THE SOCIAL STATUS OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AS A PROFESSIONAL GROUP

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Abstract- This article discusses the »illusive« definition of social pedagogy by using structural functionalism. We expose the lack of precisely defined theory and practice of social pedagogy, how they affect the social status of this profession or professional group. With the help of criteria for determening social status we discuss the position of the social pedagogical professional group within the social system. We discuss the level of development of basic theories and techniques and we find that they do not make up a consistent whole. When looking at the question of monopoly in a professional area we point out that social pedagogy is in a disadvantaged position compared to other related/similar professions and this also influences the recognisability of a social pedagogue in the professional and nonprofessional field. The area of work of a social pedagogue is often covered also by other related professions. Moreover, the very general legal and administrative regulations do not help towards a better public image. When we consider the factor of organization we find that the social pedagogic professional group matches all the criteria that define it as a professional group and because of that we see an oportunity for development and establishment of a more clearly defined social pedagogical doctrine, profession, professional group. We also do not answer the question of whether or not a solid doctrine which results in a higher status of the social pedagogical professional group is in fact something the group wants to achieve.

Index Terms- structural functionalism, professional group, social status, social pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

According to several authors (Bouillet in Uzelac, 2007, Hämäläinen, 2005, Hämäläinen inL. Eriksson, 2016, Lorenz, 2008, Müller, 2007, Razpotnik, 2006, Storø, 2013), dealing with the development and conceptualisation of the socialpedagogical discourse, it is hard to precisely define social pedagogy as a science, discipline or profession. The reasons for this can also be found in its transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary character(Bouillet and Uzelac, 2007), poly professionalisation (Hämäläinen, 2005) and eclecticism (Storø, 2013) within social pedagogy.
The difficulties with defining can be seen in different areas and within different social elements (status, knowledge fund, norms, rules, ideology) and systems (social, cultural, personal) which are explained in more detail by structural functionalism by Parsons (1937, 1955, 1977, in Hozjan, 2006).
The subject of discussion is social pedagoy as a profession, a professional group within a social system where we mostly focus on its social status (Hozjan, 2006). Despite the fact that social pedagogy has been present in Slovenia for more than 25 years the practices and academic writing indicate that it is still a science and profession in the making or in the phase of forming according to L. Eriksson (2005, in Storø, 2013) and this, among other things, determines its social status which is lower than the social status of related disciplines or professions.

II. METHODS

By using the structural functional theoretical analysis we evaluate the social status of social pedagogy as a professional group. As criteria for determening the above mentioned status we will use the following criteria (Turner and Hodge, 1991, in Hozjan, 2006): the level of development of basic theories and techniques of the profession, the question of monopoly in the professional area, recognition and organization of the profession.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

L. Eriksson (2005, in Storø) believes that social pedagogy is currently in the phase of forming which means that this science and profession is also in the phase of establishing the basic theory, methods and techniques. Storø (2013) claims that the question of what social pedagogy is is a constant in the modern theoretical discussions on the subject of the basis of social pedagogy and there are no final answers. He sees a similar situation in the social pedagogical practice which works in a wide field of different situations, it is not determined with clear norms and methods and does not offer easily accessible answers. The author (Storø, 2013) sees social consturctivism as a usable theoretical perspective that could be the basis for social pedagogy. However, he also stresses at the same time that a clearer theoretical basis should be found and connected with the social pedagogical practice.
The dispersion of professional areas, trans- and interdisciplinarity (Bouillet in Uzelac, 2007) and poly-professionalism (Hämäläinen, 2005) indicate that the social pedagogical discourse (not just in Slovenia) has difficulties in conceptualising the basic theory as a complete systemic whole. The suggested intentional and professional eclecticism in practice (Storø, 2013) also questions the basic methods and techniques since the starting point for social

pedagogical interventions are versatile social situations and the concept of change(Storø, 2013).

L. Eriksson (2005, in Storø, 2013) hopes a solution to the unstable position of social pedagogy, which is seen in searching for theoretical »purity«, can be found in replacing theoretical research with a different concept or relation that defines the work practices of social pedagogy. The starting point of social pedagogical practice is valuesand the emphasis is on democratic principles and active participation of an individual and society in the process of change. Therefore, he does not find the theoretical character of social pedagogy in theory but in the work practices based on values in connection with theory (2005, v Storø, 2013).

