

Social Pedagogy Facing Inequalities and Vulnerabilities¹

Xavier Úcar

How would a moral culture have to be constituted if it were to give those affected, despised and excluded by it the individual strength to articulate their experiences in the democratic public space rather than experiencing them in countercultures of violence? (Honneth 2011, 145).

I do not think of myself as a social being but as a being capable of making choices that can change my activities, my realities and my intentions (Touraine 2013, 298).

I think that we are all well aware of both the situations that create vulnerability and the individuals and groups most affected by the problems plaguing our developed societies. We have been in this crisis for too many years for us not to have a friend, relative or acquaintance who, in one way or another, or to a greater or lesser extent, has been affected by its consequences. And although the politicians have begun to insist that we are now emerging from it, this does not seem a very credible message when it reaches the more disadvantaged sectors of our societies.

Precarious employment conditions or unemployment, evictions, loneliness, abandonment and poverty are all contributing to swell the ranks of the disinherited on a daily basis. Situations which have indeed

¹Puheenvuoro Sosiaalipedagogiikan päivillä Turussa 21.4.2016.

started to worsen and become more urgent in the last year due to the massive arrival in Europe of refugees fleeing situations of war, insecurity and resulting poverty. People in the understandable and legitimate search for a quality of life like the one enjoyed by the privileged; we who have had the fortune to be born in developed countries.

It is difficult to establish hierarchies or degrees of social inequalities and the situations of vulnerability in which people find themselves. It is most probably disadvantaged families, the elderly, children and young people who are most affected by the precarious situations generated by the European economic crisis and the associated political cuts, especially in southern Europe. If we had been told only 10 years ago that today we would be speaking in my country, Spain, of child poverty² (27 % of children) and high levels of youth migration, we simply would not have believed it. I think that many of us share a rejection of the social policies that have not adequately responded to these problems. From my point of view, nothing can justify austerity policies and welfare cuts if they are nourished by the loss of human dignity.

Years ago, in his book on the "risk society", Ulrich Beck (1998) spoke of the "elevator effect" to refer to the overall improvement of living standards in our societies in the second half of the last century. He said that society in general had risen up a notch and that this called into question key concepts at that time, such as the "class struggle". It seems that since the arrival of the crisis in 2008 we should now talk about the opposite effect, the "descending effect". However, the problems deriving from this are much more complicated because people do not even have the support of a social class that, as well as understanding and sharing their vulnerability, accompanies them in the struggle to regain their quality of life and safeguard their rights.

On the one hand, there are the social exclusion processes, which have supplemented the exploitation processes we inherited from industrial societies in some cases and replaced them in others. And on the other hand, there are the processes of *institutional individualization* (Honneth

²The gap dividing the country (Spain) between rich and poor children begins right in the center and becomes much more severe towards the South, where the risk of child poverty reaches 35 %. Ceuta tops this unfortunate list with 55.5%, followed by Murcia with 51.4% and the region of Andalusia with 44.4 %. Northern Spain seems to reflect data from a different survey: Navarra, Galicia and the Basque Country do not have even 20 %. (Save the Children, ref. Bech 2015.)

2011), which have become more widespread in organizations in recent years³, breaking the social bond and relegating many individuals, families and communities to situations of loneliness, isolation and indigence.

Society in general or, rather, at least two-thirds or more of the society are not only seeing their quality of life worsen by the day but, in many cases, are reaching situations that may even endanger them being able to live in minimally decent conditions.

In the face of this, theorists and practitioners in our field are asking what social pedagogy should and can do to remedy these situations. In particular, we ask ourselves: what should and can social pedagogy practitioners do for people suffering these problems first hand?

Let me be clear in my answer to this question: social pedagogy theorists and practitioners would like to be able to do a lot and I wish we could! But the reality is that we will be able to do little or very little to remedy the situations of precariousness, inequality, conflict or vulnerability being experienced by the people and communities we work with. And why is that? Why do I say that we can do little? That is precisely what I will try to explain in this paper by analysing, first, the functions and dysfunctions of politics and pedagogy in the face of these issues. Secondly, I will provide a reflection on the current role of people and communities in socio-educational relations. I will then outline the features that I believe a socio-educational intervention should have. And finally, with my fourth point, I will specify some of the current challenges of social pedagogues in the face of inequality and situations of vulnerability.

