

## Discussion

Czech version/česká verze 

### Social pedagogues and social workers in primary school

Lucie Blašíková<sup>a</sup>, Helena Grecmanová<sup>b</sup>, Miroslav Dopita<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Faculty of Humanities, Štefánikova 5670, 760 01 Zlín, Czech Republic, e-mail: blastikova@utb.cz

<sup>b</sup> Palacký University Olomouc, Faculty of Arts, Křížkovského 512/10, 771 80 Olomouc, Czech Republic, e-mail: helen.grecmanova@upol.cz

<sup>c</sup> Palacký University Olomouc, Faculty of Arts, Křížkovského 512/10, 771 80 Olomouc, Czech Republic, e-mail: miroslav.dopita@upol.cz

#### Introduction

Seeking connections and boundaries between social pedagogy and social work has a long scientific history. Within the Czech context, this model is indicated in the first third of the 20th century by Hořejší (1928, pp. 72–73), and in the present day, for example, by Skarupská (2016), who identifies a connection between the two professions in social work methods, which social pedagogues also use in practising their profession. Internationally, this is documented by Schilling (1999), and in a review article written by Hämäläinen (2003), who works from three hypotheses. Firstly, that social pedagogy and social work are completely different from each other. Secondly, that social pedagogy and social work are identical. And thirdly, that social pedagogy and social work complement each other (Hämäläinen, 2003, p. 75). Ondrejko (2004) considers social pedagogy to be a social work theory. In this case, we need to find a suitable tool just for the area of social pedagogy, which is difficult because, as Kraus (2014) states, research within social pedagogy is varied, and often affected by sampling error. The submitted paper contributes to the discussion through analysis specific work activities of social pedagogues and social workers. Although we realise that these fields and professions, and the working activities they involve, are similar, we also believe that in some areas of their work one can define particular characteristics. The objective of this article is to analyse the specific working activities which apply to both social pedagogues and social workers within the primary school environment. In order to create categories for analysis, we used a breakdown and description of working activities taken from the websites of primary schools where social pedagogues work. The defined activities are characterised on the basis of descriptions published on the websites of the particular primary schools, alongside an analysis of the profession of social workers in the same categories, using the wording of the act describing the occupation of social worker ("Act No. 108/2006," 2019).<sup>1</sup>

#### Social pedagogues and social workers at primary schools in the Czech Republic

There are not many social pedagogues in Czech primary schools. One encounters them more frequently within institutions providing social services. Social pedagogues work with social groups, such as homeless people, people with disabilities, children and young people, senior citizens, drug addicts, etc. Within this sense, we can also encounter social workers, who are often confused with

<sup>1</sup> Research was undertaken in Slovakia in 2012 and 2013 in collaboration with the Czech Republic focused on the work of social workers within the school environment from the perspective of teachers. Within this research, consideration was given to establishing a new position in schools to resolve the problems of pupils in terms of risky behaviour, developmental disorders and mental disorders, as well as the climate of schools and individual classes. Reference was made to the need for such workers, while taking into account the individual needs of individual schools (Skyba, 2013).

social pedagogues. While there are differences in the working activities of the two professions, they may complement each other within different environments, including in primary schools.

There are today only a few social pedagogues in the Czech Republic who work in primary schools and are part of the teaching staff. Yet many Czech universities and colleges offer social pedagogy as an accredited course of study, preparing social pedagogues for practising their occupation, as demonstrated by available degrees. Graduates find work in the South Moravian Region in particular. It is clear from the practice of Czech primary schools that social pedagogues are meaningful and justified for these primary schools; this is also indicated in the job descriptions available on the internet, which are further analysed.<sup>2</sup>

Why are there still so few social pedagogues in schools? There are a number of reasons. The most common is the budgetary structure of primary schools, set by the school organisation authority, which inevitably fails to include social pedagogues. Primary school principals are forced to justify the need for a social pedagogue position, which is a long and complex process. If the school organisation authority approves the position, the social pedagogue is classified in the tables as a social worker. There is no Czech legislation in regard to the position of social pedagogue, and they are not even included as a member of the teaching staff, as is the case in Slovakia, for example.<sup>3</sup> This is not an advantageous situation for the social pedagogue, because if they are classified as a social worker, their work is subject to different financial remuneration, and furthermore they are not entitled to holidays to the extent granted to teaching staff.<sup>4</sup> Another possible reason might be that principals and teachers are unaware of what the work of a social pedagogue might bring them, and how they could enrich the school. Many teachers may worry that a social pedagogue could use up bonuses for working activities such as preventing risky behaviour, educational guidance, etc. One can also encounter assertions that the school does not exhibit any features of risky behaviour by pupils or parents, and so there is no need to employ such a staff member. But is it not rather the case of insufficient identification of possible prevention or problems, or their suppression?

