

The nature of social pedagogy: an excursion in Norwegian territory

Paul Stephens

Professor of Social Pedagogy, University of Stavanger, Norway

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examine the nature of social pedagogy, a discipline with deep roots in Continental Europe but not in the UK. Things are changing, however. The politicians in Westminster are listening to the people at the Thomas Coram Research Unit in London. The message is unequivocal. It is time to learn from social pedagogical approaches to working with looked-after children in other European countries. Why is this? The government wants to prepare an early years professional who can combine the skills of a social worker with those of an educator. Based on case studies of successful approaches to improving the well-being of looked-after children in Denmark, France and Germany, the Thomas Coram researchers have found a childcare professional who can pull this off: the social pedagogue. As a professor of social pedagogy in a Norwegian university that educates social pedagogues, I want to shed light on a discipline that might help British stakeholders in childcare settings to draw selective lessons from a promising Nordic model.

Correspondence: Professor Paul Stephens, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Stavanger
4036 Stavanger, Norway
paul.stephens@uis.no

Keywords: social pedagogy; work with children, UK, Norway; lesson-drawing

BACKGROUND

Social pedagogy, as a discipline and a practice, is drawing attention in British political circles. In 2003, the UK Government published a Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), in which it set out a number of measures to protect children and maximize their potential. During consultations that followed, the politicians highlighted the need for reform of the early years workforce. In particular, they identified the need to educate (at a level equivalent to qualified teacher status) a new graduate professional in children's services: the early years professional (or EYP).

The first EYPs graduated in 2007, and the government's aim is to have them in all Children's Centres offering early years provision by 2010 and in every full day care site by 2015 (DfES, 2007a). The EYP's brief is to work in settings that combine care and education, such as, for example, Sure Start Children's Centres.

These are precisely the kinds of setting that offer an optimal role for good social pedagogic practice. It is therefore noteworthy that researchers at the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) at the Institute of Education, University of London, are currently undertaking pilot research in UK residential homes for children (see DfES, 2007 b). The homes in question employ Danish pedagogues, who serve as role models for British childcare professionals. The long-term aim, backed by government funding, is to assess the effectiveness of a social pedagogic approach. Data obtained from this research will subsequently help to inform the government's decision about whether and how to encourage wider use of social pedagogic practice in residential children's homes in England (DCSF, 2008).

While the EYP is a new addition to the childcare workforce in the UK, there is a well-established (and successful) counterpart for this role in Norway: the child welfare pedagogue, whose professional education and training is based on social pedagogy. Child welfare pedagogues are found in a variety of social care, education, health and leisure sites, typically working in the life space of those whom they care for. The primary social pedagogic goal in such settings is to nurture healthy cognitive and social development in everyday settings.

As a teacher and researcher of social pedagogy at a Norwegian university, I think British policy-makers might benefit from obtaining a better understanding of

social pedagogy, as theorized and practised in a Nordic country. During the last two years, I have embarked on an intellectual and ideological voyage in the Nordic social pedagogic terrain. In this paper, I want to share some of the insights, as well as not a few gut feelings, about my understanding of the discipline of social pedagogy.

My journey is a long way from its final destination, wherever that might be, but I am beginning to put some of the jigsaw pieces together. One of the Big Ideas in Norwegian social pedagogy is that teaching and learning (both broadly defined) engender (or should engender) a connectedness between the teacher and the learner (again, both broadly defined). This affiliation is expressive rather than instrumental by design. The emphasis is on human relationships based on openness and equality as opposed to supervision and hierarchy.

In what follows, I shall explore this and related themes more fully. I shall also suggest some ways in which policy-makers in the UK might draw lessons from Nordic thinking and practice. The use of international comparisons is an indispensable tool in the development of effective social pedagogic care policy because it can point towards new (and potentially effective) solutions to shared problems. Evidence about what has worked well in one country, while not necessarily transferring directly into prescriptions for future action elsewhere, does offer scope for judicious lesson-drawing. It is encouraging in that regard to find that the ripple effects of best “foreign” practice are already providing British policy-makers with fresh – and potentially transferable – perspectives on social pedagogic work in children’s homes.