Functions and dysfunctions of politics and pedagogy

I would like to begin by pointing out, even if it might appear self-evident, that I will be speaking from the perspective of social pedagogy. This means that the response I am going to attempt to construct is an educational one, due to the fact that, as several authors have noted, social pedagogy is, first and foremost, education (Quintana 1994; Kornbeck & Rosendal Jensen

³These processes are intended to hinder or prevent the self-organizing ability of groups promoting individual action and prevent individuals and groups from sharing their particular experiences of injustice. In Honneth's view, these processes *paralyze the capacity for articulation, which is the condition of making a central theme of society's awareness of injustice and the consequences of this* (Honneth 2011, 64).

2009). And from this statement we can already deduce an initial response to the question I posed at the beginning.

The situations we are facing, as a result of the crisis and the problems our societies are suffering, are, in most cases, political problems rather than specific educational problems.

It is worth stating that social pedagogy has for most of its history acted in socio-cultural spheres characterized by problematic situations, whether due to the existence of deficits, conflicts or some kind of vulnerability. Also, in the field of education, formal and regulated education has historically been the norm, while anything referring to social education remained outside that standardized framework. Social education, in the field of pedagogy, has throughout its history borne the stigma of being different, or abnormal; precisely because it was concerned with those who were different. These differences could lead to very pluralistic and diverse situations: poverty, disability, marginalization, maladjustment, social exclusion and a very long list of etceteras.

A social pedagogy focused only on this interpretation of social has easily been understood as a pedagogy that deals exclusively with the needy, deficits and social problems. A social pedagogy whose primary function equates with the following:

- (1) ***Social pedagogical activities are based on help and assistance to people in need.*** *The activities are emancipating, aiming at mobilisation of human resources. The activities are also pedagogical interventions imbued by power since one person seeks to influence another. (Hallstedt & Högström 2005, 14.)*
- (2) pedagogical functions, the purposes of which are **to prevent and alleviate social exclusion and other deprivations** (Hämäläinen 2003, 147)⁴ and

⁴I am aware that I have included here only a part of what Professor Hämäläinen says regarding social pedagogy. I do this to highlight the dangers of focusing only on that vision of social pedagogy. The other two points this author makes are:

- "those processes of the growth of man, from which the integration into society, social subjectivity, social participation, and coping with life as a member of society, take shape
- those specific problems humans have with sharing, coping, life management, integrating into systems and communities that maintain the standard of living." (Hämäläinen 2003, 147.)

- (3) **the objective of social pedagogy is to lessen social exclusion, minimise and solve social problems by means of educational tools, the development of social pedagogy can be regarded as performing social order** (Kraav 2003, 118)⁵.

From the mid-twentieth century onwards, this conception of the pedagogical and the social began to change, and social pedagogy gradually began to also deal with promoting and developing socio-cultural aspects in individuals, groups and communities. The processes of socio-cultural animation in communities are a good example of this. From this perspective, it is clear that we can agree with the first two definitions of social pedagogy, but not with the third, which exceeds the scope and powers of pedagogy and what is pedagogical.

What characterizes social pedagogy today, in my view, is not working with vulnerable people; even if historically this has been the case. Its aim today can be defined as acting with subjects, whether individual or collective, who live in highly complex socio-cultural contexts, or suffer problems deriving from such complexity.

This means that the answer to many of these situations of vulnerability, risk or conflict should be, first and foremost, political. In the first instance, it is politics that must create scenarios to help overcome situations of people's vulnerability, conflict or social exclusion. I think that as social pedagogues we must try to escape from what elsewhere I have characterized as a "*political trap*" (Úcar 2013). That is, a trap which assigns to social pedagogy – or social pedagogy itself assumes – functions and tasks it is unable to fulfil because it has neither the capacity nor the means to do so, falling as they do fully within the realm of politics.

The classic maxim of "bread and circuses", for example, has been associated with programmes, initiatives and activities of socio-cultural animation. I think that the confusion and equating of these terms – social pedagogy/politics – has been exploited on more than one occasion to show an ineffective social pedagogy incapable of achieving what it was supposed to achieve.