The fact is that not every school needs a social pedagogue, but they could help for some larger schools, as is the case in the South Moravian Region. Outside the Czech Republic, especially in Poland, Germany and Slovakia, the profession of social pedagogue in “primary” schools is a well-known one (Böhnisch, 1992; Cichosz, 2004; Schilling, 1999). These are countries with a tradition of social pedagogy as a field. Poland is considered the cradle of social pedagogy (Cichosz, 2004), with social pedagogues a common part of the teaching staff. We are also familiar with the situation in Slovakia, where social pedagogues are defined in the Act No. 317/2009 coll., on teaching staff and professional employees (“Act No. 317/2009,” 2019) as professional employees of the school.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These involved the following schools: Primary school Brno, Sirotkova 36 (Strmisková, 2016), Primary and nursery school Křenová (“Základní škola,” 2015), Primary school Přerov, Boženy Němcové 16 (Daněk, 2013), Primary and nursery school Brno, nám. 28. října 22 (“Sociální pedagog,” 2015), Primary and nursery school Brno, Husova 17 (“Školní poradenské,” 2015). Within Slovak primary schools, the situation is different, at least in terms of legislation (see below), but here too there is a problem in terms of sufficient numbers of specialist school personnel, including social pedagogues (Zemančíková, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Act No. 317/2009 coll., on teaching staff and professional employees (“Act No. 317/2009,” 2019).

<sup>4</sup> One option for funding a social pedagogue position involves the school principal securing funds for the position of social pedagogue. Although there are a number of ways to obtain such funds, securing them can be difficult and uncertain. The first option is to include the school in a grant project. Although it is an attractive option, the administration involved in applying for a project and running it is usually complicated. Nor can the applicant be sure that the effort put in to acquire the project will lead to a successfully granted application. Even if the grant project and funding is received, it must be remembered that it will end after a few years, and money will again need to be found for the social pedagogue position.

<sup>5</sup> The job description for social pedagogues in Slovak primary schools is very similar to the job description we give below. In particular, it involves ascertaining, preventing and eliminating risky behaviour in the school. A

If a primary school in the Czech Republic employs a social pedagogue today, it is generally a school whose student body is structured in a specific way, even though it has the status of a standard primary school, not a special or practical primary school. In many cases, these are primary schools with a higher percentage of Romani pupils. Social pedagogues often operate within deprived neighbourhoods, places of temporary accommodation and shelters. In this sense, their work is unique.

The working activities of social pedagogues in primary schools are not enshrined in Czech legislation. Thus primary schools which incorporate the position of social pedagogue within their organisational structure mostly define their working activities themselves on the basis of their needs. We can encounter definitions of the work of a social pedagogue on the websites of primary schools.<sup>6</sup>

From an analysis of these websites, we can divide the common working activities of social pedagogues into six categories:

- Co-operates with child protection services, police, educational and psychological counsellors, educational care centres, special education centres, doctors, diagnostic institutes, village and town councils, public prosecutors and other interested bodies and organisations. This involves establishing co-operation with external bodies and specialists following on from school activities and recommendations – **co-operation with external specialists**.
- Co-operates with classroom teachers, teachers, assistants, pupils and parents. A lot of activity involves co-operation with the classroom teacher, influencing the classroom climate and school climate. One component of the work of a social pedagogue is co-operating with parents and pupils in prevention at all age levels. Is involved in organising career advice. If there is no other career advisor in the primary school, then the social pedagogue can focus on helping pupils who are leaving primary school, securing the agenda in this regard and organising consultation for parents in terms of the future directions available to their pupils – **school counselling centre worker**.
- Focuses on finding children at risk in time (isolation, abuse, neglect, social pathologies, criminality, etc.). Regarding the education of a social pedagogue, diagnostic competencies are utilised. Is able to recognise risky behaviour and also the syndrome of an abused, exploited and neglected child. The next step is followed up by child protection – **preventive activities**.
- Provides help to families without the conditions for children to prepare at home for school (mediating lesson preparation). Help can focus on creating the right home conditions and supporting parents, but also preparing at school through free-of-charge after-school clubs. Creates the conditions for establishing contact and a helping relationship with families in terms of education and co-operation with the family (co-ordinating outreach work and outreach workers) – **outreach (field) work**.
- Helps with organising adaptation and experience events. Seeks to integrate all children into the collective, establishing friendly relationships and adapting to the school environment, e.g. for newcomer pupils – **interviewing pupils and parents**.
- Helps with pupil development in personal and social education. All school teaching staff and specialists are active in this regard. The difference is that compared to classroom and other teachers, the social pedagogue specialises in this area – **organising education commissions**.