I shall start by briefly documenting the origins of social pedagogy as a discipline in Germany before considering how it is currently understood and

practised in Continental Europe, particularly in Norway. I shall then consider how social pedagogy is beginning to become known and used in England. From this distillate, and with the addition of some personal thoughts, I shall propose a working (or hypothetical) definition of what constitutes the discipline of social pedagogy. I shall subsequently argue that there are valuable lessons to be learned in England from social pedagogic models in Norway. Finally, I shall suggest that the time has come for a new early years professional in the British childcare workforce: the social pedagogue.

Origins and development of social pedagogy in Continental Europe

The origins of disciplines are notoriously difficult to track down. Trying to discover the genesis of social pedagogy is no exception. A credible contender for the title of “Father” of social pedagogy (see Mathiesen, 2008) is the German philosopher and pedagogue, Paul Natorp (1854-1924), who wrote (1904, as cited in Hallstedt & Högström, 2005, p. 31, fn.19):

‘[Die sozialen] Bedingungen der [*Bildung*] also und die [*Bildungs*] bedingungen des [sozialen Lebens], dass ist dass Thema dieser Wissenschaft.’

‘The social aspects of “education” (*Bildung*) and the “educational” (*Bildungs*) aspects of social life constitute this science [social pedagogy].’

Actually, German *Bildung* is more expansive than English *education*. *Bildung* denotes not just schooling, but also the cultivation and elevation of character. At the same time, *Bildung* is a nuanced (even a contested) concept that, to the chagrin of pedants, eludes a clear-cut definition. In English translation, its various connotations

include “education”, “formation” and “refinement”, to name a few. Yet even if the concept is hard to pin down, I think Prange’s (2004) notion of *Bildung* as a kind of educational surplus that develops grace-perfecting nature, or *Natura non tollit gratiam, sed perficit*, is discerning.

What does come across in Natorp’s work is a clear sense of social pedagogic practice as a deliberative and rational form of socialization. This resonates with Durkheim’s (1980, in Cosin et al., Eds., p. 79) belief, ‘that education is an eminently social thing in its origins as in its functions ...’. Again like Durkheim (1980, in Cosin et al., Eds.), Natorp (see Mathiesen, 1999) believes that individuals become social human beings by being socialized into the human collective (or society, as Durkheim would say). It is this emphasis on the social that lies at the heart of Natorp’s conception of social pedagogy. Such is still the case today. Social pedagogy, as theorized and practised in Continental Europe, typically involves social pedagogues and children sharing the same social life spaces in, as Petrie et al (2006, p. 23) nicely put it, a ‘pedagogy of relationships’ that prepares children for associative life.

Although social pedagogy, like other social scientific disciplines, can be put to different uses, including political indoctrination, its practical application has historically focused on helping socially marginalized groups. Social pedagogic interventions involving such communities have included attempts to re-socialize “deviant” children and adults, psychiatric treatment for the mentally ill, and the development of more socially inclusive schools (Madsen, 2006).

Insofar as the prevailing philosophy of social pedagogic work in contemporary Continental Europe is concerned, research by Petrie et al (2006) at the Thomas Coram Research Unit reveals a number of consistent norms:

- ❑ Social pedagogues address the whole child and provide support for the child's overall development.
- ❑ Social pedagogues pay attention to the quality of the relationship between the social pedagogue and child or young person. Communication skills (including listening) are crucial.
- ❑ Children and social pedagogues occupy the same life space rather than operating in discrete hierarchical settings.
- ❑ Related to the last point, social pedagogues share in many aspects of children's daily lives and activities.
- ❑ Social pedagogues engage in professional reflection and base their practice on theoretical understanding and self-knowledge.
- ❑ Social pedagogues value children's associative life.
- ❑ Social pedagogues not only support the legal and procedural rights of children, but also seek to ensure that every child has the right to social inclusion and social dignity in society.

- Social pedagogues value team work and respect the contribution of other adults (notably, parents) in “bringing up” children.

Petrie et al (2006) conclude that the good social pedagogue is able to juxtapose her “heart”, her “head” and her “hands”, a delicate balance involving human warmth and rational decision-making, as well as creative and practical activities. There are clear allusions to Pestalozzi’s Reform Pedagogy here, in which hearts, heads and hands make for an education of the whole child.