The problem is not, from my viewpoint, pedagogical but political. Poverty is not solved in either the short or probably the medium term

⁵Emphasis mine.

by education; it is solved with resources and structural change, which only politics can provide. Social pedagogy cannot and should not provide answers to structural problems. That is neither its mission nor its goal. As Lauritsen rightly pointed out, "the disintegration of society should be recognized as a political and cultural problem rather than a scientific or psychological one" (Lauritsen 2003, 98), or one of social pedagogy, I would add.

The fact that pedagogy has, as Freire taught us, an important political dimension does not mean it is only politics or should be confused with it. Moreover, to build a strong social pedagogy that is fair, equitable, efficient and useful for people, groups and communities, which accompanies them in their processes of building a life worth living, a clear distinction must be made between the two.

Herman Nohl said that "pedagogy and politics are like expiration and inspiration" (ref. Hämäläinen 2003, 143). But the fact that they are contingently interconnected does not mean that they are either the same or fulfilling the same functions. Or even that they pursue the same objectives or are regulated by the same timeframes. It is true that, in the best case scenario – one in which they work in a joint and coordinated way for the common good and that of specific people – though their timeframes may differ, their objectives should at least converge, even if they do not coincide.

All politics is pedagogical in the sense that it creates – prescribes – scenarios that promote and limit – morally and legally – certain behaviours affecting individuals, groups, communities and societies. We might say that it is aimed first and foremost at regulating behaviours, and indirectly or secondarily at changing mentalities. Pedagogy on the other hand, despite having an important political dimension, neither prescribes behaviours nor possesses the legal power to judicialize them. One could argue that, unlike the former, it seeks or is aimed primarily at the shaping and changing of mentalities, which may subsequently lead to changes in behaviour. If the former operates mainly in the short and medium term, the latter operates above all in the medium and long term.

Both pedagogy and politics are constructed by means of a complex web of actions that seek to shape or change people, groups and communities. It is the differentiated emphasis on the timeframes and objectives shaping these webs that makes them so different, even though they are so close. The former acts by guiding, accompanying and helping people in their learning, development and growth; the latter by creating spaces and

frameworks that facilitate and reinforce those processes; from my point of view, these will be processes of creation, updating and the emergence of capabilities.

This does not mean, however, that education cannot do anything or does not have an important role to play. In my view it does. It is obvious, for example, that education can be one of the resources that politics provides to address these problems; but if not accompanied by other resources that have an impact on their structural causes, all it will do is fail, or as we often say "apply a patch".

Socio-educational intervention cannot, by itself, help people resolve or emerge from their vulnerable situations. We are neither politicians nor magicians; we are pedagogues and educators, or rather, professionals working with people to accompany and assist them in their educational and learning processes (Úcar 2016b). Acknowledging our limits and, above all, defending them against certain proposals for action that may come from political or administrative frameworks is fundamental if we are to avoid frustrations and failures and, ultimately, to act in a more honest and better way with the people we work with and the situations in which we are involved.

Role and functions of participants in the socio-educational relationship

The second reason why as social pedagogues we can do less than we would like to in order to address the situations of inequality and vulnerability suffered by the individuals and communities we work with is because, as professionals, it is not we who should or can extract people from these situations: it is they who have to do it.

As professionals, we can accompany them, assist them, facilitate their access to resources to help them to overcome the situations they are living in, but ultimately it will be they themselves who decide what they want or what they can do with their lives in the context of their particular circumstances. And all that often regardless of everything that educators and social pedagogues can say or suggest. It was Claxton (1987) who clearly explained this with his metaphor of the horse and the fountain: you can lead a horse to water, but it has to be the horse who decides and chooses to drink. We are neither able to nor do we want to force it to drink. Social pedagogy does not consist in educating, it consists in getting the other to choose and decide to be educated.

Until very recently it was widely accepted that science is practiced by scientists, only technicians can concern themselves with technical aspects and anyone who does not form part of these groups can only be a *patient, recipient, informant, spectator, client, voter* or *user*. It was as if science and technology were surrounded by an aura that was above mere mortals. To access these exclusive worlds one had to climb a stairway and in some cases also perhaps take a lift. Such stairways were represented by, for example, language, procedures, knowledge, training and professional experience.

This was so for many years, and still remains the case in most scientific, technical and professional fields in developed societies. But since the final third of the last century, something has begun to change, especially, though not exclusively, in the field of social and human sciences.

