social legislation. They can use research methods, perform pedagogical and social diagnostics, use educational methods and forms of work in the fields of formal and informal education, community education and development, prevention of risky behavior, and crisis intervention; they can also provide educational, career, pedagogical and social counseling, work with individuals, groups and communities both in the conditions of institutions and in a non-institutionalized environment, and develop and manage educational and social projects. They are capable of professional self-reflection in accordance with the standards of professional ethics. The program is also in accordance with the standards of the Association of Educators in Social Pedagogy, in the creation of which Jitka Lorenzová, Ph.D., participated as a member of the Executive Board of the Association.

Founder of the field of study and its guarantors

Social pedagogy could not succeed at the Department of Education at the Faculty of Arts without dedicated practitioners. The leading conceptual and organizational personality during the introduction of social pedagogy was doc. PhDr. Věra Poláčková, CSc., who was already actively involved in a network of experts from universities and colleges who were trying to promote social pedagogical education in the Czech Republic in the 1990s.

Věra Poláčková significantly influenced the concept of the field by introducing current stimuli from the theoretical and methodological basis of German social pedagogy. Its concept of social pedagogy was first published in the Final Report of the PHARE – RES program, *Renewal of the education system of the Czech Republic* (Sekot, 1997). Social pedagogy is presented here in a truly comprehensive way – as a multidisciplinary field that integrates and develops the knowledge of human and social sciences into educational, preventive and re-educational activities, and analyzes the dynamic relationships between the individual and the environment and seeks to optimize them. It examines the interconnectedness of bio-psycho-social phenomena influencing social integration and the management of life situations by an individual. It respects individual needs and interests and initiates such changes in the social environment that support individual development. It can be said that social pedagogy at the department has been continuously developed in the same spirit, with only slight modifications, to the present day.

Ever since the field gained independent accreditation in 2005, it has been protected by three successive guarantors. In the first period, it was the head of the department at the time, historian of pedagogy doc. PhDr. Růžena Váňová, CSc., a leading analyst of socially motivated attempts by Czech teachers to reform schools in pre-war Czechoslovakia. In 2016, she was succeeded by doc. PhDr. Josef Valenta, CSc., one of the founders of pedagogy focused on personal and social education in the Czech Republic. Currently, the guarantor of the study program is doc. PhDr. Jitka Lorenzová, Ph.D., who for this purpose habilitated her work focused on fundamental issues and problems of the field (Lorenzová, 2017). However, the implementation of the study program would not be possible without all of the teachers at the department, whose pedagogical, sociological, philosophical and psychological disciplines influence the study program as a necessary theoretical basis for experts in the pedagogical and social field.

Science, research, achievements

For the successful establishment of social pedagogy in the university context, it was necessary that the field also develop scientifically and in terms of research. In the first period, for example, a collective monograph called *Humanity – environment – education: On the issues of social pedagogy* was created in cooperation with members of the department and academics from the University of Hradec Králové (Kraus & Poláčková, 2001). It was one of the first publications in the Czech Republic after November 1989 to focus exclusively on social pedagogy.

A number of other scientific works by members of the department have also included a socio-pedagogical dimension. Among other things, the works concerned social pathological phenomena in children and youth (Koťa & Jedlička, 1997), socialization disorders (Jedlička, Klíma, Koťa, Němec, & Pilař, 2004), social pedagogy and its relation to helping (Lorenzová, 2001), lifelong learning (Poláčková, 2005), free time and its socialization potential (Poláčková, 2006), intercultural education (Poláčková, 2008) and social aspects of cooperation (Kasíková, 2004).

In the following years, two areas of professional interest related to social pedagogy crystallized at the department. The first area includes the topics of equal opportunities, diversity and multiculturalism in education. These are topics that can be understood as transversal – they connect a number of pedagogical disciplines and, as a result, they have important socio-pedagogical connotations. Implemented grants and projects in this area include: *Intercultural education: Effective methods and forms. Projects within the concept of integration of foreigners* (researcher Hana Kasíková); *The idea of equal opportunities and quality of education* (researcher Hana Kasíková); *Universities and non-formal Learning: Developing intercultural competences (among others)* (Karolína Burešová and Eva Vincejová together with the House of Foreign Services); *UDEL21 (Use diversity to enhance learning in the 21st century)*, an international project focused on the development of new approaches and tools for working with diversity in schools (Hana Kasíková); and the ESF project *Teacher in a diversified classroom*, to support teachers in the field of multicultural education and intercultural education (manager and expert guarantor of the project is Martin Strouhal). The most recent work in this thematic area is the collective monograph (Kwiatkowski, Mielczarek-Żejmo, & Strouhal, 2020), prepared in international cooperation with experts from the University of Zielona Góra (Martin Strouhal is co-editor; also representing the department are Hana Kasíková, Eva Vincejová, Jitka Lorenzová).

The second area is the focus on specific issues and problems of social pedagogy. These are, for example, the topics of social pedagogy in schools (Lorenzová, 2018a), the value aspects of social pedagogy (Lorenzová, 2018b), the interdisciplinary relations of social pedagogy (Lorenzová, 2018c; Lorenzová & Burešová, 2016), and community schools (Lorenzová, 2016).

Since 2017/2018, the Department has been conducting sequential empirical research based on a mixed methodology, which is focused on the careers and professional identities of social educators in the Czech Republic (Jitka Lorenzová, Tereza Komárková). The published results include empirical studies devoted to the concept of the field, and to students' motivation for choosing it (Lorenzová, 2020; Lorenzová & Komárková, 2019). In a way, it is self-reflecting research, as it is carried out almost a quarter of a century after the entry of social pedagogy as an academic discipline into Czech universities. The findings so far show that over the last 20 years, the concept of the field and the performance of the profession has stabilized in the socio-pedagogical community, which can be considered a manifestation of the independence and emancipation of the field.

Conclusion

The currently implemented study program is the only master's degree program in social pedagogy at Charles University. At present, it is attractive for graduates of bachelor's pedagogical studies from not only Charles University, but throughout the country. In retrospect, it can be said that social pedagogy at the Department of Education at the Faculty of Arts has achieved a number of successes, and graduates of the field find a problem-free transition into professional practice, although the position

of the social pedagogue has not yet been explicitly named in Czech legislation. The field is developed on the basis of research (theoretical and empirical); publishing activities are adequately implemented. In the future, the development of the field will depend not only on enthusiasm and diligence, but also on a number of other factors, such as the legislative anchoring of the social pedagogue as a profession, university funding, and the necessary staff reinforcement by young academics focused on this area of pedagogical science.

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