Out of this triumvirate, develops what I believe is the defining feature of best social pedagogic practice: the capacity to become a secure adult base in a child’s life. I have borrowed the term “secure base” from psychoanalytic theory (Bowlby, 2005) because it personifies a relationship in which the child can turn to a significant and trusted adult for emotional sanctuary and support.

I also find signs of social pedagogic thinking in the sociology of education, and have already hinted as such by referring to Durkheim. What is more, I think that Petrie et als’ (2006) seminal work on social pedagogy in Continental Europe entails, intentionally or otherwise, a sociological point of view. This surfaces in the importance assigned to the relationship between adult educators and child learners and of the role of social pedagogy in child development. At the same time, a social pedagogic perspective demands more than a conceptual understanding of deliberative socialization. It is a revolt against mere depiction. It calls for the kind of action that Popkewitz (no date provided) characterizes as the reconstruction of society through the reconstruction of the child.

Social pedagogy in Norway today

In Norway, social pedagogy is rooted in an academic as well as a vocational tradition (see Kyriacou et al, 2009, accepted for publication). The academic origin of the discipline can be traced to a dispute at Oslo University in the mid-1970s, where a group of radical academics set up a course in social pedagogy as an alternative to the existing (mainly cognitive-based) programme in educational studies. The new course, inspired by critical sociology, heralded a more symmetric form of communication between lecturers and students. The Oslo social pedagogues also argued for a broader understanding of pedagogy, proposing that the discipline should have as much to do with social as with cognitive learning. There are echoes here, but with a different slant, of the English public school.

To what extent the critical voice from Oslo University moved social pedagogy outside of pure, discipline-based debates into the caring professions is hard to say. Nonetheless, a discipline that gave as much attention to social as to cognitive development, was bound to appeal to childcare professionals in Norway, and, in particular, in the field of the so-called “barnevernspedagog” (or, in English, the child welfare pedagogue). Social pedagogy is the core subject in the education of Norwegian child welfare pedagogues, and it is entirely appropriate to describe them as social pedagogues.

For the most part, child welfare pedagogues work with disadvantaged children and their families, often as ambulant professionals in such sites as children’s homes, schools, after-school clubs, child and youth psychiatry and even prisons. In these settings, the child welfare pedagogue is expected to exhibit such human qualities as

empathy (the warm as opposed to the cold variety), a capacity for reaching respectful, mutual understanding and the ability to build constructive relationships. In fact, these are among the explicit qualities set out in Norway's *National Framework for the Education of Child Welfare Pedagogues* (UFD, 2005a).

This official document, a “national curriculum” of sorts, positions the intending child welfare pedagogue as an advocate for disadvantaged social service users, with the moral duty of helping them to mobilize their own change potential. The issue is not just about altering injurious ways of thinking, even though this is a crucial aim of social pedagogic action. Child welfare pedagogues are also expected to show solidarity with vulnerable families by helping them to set up self-help groups in their own communities, and by working alongside them (UFD, 2005a).

It is noteworthy that while social pedagogy is a bedrock discipline in the preparation of Norwegian child welfare pedagogues, there is also a lot of implicit social pedagogy (in the sense of an emphasis on affective relational focus) in the education of schoolteachers in Norway. In a comparative study of teacher *training* and teacher *education* in, respectively, England and Norway, Stephens et al (2004) found that the government-prescribed content of pedagogy courses for student teachers in Norway envisages teaching as a caring profession. To cite a prominent Norwegian author of teacher education textbooks: ‘Contact is care’ (Imsen, 1999, p. 25).

Indeed, Norwegian schools are regarded as ‘moral places’ (see Goodlad, 1994, p. 59) where, according to the *National Framework for Teacher Education* (another kind of “national curriculum”), ‘Teachers need to care for children and the young

through expectations and demands on the one hand and goodwill and warmth on the other' (KUF, 1999, p. 18). Interestingly, a national study of pupils' perceptions of teacher behaviour in Norway that I was involved in found that, 'Perceived emotional support from teachers showed the strongest positive associations with desired student behavior' (Bru et al., 2002, p. 287). Put succinctly, a caring classroom manner does seem to work, which adds credibility to the policy-makers' aims.