If we evaluate the degree to which social pedagogy achieves the first of the status criteria we find that, despite the suggested solution, we cannot talk about a developed unified basic theory or techniques that would as a systemic whole serve as a basis for work practices in a professional area. This is most likely the first reason for our assumptions of a lower status of social pedagogy compared to related social, pedagogical and other professional groups whose basic activity is helping people. And this opens the next question of monopoly in the professional area. Namely, can social pedagogy in the phase of forming and instability expect to have a monopoly in the professional area because of its emancipatory intent to speak on the behalf of marginalized people?

In the professional area social pedagogy often comes across the monopoly of psychiatry and psychology. There is a very strong historical argument (Foucalt, 2004) that puts both professions mentioned above (with the exception of German social pedagogical historical legacy (Lorenz, 2008)) in a priviliged »theoretical« position since the development of their concepts is also historically established and therefore formed preciselly and more stable as well.

All three professions, psychology, psychiatry and social pedagogy have an ethical code which should result in a certain amount of monopoly (Hozjan, 2006). However, we cannot disregard the question of the dividing line between them or even the question of contamination of social pedagogy with psychiatry and psychology, which was probably not the intention of the code based on more philosophical foundations and values. We could, however, claim that the (social pedagogical) professional jargon in the function of creating a distance from the public (Hozjan, 2006) is influenced greatly by other related discourses. Let us only mention Bregant's (clinically psychological) etiological classification of dissocial disorders (1987, Priloga k vzgojnemu programu 2004) that still represents a basis in social pedagogical discourse.

The historical overview of the beginnings of social pedagogy in Slovenia (and the existance of the Ethical Code) still offers some hope for professional monopoly at least in the area of out-of-home care and children/youth with emotional and/or behavioural disorders which is shown in the contribution of the science/profession to the Educational program (Vzgojni program, 2004). The year of publishing indicates that this program is out of date. Furthermore, this is confirmed by the review of the program where N. Perger (2012, p. 391) finds that it »encourages patriarchal and heteronormative ideology« and continues that this should be »unacceptable for social pedagogy since it is based on excluding everyone who does not fit the matrix,…« Social pedagogy is in a way put side by side with psychology and psychiatry and their role of disciplining, the role of a social stabilizer, even corrector (Zorc Maver, 2006). Does this role allow for legitimacy in the relation to the authorities which in turn means and allows for the monopoly of the profession in a certain area and recognizability of the profession in public?

The recognizability of a profession (besides monopoly, description of the author) is influenced by two more factors, namely, the services it offeres and the administrative determinacy of that profession (Hozjan, 2006).

A historical analysis (Skalar, 2006) shows we can sum up the term of recognizability of the profession in connection with the services it offers (Hozjan, 2006) with »diagnostics, treatment and help« for children and youth with emotional and/or behavioural disorders, problems and their families.

Although social pedagogy has been present in Slovenia from before WWII, we could argue that it is a relatively young science formed especially to answer the needs for out of home care (in dormitories, youth homes and correctional institutions) and for individuals qualified to work with children/youth with emotional/behavioural disorders.

Due to the versatile study program a social pedagogue can perform a great number of different activities and is »qualified for prevention and treatment where education is a predominant and complementary activity in care, daycare, education, councelling, formal and informal socializing of children, youth and adults, guidance, etc.« () Škoflek, 2008, p. 28). All of the above can be connected with services offered by qualified social pedagogues: educational activities, care, daycare, education, councelling, advocacy and such. We can see that these services can be offered by many other professions in the pedagogical, psychological, social and legal area. This means that the modern social pedagogical practice is moving further away from its own historically primary activities and is expanding into other work areas. What does this mean for the recognisability of social pedagogy in public? Could this expansion of work areas be a consequence of the trasition to the postmodern world which brings about »a large existential and professional insecurity about the future« (Razpotnik, 2006, p. 35)? Can social pedagogy as a science with numerous and varied

services competently and professionally meet the needs of users in the postmodern society since it is virtually impossible or even senseless to build a solid profession in the age of insecurity (Razpotnik, 2006, p. 35)?

The process of recognizability connected with services started at the same time as the process of legal and administrative determinacy. They tried to establish a formal educational program recognized and regulated by the state (Skalar, 2006, Škoflek, 2008).