Numerous voices in the field of politics, sociology, pedagogy and psychology, among others, have advocated starting to count on "the other" or "the others" in any technical or scientific approach. Advocated, also, doing more than just listening to or consulting them in research; advocated returning them to the central role in interpreting the causes of what happens to them and, in general, the problems and situations affecting their own lives; recognized, ultimately, that they have their own voice and are able to speak for themselves, without interpreters or mediators.

What is certain is that increasingly more approaches in the social sciences have begun to call for the involvement of people from the community in research and in the intervention itself. From this standpoint, such involvement is an essential requirement in order to be able to provide scientific, technical and professional responses to situations and problems within the community. Throughout the last century, we learned that exclusively scientific and technical actions are necessary but seemingly not sufficient to act in a respectful, effective, equitable and satisfactory manner when it comes to the situations or problems facing people. Not only because the people who shape these actions can participate in them but, above all, because the results will be more appropriate, more efficient and above all more accepted due to the fact that it was the participating people and communities themselves who played an important role in their development.

Social or socio-cultural science is not constructed only by scientists and technicians; it is constructed by all of those of us who live in and

constitute the socioculture⁶. Nobody knows better than each one of us – no matter how scientifically or technically trained they are – how we live and experience our lives. And there is hardly likely to be a technician – be it a doctor, psychologist, politician, economist or pedagogue – who can respond to or solve our situations or problems without counting on us and our particular way of seeing and experiencing the world.

People are neither happy with being nor know how to be *patients* in the world of medicine, or how to be *recipients* or a *target group* in the world of education. If in times gone by we once had patience and resignation, we no longer do, and neither do we have the desire to recover them: we know who and where we are, and we have a voice that is able to respond to our own interests, desires and possibilities. We want to be what we are: that is, protagonists in our own lives; something no one can be for us; something in which no one can replace us. We want to make our own decisions and our own choices in all that affects us. As Postman (1999) pointed out, there are no experts, there cannot be, in living life or feeling love. Life is lived by living it in the first person and is an experience that only that person can feel and understand in its fullest and deepest sense.

As I have stated elsewhere (Úcar 2014; 2016a), recent psychological and pedagogical theories have not been alien to these approaches. The *sociocultural learning* theory posited by Vygotsky and his followers; John Dewey's *moral philosophy* and *theory of experience*; Engeström's *theory of activity*; Wenger's *theory of legitimate peripheral participation*, also known as *communities of practice*; *popular education* and the pedagogical ideas of Freire regarding the political dimension and the critical perspective of education; and finally, the theories of Rappaport, Zimmerman and others regarding *empowerment*. Taken together, these theories allow us to present four general pedagogical principles around which to organize socio-pedagogical work:

- A. We as people are protagonists in our own lives. Nobody knows better than we do what it means to live our lives. No one can speak better or in a more informed way than I do about what I feel, think and experience or the ways in which I do this.

⁶By socioculture, I mean social relations – physical or virtual – generated by the encounter of personal, group and community cultural identities within the framework of a specific cultural or multicultural context. See Úcar 2016a, b, c.

- B. We as people learn, grow and improve ourselves by doing; that is, through the activities we do in our physical and socio-cultural environment.
- C. Interpersonal relationships are mediators in our learning. We as people learn with and through others, and they can become mediators of our learning. Participation is the context, medium and content of learning.
- D. No one educates anyone, in the same way that no one empowers anyone. We as people educate and empower ourselves through the relationships we establish with others and the activities we do. Education and empowerment are something to attain, to achieve, and are processes that never end, that have no end.

We must change the focus of action in the educational and pedagogical sphere. Technicians, scientists and experts are no longer the protagonists and nor, on the other hand, are participants or citizens. The central role is now occupied by the relationship, the socio-educational interaction that questions us both, technician or professional and citizen, and requests that we give the best of ourselves in search of the common good and an improved quality of life for people and communities.

I believe that, before contemplating any socio-educational action in situations of vulnerability or social risk, these two considerations – the clarification of functions and roles (1) between politics and social pedagogy; and (2) within the framework of the socio-educational relationship – must come first, to become starting points for action. This is the most honest way for social pedagogues to act: not deluding either ourselves or the people we work with regarding the real possibilities of completely or profoundly changing things, in the short term at least.