By now, it will be clear that I regard applied social pedagogy, whether occurring in schools (I was a teacher educator in Norway before becoming professor of social pedagogy) or elsewhere, as an explicitly caring practice. An emphasis on the compassionate role of pedagogic activity pervades both the pedagogy of the classroom (which, understandably, is rather cognitively weighted) as well as the social pedagogy of the child welfare pedagogue (which, as expected, is rooted in caring relationships). It is important to add that my separation of cognitive and caring elements is openly heuristic because these and other factors are intertwined, although probably in different measures. I shall return to this matter later.

Social pedagogy in the UK

Today, what from a Continental European perspective is termed social pedagogy, is “practised” though rarely theorized in the UK. The inverted commas signal my unease about pushing the practice part too far. For it is problematic to speak of British social pedagogic practice when there seems to be little explicit reference to social pedagogic values in the UK. Actually, my impression is that talk of social pedagogy in the English-speaking world generally conjures up variations on the theme of social work.

Yet in Norway, social pedagogy (the hub of child welfare education) is nowhere to be seen in the *National Framework for the Education of Social Workers* (UFD, 2005b). Why is that? I think the answer lies less in paradigmatic differences (both disciplines bring social scientific insight to social problems), but more in degrees of specialization. Stated directly and with manifest hyperbole, social work is multi-perspective in its approach to (social) problem-solving, whereas social pedagogy seeks specifically *pedagogical* remedies for social problems. Notwithstanding, the distinction is surely one of degree rather than of kind

On the micro-level, the vehicle for achieving a pedagogical remedy is a therapeutic relationship between the social pedagogue and the child (or adult), with the aim of instilling (to borrow from Bandura, 2004, p. 620) ‘a robust sense of coping efficacy’. Into the bargain, the social pedagogue arranges things in ways that enhance success and which avoid putting vulnerable people prematurely into situations where they are likely to fall short. For example, individuals who have little confidence in their ability to enter (or re-enter) employment can go into work programmes that

start with easily “mastered” steps. As confidence grows, so the challenges increase until bolder functioning is instilled or restored.

Given that the recognition and practice of social pedagogy in the UK is still in its infancy, attempts to translate Continental European terms, such as “Sozialpädagogik” (German) or “sosialpedagogikk” (Norwegian), into English are rarely edifying. Indeed, the result is often perplexing. What, for example, is to be made of terms such as “social education” or “socio-educational care work”? This lack of conceptual precision prompted Petrie and her colleagues (Petrie et al, 2006) to look to Continental Europe. What they found in countries such as Denmark and Germany, is a care professional who works within the same life space as children across a range of educational and social settings. Petrie et al (2006) call this practitioner a *social pedagogue* and the discipline that she practices *social pedagogy*.

These unambiguous translations from Nordic and German usage bring clarity to a field that in the English-speaking world is still semantically stuck. In fact, as a result of work being done at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, a framework for social pedagogy is now in place in the Institute of Education’s Foundation Degree; BA and Masters degrees in social pedagogy are also being developed. For all this, now is not the time to rest on laurels. ‘Social pedagogue’ and ‘social pedagogy’ continue to mystify British ears, and the terms have yet to gain full acceptance among those who are making decisions about the new childcare workforce in the UK.

The uniting of two dimensions, the social (or caring) and the pedagogic (or cognitive) in the holistic notion of social pedagogy might prompt some fundamental changes in the way the government looks at work with children, parents and families.

Traditionally, politicians in England (but increasingly less so in Scotland) have tended to view care and education as separate domains. The social worker (broadly defined) provides care; the schoolteacher instructs. True there is a degree of hyperbole here. Even so, the philosophy behind the education of social workers in England is arguably more expressive and less instrumental than that found in English teacher training, where things tend to be the other way around (see Stephens et al, 2004).

Social pedagogy defined

Put on the spot to define their subject, most academics would find this daunting. Indeed, few (are there any?) academics have achieved consensus about what constitutes a distinct field of study. Notwithstanding, some disciplines have a more clearly defined body of knowledge than others. Thus, for example, it is easier to identify commonly accepted paradigms in physics than it is in sociology. As regards social pedagogy, it is glaringly difficult to identify a core content.

