

Social pedagogy at the Institute of Social Studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

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History

Social Pedagogy as a field in the Czech Republic has its longest tradition at the University of Hradec Králové. Its origin can be dated back to the beginning of the 1990s. The links to this field were obvious, as the Faculty of Education in Hradec Králové was also famous for concentrating on non-teaching pedagogy during the 1970s and 1980s. The fields we could have noticed here were Education, Leisure Time Pedagogy, Pedagogy of Children and Youth Organizations. The Department of Social Pedagogy itself was established in 1991 and provided studies in the following fields: Education, Social Pedagogy Focused on Physical Education, Sport, Ethopedy and Social Work (we followed the idea of ethopedist P. Klíma in saying that Ethopedy is part of Social Pedagogy, not of Special Education). The studies were in the present form as well as in the form of consultations. The master's degree programme in Social Pedagogy was first set up in 1997. The Institute of Social Studies was established in the same year, on February 2, 1997 and, above all, it also guaranteed the fields of Social Pathology and Prevention, Charity and Social Work, Social Communication in State Administration and Social Educational Care for the Sensory Impaired. The Institute was then being developed in terms of not only number of fields, but also number of students, with the prospect of becoming the Faculty of Social Sciences. We estimated to guarantee a wide range of fields connected with the social sphere, so that the students could exercise various assisting professions. The number of students was almost 1500 in 2003, but unfortunately the new faculty was not authorized by the accreditation council, even on the second try in March 2003 (we had tried in January 2002 for the first time). Later on, the "faculty" was split into the Department of Social Pedagogy, Social Work, Special Education, Sociology and Social Pathology within the Faculty of Education. Since then, the heads of the Department of Social Pedagogy have been PaedDr. Monika Žumárová, Ph.D., Mgr. Leona Stašová, Ph.D., and Mgr. Iva Junová, Ph.D.

Thousands of students studying the assisting professions have graduated from the Faculty of Education. The organisational and ideological leader, Prof. PhDr. Blahoslav Kraus, CSc., has been active in building a team of colleagues from pedagogical universities and vocational colleges and promoting socio-pedagogical education in the Czech Republic as well as legal acknowledgement of the profession of social pedagogue. He has significantly influenced the whole concept of this field through a transdisciplinary understanding. He was also the first head of the Department of Social Pedagogy and the head of the Institute of Social Studies.

Present characteristics of the field

The Department of Social Pedagogy currently provides a three-year bachelor's degree in social pedagogy studies focusing on educational work in ethopedic institutions, and a two-year master's degree in social pedagogy. Both programmes can be studied in full-time or combined form. Since 2016 it has even been possible to study Social Pedagogy in English.

The aim of the studies is to prepare professionals for practical experience in a wide range of pedagogical and assisting professions. The study programmes and their specifications conform to valid legislation. With respect to Act No. 563/2004 coll. (2016) regarding pedagogical professions, graduates have been successful in the resort of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as qualified tutors, leisure time teachers and assistants to teachers. Act No. 108/2006 coll. (2019) regarding social services

enables them to become social workers. Besides these two main resorts, a number of graduates have also become active in resorts of the Ministry of Justice (for example, as Probation and Mediation Service Officers) and the Ministry of the Interior, mainly as tutors or policemen. The aim of the study programmes is to prepare students for a wide range of assisting professions.

This is reflected in the concept of professional experience. Our department focuses on cooperation with workplaces that usually become the employers of the graduates. These include educational and re-educational institutions, leisure time institutions for children and youth, and non-profit organisations. In recent years, we have been successful in cooperating with organisations specialising in primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. The students in our department participate in seminars, courses and trips focusing on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and the problems associated with social disadvantages.

Our department fully cooperates with social policy subjects (institutions of state administration, civil associations, and other non-profit organisations) within the above-mentioned study programmes to help students with their practice, bachelor's thesis, diploma thesis and research activities.

Scientific activity, international cooperation

The Institute of Social Studies received two grants in 1997 – “Social Pedagogy Study Programme” from the Open Society Fund and “Use of Social-Psychological Training Methods to Create Healthy Lifestyles for University Students” from the University Development Fund of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Prof. Kraus helped to submit the international grant – “Research on Youth in the Polish Border Region” (coordinated by the University of Opole). The Institute of Social Studies carried out the research plan “Social Analysis of Secondary School Students in Eastern Bohemia” in 1998–2003, with Prof. Kraus as the head of the research. He also participated in the Bullying Prevention Programme and its evaluation being experimentally put into practice. It was a “Skills for Adolescents” programme, and the research was guaranteed by Academia Medica Pragensis.

The tradition of holding the “Sociália” conferences started in 1997, with Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and WSB University in Dąbrowa Górnicza as partners of late.

The workers in our department are members of various professional societies and associations (for example, the Association of Educators in Social Pedagogy, Czech Pedagogical Society, Czech Educational Research Association, Czech Sociological Association).

Our department has been working intensively on cooperation with foreign workplaces, not only in the fields of science and research, but also in the development of student and teacher international activities. The employees and students of the Department of Social Pedagogy were able to visit, for example, Eastern Michigan University (Ypsilanti, Michigan); the University of Loughborough (UK); Saxion University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work in Enschede (the Netherlands); Thomas More University in Mechelen (Belgium); the University of Iceland, the University of Reykjavík, the University of Akureyri (Iceland); Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius (Lithuania); Riga Stradins University (Latvia), Larch Hill Centre – international scout & guide centre, Scoil Naomh Brid (Ireland); ESEC Coimbra (Portugal). In the fields of science and research we mainly cooperate with workplaces in Slovakia (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, the University of Prešov, University of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Trnava) and Poland (the University of Opole, WSB University in Dąbrowa Górnicza).

The most significant projects in recent years have included “Family and Lifestyle in the Visegrad Countries” (coordinated by the University of Szeged) and “The Risks of the Virtual Environment in the V4,” in which we cooperated with Slovak, Polish and Hungarian institutions. The workers in the department are nowadays working on specific projects or internal grant competitions.

The workers in our department are published in professional journals and academic catalogues, and have written a number of monographs and study books for university students. The most significant

ones are: Social aspects of education (Kraus, 1998), Human, environment, education, (Kraus & Poláčková, 2001), How secondary school students live at the beginning of the 21st century (Kraus, 2004), Secondary school students and their lives at the turn of the century (Kraus, 2006), Basics of social pedagogy (Kraus, 2008, 2014b), History of social pedagogy in Europe (Hroncová, Emmerová, & Kraus, 2008), Intergenerational bridges (Žumárová & Balogová, 2009), Subjective quality of the lifestyles of older people (Žumárová, 2012), Society, family and social deviation (Kraus, 2014a), Current lifestyle of the Czech family (Kraus, 2015), New generation: selected aspects of socialization and education of contemporary children and youth in the context of a mediated society (Stašová, Slaninová, & Junová, 2015), Contemporary family lifestyles in Central and Western Europe (Kraus, Stašová, & Junová, 2020), Children with social disadvantages and their educational perspectives (Caltová Hepnarová, 2020).

Conclusion

An overview of the given publications proves that the workers in the Department of Social Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education in Hradec Králové fully understand social pedagogy to be a transdisciplinary field, as it is described in the publication “Human, environment, education”, which not only solves problems of people who suffer from social disadvantages and whose social development is threatened, but also focuses on society as a whole and understands the necessity to create a balance between individual needs and the needs of society, so that an optimal lifestyle is achieved (Kraus & Poláčková, 2001).

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