Socio-educational intervention in the face of inequality and social vulnerability

I think the first thing to emphasize to continue with the points defined in the previous section is that the fact that we can do little to remedy the situations of inequality, vulnerability and conflict suffered by the people we work with does not mean we cannot do anything. As I have already pointed out, I think our role as social pedagogues can be a key for the people and communities we work with.

When social educators are asked about the main objectives that guide their actions, they tend to say social change and transformation. But these

words are actually too grand. For social pedagogues, these are by-products that may or may not derive from the goals and approaches of everyday activities: working with specific individuals and communities that have specific names, live in specific places and face specific problems on a daily basis. It is here that we must focus and rephrase the question: how can it help these individuals and communities to have social pedagogy by their side?

In a recent study of socio-pedagogical practice, Storø (2013) says two things which I think are a key when considering the answer to that question. The first is that social pedagogy is built on three pillars: theory, practice and values. The action of social educators is guided by values and based on theories.

In our relationship with the other, with the individual or collective subjects we are working with, social pedagogues embody, illustrate or suggest – through our activities and everyday actions – the values that can help or encourage them to:

1. improve themselves;
2. become aware of their situation; and
3. seek out resources to enable them to fight to get out of that situation.

As you can see, this is pure Freire.

Even if we do not like to hear it, I believe it has to be said: the social pedagogue cannot change things, and has no reason to try to. What we can do is to help and support people to improve themselves, because we have the profound conviction, once more following Freire, that this is the way to ultimately change things. We work with people not structures, at least not directly, and must never forget when intervening that we are the ones who can change structures. And that is the message all our actions must convey.

To state that our actions are based on theories means, in my view, that our actions are not trivial or frivolous. We do not do just anything in any situation. On the contrary, we have good reasons, sound reasons, for doing what we do in every situation; whether, for example, it is working with a boy who has run away from school or a group of neighbourhood organizations that want to attain more and better community services.

In other words, through our actions we can provide the other with reasons to act in one way rather than another. We can expand their scope for action and accompany them in the process of choosing the course of action that may best help improve their situation and that of their community.

The social pedagogy we propose seeks to broaden the perspectives and worlds of the people it works with because it is aware that by expanding those perspectives it is expanding their capabilities and possibilities for action. It is a pedagogy of choice that aims to accompany individual and collective subjects in their decisions and choices regarding what may be best for them. And with that I mean what may be and not what is or will be, because we must not forget that an action is always in some way a commitment to the future and we will never be able to anticipate the results of the action or socio-educational intervention.

The second idea propounded by Storø (2013) which I use to answer that question about what the social pedagogue can contribute is that social pedagogy has more to do with building than repairing or compensating. This idea seems very important to me. I think we have to change our ways of looking at the individual and collective subjects we work with, especially those in situations of risk or vulnerability. It is not so much about looking for what they are lacking, their needs or the problems they have suffered, but looking for where they are strong, what they value in themselves. That is the starting point for human growth and improvement. That is what must guide our socio-educational intervention methods.

In the socio-educational relationship, needs place the subject of intervention in an asymmetrical situation with respect to the social pedagogue; potential⁷, however, puts the subject in symmetry and can become a springboard or powerful motivator for growth and self-construction, whether personal, group or community. The asymmetrical relationship places responsibility for the results of the socio-educational relationship on the educator, on the pedagogue. A symmetrical socio-educational relationship, by contrast, puts this responsibility on the relationship, on both actors, in what Bentgson et al. (2008) has been characterized as the "*common third*".

⁷With potential I am referring to, in terms of Vygotsky, what a subject is doing and what she/he is able to do. Or, in terms of Amartya Sen, the functionings and the capabilities.

As people, we grow and improve not on the basis of what we lack, but precisely from what we have, what we value and what is valued in us by those around us. What we lack makes us insecure and vulnerable when it is perceived or highlighted from outside; what we have, what we are good at, gives us confidence and makes us strong.

The focus of social education or pedagogy has always been on filling gaps or correcting faults, deficits. That is a focus that can contribute to belittling the other. We must seek to adopt a pedagogical focus and socio-educational actions that encourage the other to fight to achieve that which is going to make them better than they are and consequently help them to improve their way of being and existing in the world. A focus and action which acknowledge and value the decisions and choices of the other and contribute to the emergence and development of their capabilities.