The subject gives up many of its secrets in bits and pieces and sometimes through the writings of academics who never thought to call themselves social pedagogues, such as John Dewey (1897) and Paulo Freire (1996), both of whom laid bare the social rudiments of pedagogic practice. I also find social pedagogy in the ‘sprawling oeuvre’ (see Wacquant, 2006, p. 3) of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, whose writings span a wide selection of topics at the intersection of social work and education (see, for example, Bourdieu et al, 1999).

Even though social pedagogy might elude a clear-cut definition, Petrie’s (Petrie et al, 2006, p. 6), ‘working definition of [social] pedagogy’ as ‘probably that of

“education in its broadest sense”, or “bringing up” children in a way that addresses the whole child’, begs the question: What is education in its usual sense? I venture that the short answer, at least in England, is that the term “education” on its own generally denotes the imparting of *cognitive* knowledge. The broader notion implies a *relational* (or *social*) aspect as well, which in Petrie’s (Petrie et al, 2005; Petrie et al, 2006; see also Kozol, 1993) writings is understood as a conscientious pedagogic effort on the part of an adult to support a child in a caring environment.

My point is that to envisage social and cognitive elements holistically makes it possible to admit a broader concept of education, something that each of these elements on their own do not achieve. In that respect, I think that Petrie et al’s (2006) notion of social pedagogy as education in its broadest sense might be reformulated as the additional (and much needed) educational dimension that brings English pedagogy (read cognitive education) to full circle (read cognitive learning *plus* deliberative social upbringing). This brings me to a hypothetical definition of social pedagogy:

Social pedagogy is the study and practice of deliberative care, education and upbringing, viewed holistically rather than as separate entities, and with an emphasis on finding pedagogical ways of nurturing and supporting positive social development.

Interestingly, the notion that social and cognitive events are simultaneously present and affect each other is found in Bandura’s (1997) social cognitive theory. However, reciprocity does not necessarily suggest that mutual influences are of comparable strength. Context determines the weighting. When solving a

mathematical problem on her own, for example, the child's cognitive skills are foremost. But when she shares a toy with another child, she draws on her social abilities, and, of course, her sense of right and wrong. For social abilities are not just learnt, they are felt in the conscience (see Stephens, 2006).

The interconnectedness between the social and the pedagogic in social pedagogy can be represented, in ideal type terms, as a socio-pedagogic 'molecule', dependent on and for each other but also indivisible. For heuristic purposes, however, it is helpful to disentangle and define the constituent elements. In a social pedagogic relationship, the social element is the reception of the learner and the pedagogue to each other. The pedagogic element is the teaching and learning that seek to enact changes in the way the learner thinks and acts. There is not a single formula for these events. Rather, the particular configurations of social pedagogic practice will echo traces of wider social structures.

In hard-line, neo-liberal regimes, for example, social pedagogic (and social) work is often a repair device for rectifying social disorder. However, in Nordic countries, where Keynesian economics still holds some sway, social pedagogues are more concerned (state approval to boot) with nurturing the innate qualities of marginalized individuals, even if this means openly challenging inequality in society. It is important to add that social pedagogic practice is also apparent in the universal Nordic services, such as pre-school and after-school activities.

Cross-cultural policy learning

This brings me to the matter of whether Norwegian-style social pedagogy might fit easily within a fully-fledged, neo-liberal regime such as the UK. While some New

Right ideas are filtering into the Norwegian welfare state (“filtering” is the operative word), the political consensus appears to be that social justice is a cultural capital resource that is tainted by an over-emphasis on monetary considerations.

It should not be forgotten that Norway is a very rich nation. More to the point, the matter of how the nation’s massive \$380 billion sovereign wealth fund (based on oil money) should be spent and invested is as much an ethical as it is a financial question. Ethical social policy – for, example, how much to spend on social welfare, why not to invest in Wal-Mart – is a characteristically Norwegian penchant. It is therefore predictable that the state-mandated content of child welfare pedagogy courses in Norway supports the core values of siding with the needy and giving socially marginalized people real voice in politics. Bourdieu would have approved.

Things are rather different across the North Sea, where there still remain unambiguous parallels with Thatcher’s and George W. Bush’s neo-liberal social policies; and that in spite of a Labour government since 1997. For this reason, UK social policy is heavily steeped in an ideology that seeks to avoid rocking the boat of global market forces. Accordingly, “workfare” (i.e. work for your welfare) policies of the kind that, for example, push lone mothers into precarious employment (see Evans, 2007) are incrementally becoming the income support intervention of first choice in the UK.

