

The (pro)social context of pedagogy

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Introduction

One of the major educational problems in Estonia in the 1990s was and still is the low academic achievement of pupils at the upper level of the basic education (grades 7–9), reflected in a large number of dropouts and 'grade repeaters' (Heinlo 2001, 23; Leino 2010). One possible reason for this might be personal conflicts (or misunderstandings) between students and teachers. The aim of this article is to analyze the specific aspects of concepts (as social pedagogy, prosocial and temperament-conscious teaching) and to investigate the social pedagogical content of an effective educational process. The problem is that the concept of social pedagogy is largely a semantic mess and the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy is incoherent (Hämäläinen 2012, 3). The research involves an analysis of concepts: is there a specific content of social pedagogy or is the meaning of it rather the universal 'helping activity'? For example: could we name the temperament-conscious teaching or child friendly education also as (pro)social pedagogy? In Latin the word *socialis* has the meaning of being friendly as well as social. Saying that one is friendly holds a social relation in itself: one is friendly towards/to somebody (like in social pedagogy and in temperament conscious teaching also). The research method here is the analysis of definitions.

General education in Estonia is divided into two parts: basic education (9 years) is compulsory for all children aged 7 to 17; secondary

general education (3 years) is not obligatory. The problem is that about 10 % of students drop out of the obligatory general educational system, and 25–30 % of students in Estonia have poor study results (Kallavus & Tiko 2006, 78). The reasons for this include financial problems in the family, inadequate teaching method, special needs or/and multi-cultural background of students (Kallavus & Tiko 2006, 78; Leino & Männiste 1996; Leino 2002a; 2010; 2011). Among 'inadequate' teaching methods subjectivity of teachers can be an extra factor. According to Mullola's doctoral dissertation (2012) teachers (both females and males) perceived the temperament and teachability of boys to be less appropriate to the school context than that of girls (Mullola 2012, 59). Temperament can be seen as a non-academic aspect of educational process, but it strongly influences results. Final marks will direct (through universities or lack of education) one's place in the labour market, people's self-esteem, etc. According to Jussim and Harber, the grades are mostly based on teachers' ratings rather than standardized tests and likely to be influenced by subjective perceptions of the teachers that reflect teachers' personal expectations, opinions, values, and attitudes (Mullola, Ravaja, Lipsanen, Hirstiö-Snellman, Alatupa & Keltikangas-Järvinen 2010, 209). Psychologists (Burks & Rubenstein 1979, 42; Keltikangas-Järvinen 2009) emphasize that the communication of temperament style is the basis of harmonious interpersonal relations, because it forms the base for a healthy self-image and for individual autonomy. According to Mullola et al. (2010) the temperament factors of activity, persistence, distractibility, inhibition and negative emotionality were significantly associated with both Mother Language and Math grades, explaining together 28 % and 29 % of the variance (Mullola et al. 2010, 211–212). This kind of subjectivity might be considered as one of the reasons for school conflicts and dropout.

In 2010 there were in Estonia 4400 teenagers (15–19 years old) and 18 900 young people in age of 20–24 out of education and/or labor market, which was 12,4 % of this age group (Leino, Hintsanen, Hintsanen, Merjonen & Keltikangas-Järvinen 2013, 115). According to statistics of 2013, 1/6 of young people in age of 15–19 don't work or study: there are about 40 000 so called NEET-youngsters (Not in Education,

Employment or Training) in Estonia (Leino et al. 2013). Some of them dropped out probably because of “wrong temperament”. According to Mullola et al. (2010), there is an increasing evidence that student’s temperament plays a significant role in teachers’ conceptions, affecting their student–teacher relationship, their attitudes toward the student, their expectations concerning his or her abilities, and even their teaching decisions (Mullola et al. 2010, 209). If teachers’ subjective impressions influence marks so strongly, the pedagogy is instead of social rather anti-social. Every activity to keep students in the educational system is important, because the prevention of dropout avoids societal problems. In this context the temperament-conscious teaching can be considered as practical social pedagogy.

The aim of this article is to fix similarities in concepts, because one of the solutions to (or a way of preventing) school problems could be the mix of social and academic pedagogy. If some extra-curricular aspects (like temperament, students’ personal working style, etc) would be tolerated in class (to a certain extent), the dropout rate could probably decrease.