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major area of exercising the profession also involves establishing co-operation between the family and the school, and helping all teachers in the school to create a positive school climate ("Act No. 317/2009," 2019).

<sup>6</sup> For comparison, we provide links to the descriptions of the work of a social pedagogue at primary schools where such a position is established (Daněk, 2013; "Sociální pedagog," 2015; Strmisková, 2016; "Školní poradenské," 2015; "Základní škola," 2015).

### Analysis of the working activities of social pedagogues and social workers

We are utilising a number of criteria in analysing the working activities of social pedagogues and social workers. First of all, we focus on the performance of work by social pedagogues and social workers that relates to the primary school environment. The working activities of a social pedagogue listed in the table are based on an analysis of selected primary school websites, and they are divided into the six categories listed above. Table 1 further defines the working activities of a social worker based on an analysis of Government Regulation No. 222/2010 coll., on a work catalogue of employees in public service and administration ("Government Regulation No. 222/2010," 2019) and Act No. 108/2006 coll., on social services, as amended ("Act No. 108/2006," 2019). Also used in the analysis is a study of specialist resources in social pedagogy and social work (Dočkal, 2008; Gulová, 2015; Kodymová, 2013; Matoušek, Kolářková, & Kodymová, 2005; Urban, 2015, and others).

Table 1

*Comparison of the activities of a social pedagogue and social worker*

Social pedagogue	Social worker
<p><b>Co-operation with external specialists</b> involves establishing contact and co-operation with child protection services, education and psychological counselling services or the police, and is very important for the school. It is often essential to send the child to these facilities (with their parents' consent), to know the local external staff and the procedure for how these applications are dealt with. In some cases, the parents do not know the options available to them for resolving their children's problems, and so the social pedagogue can suggest these and know how to explain their benefits.</p> <p>The <b>school counselling centre</b> comprises specialists who monitor the situation at the school and endeavour to respond accordingly and flexibly. These specialists include the school prevention methodologist, school psychologist, guidance counsellor, special education teacher, career advisor and social pedagogue. It is a centre which provides specialist counselling and recommends solutions to certain situations to the school principal, who due to the difficulty of his/her profession and management duties cannot have a personal insight into the situation in every class in the school. The task of the social pedagogue is in particular to provide information from the field, and to note problems and any improvements for individual pupils and whole classes. Documented problems are then submitted to school management in co-operation with classroom teachers.</p> <p><b>Preventive activities</b> are the focus of the school prevention methodologist, who organises and implements preventative activities. The social</p>	<p><b>Co-operation with external specialists</b>, most commonly with child protection services, is very important. The school should have contact details for workers who most commonly work and visit the school's catchment area.</p> <p>This doesn't only apply to child protection services: there is frequent co-operation with education and psychological counselling services and special education centres where learning difficulties can be diagnosed.</p> <p>The <b>school counselling centre</b> operates in collaboration with child protection services. Curators and social workers should be familiar with the persons who may ask for reports on pupils to be written, or for other information which the school can provide.</p> <p><b>Preventive activities</b> involve curators and social workers arranging to hold various talks and discussions when they visit schools. These talks</p>

pedagogue may be the one who points out risky behaviour spreading amongst pupils at a particular time. Co-operation between both these workers is subsequently very important. The social pedagogue may encounter risky behaviour in the field, where he or she may observe it. In regard to deprived areas, a frequent phenomenon is that risky behaviour is shown mainly by the parents, and their children copy this behaviour from them.

**Outreach (field) work** is one part of the work of a social pedagogue. It involves visiting a school pupil at their place of residence, in most cases within the catchment area, or in a shelter or other facility. There may be various reasons for such visits – poor pupil performance, unexcused or long-term absence, establishing co-operation with parents, or recruiting parents for co-operation with the school. The social pedagogue is able to ascertain how the child is living, how many siblings they have, and whether they have the space for learning and privacy. In terms of their education, the pedagogue should be able to appropriately assess all aspects. This information acquired from the field is important for further work with the pupil, and helps give a complete picture of the child. The classroom teacher usually provides further supplementary information.