The educational program of social pedagogy was started in the 1980s with a youth home pedagogy program at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and another program at the Faculty of Education in the Department od Defectology - Behavioural and personality disorders (hereinafter referred to as BPD) (Skalar, 2006). When they analysed the situation in the employment market and in the academic field, compared both programs and found several similarities and connections, it was suggested that the two programs should be combined into one program named Professor of defectology for BPD. This program was then established and executed in a separate department at the Faculty of Education. After reviewing the academic practices from abroadthe program of social pedagogy started in 1991 as an upgrade and expansion of the program Professor of defectology for BPD (Skalar, 2006).

The contributions of academics in the professional and scientific field allowed for some legal and administrative provisions to be passed (such as the Educational program, 2004, Provisions in force in the area of education, 2018), mostly in the field of out-of-home education, which witnesses to the importance and value of social pedagogical expertize.

Last but not least, the final criterion for determining social status – the level of organization of a profession. We considered all three criteria: organization of educational institutions (professional education), the most common employment organizations and the organization of professional associations (Šporer, 1990). We find that social pedagogy has existed as a study program since 1991 which means that the first criterion has been met. When we look at organizations where social pedagogues are employed we can see a discrepancy between the systemic placement of social pedagogues mainly in the area of education and the actual situation. In practice social pedagogues are present in many areas outside of education (non-governmental organizations, social work centres, councelling centres and some are even self-employed or working in the economic sector). We would definitely place the social pedagogical profession into an organization where knowledge is produced, observed and formed and social pedagogues can contribute with their ability to reflect (Etzioni, 2001, in Hozjan, 2006). If we continue with the third criterion we see that the Social Pedagogy Association was founded in 1996 (Združenje za socialno pedagogiko, 2018), five years after the formal educational program was formed. It functions as a society whose main aims are to research and develop social pedagogy as a profession and science, to unite social pedagogues and to publish a professional –scientific magazine Social pedagogy. There are three sections within the society which in a way fits the dispersion of work areas, however we can still claim that social pedagogy meets the third criterion of organization of profession.

IV. DISSCUSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A profession, more precisely professional status includes several different elements – economic, social, cultural, etc. – which means it is a complex category and at the same time plays an important role in the development and functioning of society. (Hozjan, 2006). Professional groups (including the social pedagogical group) are dynamic structuresconstantly evolving, changing and (re)forming (Eriksson, 2005, in Storø, 2013).

Considering the dynamics, (re)forming and the developmental perspective we focused mainly on the elements that influence the social status of a professional group directly according to Turner and Hodge (1990, in Hozjan, 2006). Based on the analysis of »status criteria«we found that it is difficult to define the original theories and techniques that would form the basis for work practices in the professional field and this confirms our assumption of the lower status of social pedagogy compared to related social, pedagogical and other professional groups with a more consistent theoretical basis.

We warned about the psychologization and psychiatrization (Boulliet in Uzelac, 2007) of social pedagogy which contributes to the monopoly of psychiatry and clinical psychology in the area that is supposed to be primarily social pedagagogical – identification, diagnostics (not so much treatment which is the most social pedagogical according to practice) of children/youth with emotional/behavioural disorders. Despite the Educational program (2004) it is very difficult to determine the professional area where social pedagogy would have complete monopoly which again does not speak in favour of its social status.

With the help of a short historical overview we found out that while we can determine historically primary social pedagogical area related to the services it offers – children/youth with emotional/behavioural disorders, it does not actually display this monopoly in the current situation. At the same time this affects the reputation of social pedagogy and we could describethe role of social pedagogy as marginal among professions. We agree with Müller (2006) who warns us about the fact that social work shares the social status of its users. We believe that the same is happening to social pedagogy. So, when we look at the services that determine the recognisability of a

profession (Hozjan, 2006), we see that many services are also offered by other related professions – psychosocial help, councelling, identification and treatment of problems etc. Regarding the legal and administrative regulations we find that while the area of work can be defined systemically (legally) – education – it is still very general. If we consider the organization and contents of education we can again see the trans- and interdisciplinarity and »contamination« with other sciences within the social pedagogical professional training.

Only when we analyze social pedagogy as a professional group according to the criterion of organization we find that it has an organized professional education and training, we can determine the predominant organizations of employment and there is a professional association – therefore, it should have a higher status according to this criterion. Perhaps the opportunity to improve the social status lies in this area since a professional association is an ideal opportunity to actively work towards the above mentioned goal if this should be a goal of a profession, professional group or association.

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