The academic and/or social pedagogy

In many countries besides of the word ‘pedagogy’ there is also ‘social pedagogy’ in use. The theoretical reason of different concepts is the speciality of contents, but in reality the aim of those words is quite similar: effective education is kind of social; and the sozialisiation is (mostly) pedagogical. According to Pinker the power of a definition is that it transcends the particulars of experience (Pinker 1999, 302). The speciality of social pedagogy is that the field of experiences is broad, and because of that the content of definition is not clear. According to Hämäläinen (2012), pedagogical activities for preventing social exclusion and promoting active citizenship are closely linked (Hämäläinen 2012, 13). This is the point where academic pedagogy meets social pedagogy. Preventive tolerance in context of temperament-conscious education gives as result an active socialization. As

the prosocial teaching avoids bigger problems, emotions should never be underestimated. Lewin wrote already many decades ago that the perceived, cognitively interpreted situation is the one which is related to behaviour, and not the external, objectively manipulated situation (Forgas 1981, 10–11). According to Damasio (2006) feelings (along with the emotions they come from) serve as internal guides, and help us to communicate to others signals that can also guide them. And feelings are neither intangible nor elusive. Contrary to traditional scientific opinion, feelings are just as cognitive as other percepts. They are the results of a most curious physiological arrangement that has turned the brain into the body's captive audience. (Damasio 2006, xxv.) The knowledge about cognitivity of feelings should be part of temperament-conscious pedagogy: emotional effect of education is at least as important as academical. If feelings are cognitive, academic marks have emotional output – 'ordinary' pedagogy has social influence through psychology (through student's self-esteem). Moreover, if about 1/3 of the content of marks depends on teachers' subjective impression, the situation is unfair. As Mullola's research indicates the pleasant students get good marks more easily compared to children with a 'bad' temperament (Mullola 2012). This is a kind of power game: the teacher decides who needs rehabilitation, who doesn't. Teaching subordination is one of the activities at school. Whatever the teacher does (or does not do) has a social influence, even if it seems academic. To minimize the subjectivity in the context of marks, teachers should be kind of social pedagogues.

In the post-Soviet period emotions and feelings are considered important, especially young people are willing to show how they feel (Leino 2002a). An assistant professor in the University of Tartu, Inger Kraav (1998, 86) argues in a Finnish-Estonian comparative study that the young generation of Estonia values independence more than the youngsters in Finland. Besides history, one reason lies in Estonian educational traditions – the upbringing in Estonia seems to be more authoritarian than in the Nordic countries. Also the experience of having lived in a totalitarian state influences the resistance of Estonian youngsters (Kraav 1998, 86).

The school requires that children work alone, are attentive, are able to wait, are able to control themselves motorically and verbally, forget the experiential world, and subject themselves to the authority of the teacher (Kuusinen 1992, 49–51). In fact, the Estonian school does not differ from the school of many other European countries – we are socialized to respect authority, to be obedient, and to avoid trouble when possible (Leino & Männiste 1996, 94; Leino 2011). However, students' expectations of the school are different, and not all of them adapt to the culture of the school that stresses mostly middle class values (Silvennoinen 1992, 259). The middle class values of Estonia mean having or striving for a good workplace and coping with one's own life – also the teacher gives importance to this. 'Bad pupils' are threatened with not getting into secondary school, which in Estonia means the status of an outcast (Leino et al. 2013). A concrete example of this is that evening schools in Estonia are situated only in bigger cities. As the unsuccessful will turn out to be a burden to the taxpayer, these poor people are scolded from their early years onwards. Problems in studies predict further difficulties in the labour market and as the social security system in Estonia is poor, teachers as well as parents take deviations from the norm as a tragedy.

From the point of view of school the 'proper citizen' in Estonia seems to mean a Soviet-type obedient factory worker. Giving out information mostly in one direction – from teacher to student – excludes dialogue and individual reflection. The 'previous' education rested on similarities. Contemporary Estonian society, however, needs independent and creative people for faster development. There is probably a tension between emancipation and regulation in the schools of Nordic countries as well (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma 2000; Leino & Lahelma 2002, 84), but in post-Soviet countries the conflict between society and the conservative school is more acute because of the intensive changes in the society during a very short time (Leino 2011). I suggest that the behaviour of students in Estonian schools is assessed more than in some other European countries. Maybe it is because our teachers have mostly a Soviet 'factory-type' upbringing themselves (see Foucault 1990). Also several Estonian researchers in education

have reached a similar conclusion about school norms (Kuurme 1999; Ruus 2000, 128–131). Too often troubled behaviour is considered as a permanent characteristic of the person, even as an illness that has to be diagnosed (Nygard 1998, 23–24). This can be seen particularly in post-Soviet countries, where people have been taught for the past 50 years that the only norm is average behaviour, appearance etc (Leino 2002a).