**Interviews with parents and pupils** are often conducted by the social pedagogue during outreach work, when they invite the parents to the school for an interview, with a number of teaching staff participating. An urgent situation may occur when an interview has to be conducted in the field. Here, the social pedagogue must demonstrate their communication skills. Interviews with pupils usually take place at the school. They may be official or unofficial in nature. For an official interview, a parent must be present, but unofficial interviews usually involve only the pupil and the social pedagogue or other school specialist (school psychologist, school prevention methodologist) and are usually conducted as an initial warning, which may not involve any more serious punishments.

**Education commissions** are the job of the social pedagogue in terms of organising them and inviting all commission members. If the pedagogue knows the particular pupil and works with him or her, then the pedagogue is also a

should be implemented in co-operation with the social pedagogue in order to respond to the current situation. It may, unfortunately, happen that talks do not have a positive effect, and can even be used by some pupils as a guide for establishing or worsening risky behaviour. It is therefore important to discuss the talk with the school management or specialist staff.

**Outreach (field) work** for the social worker and curator for children and young people involves visiting their clients in their natural environment according to the town district or neighbourhood assigned to them. The problems they deal with are usually more serious in nature than for the social pedagogue. There is a clear connection – the social pedagogue may discover cases which he or she is able to assess, but which must be transferred to the relevant body in order to be resolved. The danger inherent in this part of the work is clear for both positions.

**Interviews with parents and pupils** often involve the social worker inviting parents and their children for personal interviews. These are mostly cases involving the family or child's first offence. The family is further monitored and if the situation de-escalates, no additional measures are recommended. The style for conducting the interview is the same or very similar for social pedagogues and social workers. Some families, however, may have issues concerning the authority of the social pedagogue, who does not have many options for resolving the situation (in terms of punishment).

**Education commissions** may be organised by the curator for children and young people, or else the social worker is part of the education commission, which precedes the interviews the school organises internally. This may lead to

member of the commission. The pedagogue works closely with the invited child protection service representative. The social pedagogue often comments on co-operation with the family. If the family is not co-operating, then intervention from the child protection service is likely. Often the decision can remain within the school's competencies, and the social worker does not intervene further.

more serious measures being taken by child protection services. In most cases, there are two to three interviews within the school.

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Source: Author.

Although there is an opportunity to compare the working activities of social pedagogues and social workers, we shall continue the analysis using internet sources of identifiable working activities, considering the number of social pedagogues in primary schools and the precision of indicators of their working activities. The previous analysis of the working activities of social pedagogues and social workers in the listed primary schools suggests that both professions have a lot in common, but also show some differences. Social pedagogues in primary schools can help to perform a socialisation function as well as an instructional function, including education. A social pedagogue with a teaching qualification can also be a teacher who works individually with pupils. In this case, they learn with them, adding to the teaching material. In some cases, the social pedagogue may substitute for a teaching assistant, with the teacher making use of his or her help in a teaching unit as a second teacher. Due to its difficulty, a social pedagogue's job description should not be combined with other roles such as guidance counsellor, school psychologist or school prevention methodologist. It is also a good idea to realise that the social pedagogue is not a teacher at the primary or lower secondary level, undertaking direct teaching of a particular subject. Although social pedagogues do not have the necessary education for teaching, they can supplement teaching. They may undertake teaching activities within after-school clubs, or perform individual extra coaching. If we want to consider social workers in the same way as we did pedagogues, then we can focus on preventive programmes and public education activities. This does not involve teaching activities in the true sense of the word, as referred to when talking about teachers.

The work of social workers and social pedagogues incorporates individual work, group work and community work (Matoušek, 2003). In regard to deprived areas and working with ethnic groups, community work is very important. One important aspect of their work may be street work. This essentially refers to outreach work as described in Table 1. Street work is characterised by being focused on finding problems within a specific neighbourhood. For social workers, this is often not possible to do, because social workers are too busy dealing with their own cases. They do not have the time for preventive outreach work. Social pedagogues have more options in terms of street work, but their scope is narrower because they are focused on school pupils and their parents. They do not look for drug addicts or homeless people in order to give them prevention options at all levels.