The pedagogy that seems most appropriate for situations like those we face is one that seeks a strategic alliance with the subject. It is one that allows the educator to present themselves to the subject as a trusted partner who can help them to broaden and deepen their perspectives of themselves, their reality and their ways of being in the world and in life. And it is that pedagogy that accompanies them in their choices and decisions about their daily courses of action; not with the purpose of controlling or directing but with the firm intention, as Stephens (2013) points out, of helping them help themselves. I think that is the mission of any pedagogy, whether social or individual.

Challenges facing the social pedagogue: regarding decisions, choices and changes

The first objective for the pedagogue to consider is for the subject with whom we are acting, whether individual or collective, to want to get involved in the socio-educational relationship; the young person who runs away from school or the community that lacks basic services, in our example. No change is possible if they do not want to change.

That is the decision that begins to change the world, that of changing myself. There can be no social change – nor change of structure or flow of sociocultural interaction – If there is not first a personal change, and that is precisely why we are educators and talk about pedagogy. When I change my way of viewing and interpreting the world, I am changing my way of being in the world. And I am therefore helping others, those around me and who form part of my life, to change their ways of viewing me and

relating to me. This seems to me a great challenge of social pedagogues, a seemingly simple little challenge but one which can help to change things in the medium term. A challenge, in addition, that we can all assume in our daily practices.

What I am proposing is something that appears very simple but is often very difficult. I am talking about socio-educational relationships based on shared responsibility. This is the first task of social educators: getting the others to want to change; seeing themselves not as mere *recipients* or *target groups* for socio-educational action but as joint participants with the capability of acting upon themselves to improve what they are, whether children, young people, adults, the elderly or communities.

Becoming aware of our role as social pedagogues means first being prepared to accept that the individual or collective subject with whom we are working might not follow our suggestions and might even act completely opposite to what we believe is best for them. Even if we know that they are wrong, even being sure that what they have chosen will be detrimental to them, we can do nothing other than warn them and wait and hope that our initial judgment was wrong and that the subject we are working with has made decisions that – even against our opinion or recommendations – help them to improve themselves and live their life better.

One methodological principle that we educators must integrate deeply within our actions is that the subject enjoys complete independence to choose and decide what to do regardless of our actions, proposals, suggestions or recommendations⁸. That is what it means to be a professional who acts in the daily lives of people and communities.

This means, once again, that if social pedagogues want to succeed in the processes of socio-educational intervention, they will necessarily have to approach and design them together with those involved, because only this will guarantee their involvement when it is time to make an effort or fight to achieve the established objectives. It also means that we must be very humble when defining objectives. It is preferable to set one single goal and achieve it than to propose five and achieve only three. In the former case,

⁸One could argue that this is difficult in socio-educational interventions with young children. Elster argues that “paternalism is appropriate only when it is probable that freedom of choice is gravely self-destructive and especially when it also harms others” (Elster 1990, 64). Meanwhile, Nussbaum notes that “generally speaking, a paternal approach is appropriate if the individual’s capacity for choice and autonomy are compromised” (Nussbaum 2007, 369).

there is a positive reinforcement in the learning process that clearly affects participants' self-esteem and the sustainability of this process; in the latter, the result can lead to discouragement or abandonment of the project or intervention.

In the previous section we talked about values. That is, from my point of view, another of the main challenges facing social pedagogues today. I believe we have to defend, assume, demonstrate and embody values, attitudes and behaviours that may appear to belong more to the private than the professional sphere. I must say that as educators we cannot ask for change in others if we are not able to exemplify it in ourselves.

These will be ways of working with individual and collective subjects that reveal values such as generosity, honesty, authenticity, dedication, devotion and commitment, which will encourage the people we work with to see us as trustworthy allies. It is these attitudes and behaviours that we project in socio-educational action and intervention, which, through mechanisms such as reciprocity, can help others to respond to us and respond to life with equivalent attitudes and behaviours.

As social educators we are human rights professionals. Human rights mark our limits and possibilities. They define the ideology that guides us and moves us. De-westernized and universal human rights, in line with that proposed by de Sousa Santos (2008).

The role of socio-pedagogical work is neither to maintain nor directly seek the well-being of the other; rather it is to help people to develop strategies and acquire resources that enable them to learn to search for, choose and construct their own ways of being and living in and with the world.