This outlook is at odds with the Norwegian welfare model, where public benefits are construed as social rights. True, there are signs of workfare thinking in recent welfare reforms. But this represents only a small part of the overall system. In that sense, the social rights agenda has been supplemented rather than replaced by

workfare schemes (see Sefos, 2000). Of real importance, social pedagogic practice has a natural affinity with welfare policies that seek pedagogic remedies to social injustice. In Norway, the goal of the social pedagogue is not to apportion blame, but to help vulnerable children and their families gain the confidence for self-improvement, whether this is through counselling, study, paid employment or indeed via the receipt of welfare benefits.

Indulge me if I seem unduly pessimistic, but I do not think that the Norwegian model of social pedagogy can be imitated – even though it is surely worthy of imitation – in the UK. I say this because the two nations are so different with regard to structural and political arrangements. That said, there is leeway to filch some promising aspects of Nordic policy and practice and then to use (and adapt) these elements in a UK setting. I think such an exercise might work especially well in those areas of British social policy that place a strong emphasis on social service user participation.

I have in mind, for example, the Wiltshire and Swindon User Network [WSUN] (Swindon Borough Council, 2008), which was set up in 1991 by long-term users of health and social care services. This user-controlled organization was launched as a result of directives in the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act that identified service users as key stakeholders in their own care. WSUN – which empowers users with sensory and other physical impairments, people with mental health problems and older people – has since become an example of good practice nationally. Interestingly, this is an example of social pedagogic practice (implicit, to be sure) outside the realm of child welfare. I mention this because social pedagogy,

while largely practised in sites where there are children, has much to offer the adult population.

Drawing inspiration (again, probably implicitly) from social pedagogic practice of the kind involving mutual teaching and learning between welfare professionals and service users, WSUN has incorporated the idea of ‘a literature from below’ (see Grass & Bourdieu, 2000) into its day-to-day agenda. What comes across, is the commitment of senior welfare professionals in using their personal power to promote user power and influence. I sense a Nordic touch with regard to the emphasis on enabling socially disadvantaged groups to have a voice that goes far beyond the limiting expression, “I hear what you say”. The onus is on a profoundly social pedagogic skill, namely, being able to listen to a different point of view and, as appropriate, of incorporating this into the decision-making process.

Undoubtedly, this readiness to ensure that the voices of long-term service users are heard and acted upon will be found in many areas of social work and child welfare in the UK. Yet my impression (an hypothesis yet to be tested empirically) is that notions of care, as enacted in UK legislation, are constituted more in legalistic than in moral terms. If my assumption is correct, then the means for adopting a “best interest” approach based on moral contingencies rather than strict adherence to set procedures will surely be difficult to achieve.

On the other hand, in Norway, where welfare legislation is more rooted in the principle of social service users’ rights to self-determination than in the UK, I think it is easier for social workers and social pedagogues to engage with what Smith (1997, p. 3) terms, ‘the social and emotional content of a caring relationship’ rather than what

she characterizes as an agenda based on ‘formal requirements’. What I am suggesting is that there is quite a strong consensus in Norway between legislative and practitioner values, thereby making it easier for welfare professionals to work in ideological harmony with the state.

This is not to suggest that ‘formal requirements’ are unimportant in Norwegian child welfare. On the contrary, the moral obligation in Norway to allow children to express their feelings and preferences is enshrined in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* [1989] (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008; incorporated into Norwegian Law in 2003). The Convention states that all children and young persons have the right to be heard in all matters that concern them (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008). This allows for a social pedagogy based on the principle that children’s rights should be interpreted widely. It applies, for example, to close relationships in the child’s family and other care sites, in pre-school and school, in court and in the local community (Det kongelige barne- og likestillingsdepartement et al, 2007).

Even though the Nordic welfare model differs in many respects from its UK counterpart, there is surely scope for British policy-makers to widen their horizons by learning from Nordic success stories. Indeed, the experts on the Nordic story at the Thomas Coram Research Unit have shown how evidence on social pedagogic practice elsewhere can offer an invaluable source of useful ideas. I sense that these policy scholars are on the horizon of something big. Why else would their willingness to try out ideas from Denmark in English children’s homes be rewarded by government interest and funding?