There are identifiable differences between both working roles in terms of educational attainment. Social pedagogues and social workers leave higher education with a bachelor's or master's degree. Social pedagogues graduate from specialisation in Pedagogy, Pedagogy or Education study programmes. Graduates of Social Pedagogy work as social workers and are classified in their positions according to the relevant law ("Act No. 108/2006," 2019). Graduates of Social Work can work as social pedagogues in primary schools. Due to the content of pre-graduate curricula in Social Pedagogy and Social Work, graduates should find work according to the programme they have studied, as corresponding to their competencies within the particular study programme curriculum. Differences in subjects studied may consist in the number of subjects focused on pedagogy and its sub-disciplines. Social workers need pedagogy subjects, but to a different extent than social pedagogues. The Act on Social Services ("Act No. 108/2006," 2019) defines the educational attainment necessary for the role

of social worker. In order to qualify as a social pedagogue in primary schools, a master's education is important.

The working activities of social pedagogues and social workers are often very difficult: these are callings where an important aspect is the feeling of satisfaction from one's work and helping others. Both positions are helping professions where there is regular and very frequent contact with clients, mainly children and young people, and also with parents. For social pedagogues, communication with teachers can also be hard work, as they sometimes ask for a lot of information to be provided. For social workers, it is important to note the large number of cases they are responsible for. Workers must have a lot of training and information in social and family law, and they must always act in accordance with legal standards. Both professions experience pronounced pressure from management, further education and society. Social pedagogues and social workers also have a large amount of administration to undertake, preventing them from spending more time with clients and pupils. On the other hand, it should be noted that individual records of investigations and interviews may in some cases serve to protect the social pedagogue or worker.

### Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to analyse the working activities of social pedagogues and social workers within the Czech primary school environment. It is clear from the paper where the borders between the work of a social pedagogue and the work of a social worker are. The rights and obligations of the profession of social worker in child protection are found in legislation. The situation is more complex when defining the rights and obligations of the profession of social pedagogue. In this situation, the job description of the social pedagogue is the only authority. From an analysis of working activities, it is clear that there is a blurred border between social pedagogue and social worker, assuming their mutual co-operation, which is to the benefit of the primary school and its families. There is an evident difference in education content, with not so much emphasis on certain areas of law and social policy required for social pedagogues. For social workers, the situation is the opposite, because knowledge of legal areas and social policy is fundamental for performing the occupation, both towards clients and in relation to expertise. On the other hand, social workers do not need to complete pedagogy-focused subjects during their studies. However, we can also find areas where we are unable to determine where the border is, such as social deviation, social psychology, and working with clients, something we consider predictable due to the historical development of social pedagogy and social work.

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Mgr. Lucie Blašítková, Ph.D. graduated in Pedagogy - Social Work at the Faculty of Education at Palacký University in Olomouc, where she also obtained a doctoral degree in Pedagogy. Since 2015, she has been working at the Department of Pedagogical Sciences at the Faculty of Humanities TBU in Zlín as an assistant professor. As part of her research and publishing activities, Lucie deals with the issue of the climate of primary schools with an emphasis on creating a positive school climate. Her research also focuses on the performance and scope of work of a social pedagogue in primary schools. Pedagogical activity is related to the fields of social policy and social work concerning vulnerable children and their families. Lucie is also the author of a monograph and has participated in a number of domestic and international conferences.



prof. PhDr. Helena Grecmanová, Ph.D. graduated in General Education Teacher Training: Czech Language and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc. She worked most of her professional life at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc as an assistant professor, associate professor and professor in the field of Pedagogy. She taught pedagogical disciplines and focused scientific research mainly on the climate of schools and educational organizations. In this area, she also professionally published monographs, articles in Czech and foreign proceedings and magazines, and wrote textbooks. She worked as a member and chairwoman of various expert commissions (doctoral, habilitation, professorships), reviewed professional texts and accreditation files, sat on scientific boards of faculties and universities, led and solved scientific research projects. She currently works as a professor at Department of Sociology, Andragogy, and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc and Department of Pedagogical Studies, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Žilina.



Doc. Mgr. Miroslav Dopita, Ph.D. graduated from Sociology and Andragogy at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc where he also defended his doctoral thesis in Sociology and later habilitated in the Andragogy major. At present he works as an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, Andragogy, and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc. He specializes in the sociology of education and work. He has participated in the research of the popularity of natural sciences among pupils of primary and secondary schools, in the research of organizational climate of higher education institutions, he has led the research of leaders in educational sciences, et cetera. He is the author/co-author of 8 monographs, he has published more than 80 articles and essays dealing with the issues of sociology of education. For example, he wrote the monograph Pierre Bourdieu about art, education and society (2007).