The meaning of *social*

The word '*social*' is derived from '*societas*', meaning connection and society. This Latin expression in turn derives from '*socius*' (companion, kinsman/relative). It is also possible to add the concepts of values and ethics, which support joint profit. In Latin the word *socialis* has the meaning of being friendly, as well as social. The saying that one is friendly, holds a social relation in itself: one is friendly towards/to somebody. The word '*social*' has several meanings – on the everyday level, sociality is considered to be a quality of an individual (a social person seeks contacts and enjoys company), in social psychology any reciprocal impact of a human is called social (not depending on the level) (Hilasvuori & Rantanen 2000, 5); in social pedagogy *social* refers to a willingness to cooperate, also to assisting others and of being capable of solidarity (Leino 2002b, 320). Rousseau introduced the word '*socialis*' in 1762 as 'together, follower, companion, participant'. The new field of relationships, under the meaning of '*social*', was widely recognized by the end of the 19th century – it denoted a specific field outside of politics, inside of pedagogy: people started to connect social problems (including poverty) with school (or lack of education). In some areas (Baltic countries, Scandinavia, Germany) the use of the word '*social*' is narrower than '*societal*' – for example if one talks about people in need, and how to support them. In this case the word '*social*' has an opposite meaning to the word '*economic*'. (Leino 2012.) For Durkheim the word '*social*' was equal to norms, which were thought to be the putty of whole society. A '*social*' person

fits to standards, unlike an 'asocial' one. It is normal to cope by yourself, not to burden the taxpayers. No wonder then that during significant societal changes, in the draught of the industrial revolution, the scientific fields of socio-prefix started to become a reality: sociology (to investigate the problems), social psychology (to understand their essence), social work and social pedagogy (to solve them). 'Social' as being able to cope (for example through education), or as the introduction of norms, or as the promotion of co-operation are important both to the school and the teacher.

According to this, the educational activity supports the process of socialization – the border between academic and social is unclear. In ideal world the whole pedagogy should be called social pedagogy – it avoids drop out and other problems. And in ideal world the students' marks are result of knowing, not of ("proper") temperament.

The meaning of *pedagogy*

Historically the school has had several functions in addition to sharing knowledge. After child labour was forbidden in many countries in the 19th century, parents had to work harder to compensate for the income they lost because their children had stopped working. They were working longer hours, and children were unsupervised. Establishing a network of schools helped to solve the unwanted by-product of the industrial revolution: the possible criminal activity of the under-age tramping youth. In this sense the role of school was (and/or is?) preventive (like in social pedagogy). So, the effect of school education in those times was manifold: the new educated generation with academic knowledge also proved to be better factory workers than the one without education.

When the power of the church decreased in the 19th century, the school had to overtake the task of socializing the new generation. In some languages (for example in Estonian) the same word 'teacher' is in use for the *school teacher* and for the *vicar*. This is a sign of high expectations of the society for both professions – especially in the

context of discipline, guarding and socialization. (Leino 2012.) As in history, pedagogy has been considered to be one important (practical) lifepreserver in case of social problems (Lorenz 1994, 88). The development of the society in 19th century brought new social problems. Those were carried into the school and teaching. And even until now the dutiful pedagogues compensate for the unfinished activities of the government and homes. In states, where the salary of teachers is rather low, teachers' demonstrations/protests sometimes take place (like in Estonia). This is a strong signal both for the government and the public that the pedagogues are unsatisfied because of the many social tasks (among other things), and of high expectations.

According to the definition of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1998) the content of the pedagogy refers to the pedagogical (teaching) skills teachers use to impart the specialized knowledge/content of their subject area(s). Effective teachers display a wide range of skills and abilities to create a learning environment where all students feel comfortable and are sure that they can succeed both academically and personally. This complex combination of skills and abilities is integrated in the professional teaching standards that also include essential knowledge, dispositions, and commitments that allow educators to practice at a high level. In this definition the 'comfortable feeling' and 'personal success' are important concepts, because emotional well-being helps socialization. As Damasio put it: "feelings are just as cognitive as other percepts" (Damasio 2006, xxv). Emotions, feelings, psychology and sociality are part of both 'ordinary' and social pedagogy – they influence academical results and support the everyday life at school.