I would like to emphasize, finally, that the objective of social pedagogy is not to fight against inequality and situations of vulnerability, although it is clear that this will be one of the main results of its actions when social pedagogues have done their work well. The main objective is to help and accompany people in their processes and in their struggles to equip themselves with all the learning resources that will allow them to live in a dignified manner. And lastly, it seems clear to me that this is something that social pedagogy cannot do for itself; in isolation, independently or self-sufficiently. It requires, to carry out its functions properly, socio-cultural policies that are committed to individuals and communities and to creating scenarios that help them to be and act in the world in a dignified way.

REFERENCES

- Bech, L. 2015. Últimos datos sobre la pobreza infantil en España. *Blasting News* 10.11.2015. Available at <http://goo.gl/cB0sbF>.
- Beck, U. 1998. *La sociedad del riesgo*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Bengtsson, E., Chamberlain, C., Crimmens, D. & Stanley, J. 2008. Introducing social pedagogy into residential child care in England. Social Education Trust and National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care. Available at <http://www.thetcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/introducing-sp-into-rcc-in-england-final-reportfeb2008.pdf>.
- Claxton, G. 1987. *Vivir y aprender. Psicología del desarrollo y del cambio en la vida cotidiana*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Elster, J. 1990. *Tuercas y tornillos. Una introducción a los conceptos básicos de las ciencias sociales*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Hallstedt, P. & Högström, M. 2005. The recontextualisation of social pedagogy. A study of three curricula in the Netherlands, Norway and Ireland. Available at <http://goo.gl/xE8oTe> (consulted January 2010).
- Honneth, A. 2011. *La sociedad del desprecio*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Hämäläinen, J. 2003. Developing social pedagogy as an academic discipline. In A. Gustavsson, H. Hermansson & J. Hämäläinen (Eds.) *Perspectives and theory in social pedagogy*. Göteborg: Daidalos, 133–153.
- Kornbeck, J. & Rosendal Jensen, N. 2009. Introduction: Social Pedagogy in Europe – Diverse with Common Features. In J. Kornbeck & N. Rosendal Jensen (eds.) *The Diversity of Social Pedagogy in Europe*. Bremen: Europäischer Hochschulverlag, 1–10.
- Kraav, I. 2003. Development perspectives of social pedagogy in Estonia. In A. Gustavsson, H. Hermansson & J. Hämäläinen (Eds.) *Perspectives and theory in social pedagogy*. Göteborg: Daidalos, 117–133.
- Lauritsen, J. 2003. In between post structuralism and phenomenology? In A. Gustavsson, H. Hermansson & J. Hämäläinen (Eds.) *Perspectives and theory in social pedagogy*. Göteborg: Daidalos, 83–100.
- Nussbaum, M. C. 2007. *Las fronteras de la justicia. Consideraciones sobre la exclusión*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Postman, N. 1999. *El fin de la educación*. Barcelona: Octaedro.
- Quintana Cabanas, J. M. 1994. Trabajo social y pedagogía social: Relaciones entre sus campos y competencias profesionales. *Pedagogía Social. Revista interuniversitaria* 9, 173–183.
- Sousa Santos, de B. 2008. *Reinventar la democracia, reinventar el Estado*. Madrid: Sequitur.
- Stephens, P. 2013. *Social pedagogy: heart and head. Studies in Comparative Social pedagogies and International Social Work and Social policy*, Vol. XXIV. Bremen: EVH/Academicpress GmbH.

- Storø, J. 2013. Practical social pedagogy. Theories, values and tools for working with children and young people. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Touraine, A. 2013. La fin des sociétés. París: Éditions du Seuil.
- Úcar, X. 2013. Exploring different perspectives of Social Pedagogy: towards a complex and integrated approach. Education policy analysis archives 21 (36), 1–19.
- Úcar, X. 2014. Presentación: evaluación participativa y empoderamiento / Presentation: Participatory evaluation and empowerment. Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria 24, 13–19.
- Úcar, X. 2016a. Pedagogías de lo social. Barcelona: UOC. Oberta Publishing.
- Úcar, X. 2016b. Relaciones socioeducativas. La acción de los profesionales. Barcelona: UOC. Oberta Publishing.
- Úcar, X. 2016c. Pedagogía de la elección. Barcelona: UOC. Oberta Publishing.