As regards centrally formulated criteria for the education of the childcare workforce, selective lesson drawing from Norway might help decision-makers in the UK to obtain better policy answers to the challenges they face at home. For example, I think that the explicit inclusion of social pedagogy in courses for the preparation of EYPs will help to ensure that care and education are firmly on the agenda. On the other hand, if the discipline of social pedagogy is left to the mercy of caprice, social pedagogic dimensions might easily slip to the margins.

For all this, there is no guarantee that social pedagogic models showing promise in one country will produce the same results elsewhere. Indeed, as in other areas of comparative policy studies (see Marmor et al, 2005), closing the gap between promise and performance is rarely easy. This is why the Thomas Coram researchers are not just distilling the core elements of promising interventions in Continental Europe, they are also testing the effectiveness of these measures in the ‘home’ country.

Social pedagogue or early years professional?

In themselves, the words used to describe the childcare workforce in the UK ought to be less important than what childcare professionals do. Notwithstanding, I think there is a compelling case for describing these professionals as social pedagogues who are implicitly or explicitly (probably, the former) engaged in social pedagogic work. I must add that the term “social pedagogue” could (and probably should) be used to describe other welfare and educational professionals in the UK who combine a caring and a pedagogic approach in their work. Thus, for example, the designation might usefully be applied to certain professionals (including some social workers) who work with the following groups: disabled children and adults, prisoners

and their families, children in secure settings, and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people.

The fact that the new EYPs in the UK work in settings that touch at the suture of care and education and that they are also expected to engage in sustained shared thinking with children (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2007) bodes well for the ambulant and integrated ambitions of social pedagogy. So, in the spirit of "If she looks like a social pedagogue, she probably is a social pedagogue", I propose that the time is right for a new designation in the professional vocabulary of the UK childcare workforce: social pedagogue.

Permit me to end with a postscript. My suggestion should not be interpreted as inviting an uncritical semantic takeover of a term from a different place. Rather, it is an invitation to learn from the ideas and practices of a richly developed Continental European education and welfare field.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Dr Chris Kyriacou (University of York) and Professor Pat Petrie (University of London) for valuable and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.

Bandura, A. (2004). Swimming against the mainstream: the early years from chilly tributary to transformative mainstream, *Behaviour Research*

and Therapy, 42, 613–630.

Bourdieu, P. et al. (1999). *The Weight of the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bowlby, J. (2005). *A Secure Base*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bru, E., Stephens, P. & Torsheim, T. (2002). Students' perceptions of class management and reports of their own misbehaviour. *Journal of School Psychology, 40*(4), 287-307.

Children's Workforce Development Council (2007). *Prospectus: early years professional status*. Leeds: CWDC.

Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed, *The School Journal, LIV*(3), 77-80.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). (2008). *Care Matters: Time to deliver for children in care*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2003). *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. London: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2007a). *Children's Workforce Strategy Update – Spring 2007: Building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families*. London: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2007b). *Care Matters: Time*

for Change. London: DfES.

Det kongelige barne- og likestillingsdepartement, Det kongelige kommunal- og regionaldepartement, Det kongelige arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartement, Det kongelige helse- og omsorgsdepartement, Det kongelige justis- og politidepartement, Det kongelige kunnskapsdepartement. (2007).

[Department of Children & Equal Opportunities, Department of Community & Regional Development, Department of Work & Social Inclusion, Department of Health & Care, Department of Justice & Police, Department of Education].

Forebyggende innsats for barn og unge. [Preventative Interventions for Children and Young People ; in Norwegian]. Rundskriv Q-16/2007. Oslo: Departementene.

Durkheim, E. (1980). Pedagogy and sociology. In B. R. Cosin, I. R. Dale, G. M. Esland, D. Mackinnon, & D. F. Swift (Eds.), *School and Society: A sociological reader*. 2nd ed. (pp. 79-83). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Evans, P. M. (2007). (Not) Taking Account of Precarious Employment: Workfare Policies and Lone Mothers in Ontario and the UK, *Social Policy and Administration*, 41(1), 29-49.

Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Goodlad, J. I. (1994). *Educational Renewal*. San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass.

Grass, G. & Bourdieu, P. (3 July, 2000). A Literature From Below. *The Nation*.

New York: (no publisher provided).

Hallstedt, P. & Högström, M. (2005). *The Recontextualisation of Social Pedagogy: A study of three curricula in the Netherlands, Norway and Ireland*. Malmö, Sweden: Holmbergs AB.

Imsen, G. (1999). *Elevenes verden* [The pupil's world; in Norwegian] (3rd edn.). Oslo: Tano Aschehoug.

Kirke, Utdannings-Og Forskningsdepartementet (KUF). [Norwegian Ministry of Education]. (1999). *Praktisk-pedagogisk utdanning* [Practical teacher education; in Norwegian]. Oslo: Norgesnettrådet.

Kozol, J. (1993). *On Being a Teacher*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Kyriacou, C., Ellingsen, I. T., Stephens, P. & Sundaram, V. (2009; accepted for publication). Social pedagogy and the teacher: England and Norway compared, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*.

Madsen, B. (2006). *Sosialpedagogikk* [Social Pedagogy; in Norwegian]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Marmor, T., Freeman, R. & Okma, K. (2005). Comparative Perspectives and Policy Learning in the World of Health Care, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 7(4), 331-348.

Mathiesen, R. (1999). An Examination of the Theoretical Foundation of Social Pedagogy, *The Journal of the European Association of Training Centres for Socio-Educational Care Work*, 3, 3-27.

Mathiesen, R. (2008). *Sosialpedagogisk perspektiv på individ og fellesskap* [Social Pedagogic Perspectives on the Individual and the Group; in Norwegian]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2008). *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). Accessed 6 September 2008 on: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>

Petrie, P., Boddy, J., Cameron, C., Heptinstall, E., McQuail, S., Simon, A. & Wigfall, V. (2005). *Pedagogy – a holistic, personal approach to work with children and young people, across services: European models for practice, training, education and qualification*. Briefing Paper. London: Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Petrie, P., Boddy, J., Cameron, C., Wigfall, V., & Simon, A. (2006). *Working with Children in Care*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Popkewitz, T. S. (no date provided). *The Idea of Science as Planning was not Planned: A Historical Note about American Pedagogical Sciences as Planning Society and Individuality*, pp. 1-18. The University of Wisconsin-Madison. Accessed 14 July 2008

on: <http://www.ped.gu.se/biorn/popkewitz.pdf>

Prange, K. (2004). *Bildung: a paradigm regained?*, *European Educational Research Journal*, 3(2), 501-509.

Sefos, N. K. (2000). Workfare tendencies in Scandinavian welfare policies.
Paper presented at the 8th BIEN Congress: *Economic Citizenship Rights for the 21st Century*, Berlin, 6-7 October 2000.

Smith, C. (1997). Children's Rights: Have Carers Abandoned Values?, *Children & Society*, 11, 3-15.

Stephens, P., Tønnessen, F. E. & Kyriacou, C. (2004). Teacher *training* and teacher *education* in England and Norway: a comparative study of policy goals. *Comparative Education*, 40(1), 109-130.

Stephens, P. (2006). *Å utvikle og å fremme barns prosiale atferd*
[Developing prosocial behaviour in childhood; in Norwegian]. In, J. B. Johansen & D. Sommer (Eds). *Oppdragelse, Danning og Sosialisering i Læringsmiljøer* [Upbringing, Character Formation and Socialization in Educational Settings; in Norwegian]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Swindon Borough Council (2008). Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network

(WSUN). Accessed 14 July 2008 on: <http://www.steam-museum.org.uk/socialcare/signpost/social-signpostdailylife/social-signpostmanagingathome/sbc-signpostitemdisplay.htm?itemid=24608>

Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet (UFD). (2005a). *Rammeplan og Forskrift for 3-Årig Barnevernspedagogutdanning* [National Framework and Regulations for the 3-year Education of Child Welfare Pedagogues; in Norwegian]. Oslo: UFD.

Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet (UFD). (2005b). *Rammeplan for 3-Årig Sosionomutdanning* [National Framework for the 3-year Education of Social Workers; in Norwegian]. Oslo: UFD.

Wacquant, L. (2006). *Pierre Bourdieu*. Berkeley CA: University of California-Berkeley.