The *prosocial* aspect of education

At school one will know how to act. According to Hämäläinen (2012, 11), the social pedagogy can be called an action science, because it is closely connected with the challenges of pedagogical action, either professional or non-professional, in theory and practice.

In academic pedagogy the action is important also – for example in context of temperament. An attempt to separate the concepts of social and "ordinary" pedagogy is probably not fruitful, because they both are tools of socialization. In ideal world the whole pedagogy could be called (pro)social (according to practical results). According to Forgas, the pro-social approach involves workers identifying and being clear about the values they wish to promote and purposefully encouraging those values through the use of praise and other rewards. It also involves appropriate modelling of the values the worker seeks to promote, and challenging anti-social or pro-criminal expressions and actions. (Forgas 1981, 19.) Prosocial action and socialization are kind of synonyms. For example Hall (1989) writes, that school instructs us how to make the system work, and the message is that one is forever in the hands of administrators. Bell tells everyone when they must begin learning and when to stop (Hall 1989, 109): if there is no order at home, the school should compensate it even more. There are many positive aspects in order. The strict rules seem bad, but inside the rules life is safer. In my research (Leino 2011) it was obvious that students accept traditional rules and a fixed routine. Children and adolescents need supervision in their everyday life. As Keltikangas-Järvinen (2011) puts it, "it is important to comment and to direct them as soon as possible". Effective pedagogical acting is always both prosocial and social.

According to Mullola (2012) students with low temperamental task orientation, low educational competence, low personal-social flexibility (i.e., approach, positive mood, and adaptability), and high reactivity (i.e., negative mood, intensity of response, and reactivity) have been perceived as less capable and less teachable by their teachers and have received lower school grades. Mullola adds that these results are not surprising in Finnish culture where restrained behaviour is a common and important aspect in all individuals' activities. Thus the spontaneous expression of feelings, especially negative ones, is somewhat inadvisable in the Finnish cultural and educational climate. (Mullola 2012, 63.) It explains (partly) the problem of 'problem' children. Education is obligatory for a reason, and also here the logic of

words and concepts is important. For example the Finnish word for order, *järjestys*, goes back to reason, *järki*, whose meanings include 'in order, in single file, in a row' (Salo 2003, 107). Salo wrote that as a verb, the word has also traditionally meant placing things in a row or putting things in order. In the language of the Finnish school, 'order' appears in the words for schedule, seating order and in many other activities found almost exclusively in the school. The original form of the word is *järki*, meaning 'reason', 'sense'. Everything in school is sensemaking and should be done with reason (Salo 2003, 107) – this is the content of socialization. Finnish and Estonian languages are related – so, in Estonian the word for order has similar logic. The message of it is that a proper citizen does not differ from rules, and undertakes matters in a proper order (goes to school as long as needed). Educates himself first and acquires job and family afterwards (Leino 2012).

The role of educational order is to support the passing of the curriculum and the functioning of the hidden curriculum. The last one consists of unwritten rules, norms and order, which if ignored will result a punishment. Children with different social backgrounds are therefore in unequal situations. For example, not all families use the correct official state-language – some confine themselves to slang, cursing and grammatically wrong language. In situations like this the teacher has at first to teach the pupils to talk, and only after that the teaching of the subject will be possible. Here the social aspect of teaching is obvious. There are many children in school class, and most of the time the teacher has to work with a group. S/he even talks in we-form: '*Let's take our textbooks out!*', '*Let's solve this exercise!*'. This form of speaking refers to a collective, but also to impersonality. The child gets used to the fact that at school s/he changes from a rare subject to an element of a larger mass – just into a line of the list of pupils in the class. Sometimes several days may pass before the teacher approaches a pupil by their name. It also happens that some pupils start to behave badly on purpose – just to get personal attention from the teacher. Obviously political decisions in the Estonian education field (big classes, the lack of an assistant teacher etc) can cause a new problem (badly behaving children), which requires an extra social

role of the teacher, who has to socialize all students – both with 'right' or 'wrong' temperament. This process is deeply connected with cultural norms. Caspi and colleagues have presented the concept of 'cumulative continuity', where temperament-related consequences may be combined and elaborated over the course of time (Mullola 2012, 68). The statistics about NEET-youngsters is probably a result of this process. And if the temperament factors of activity, persistence, distractibility, inhibition and negative emotionality explained about 1/3 of marks (Mullola et al. 2010, 211–212), there is a paradox: the aim of pedagogy is human (or social in the best way); but activities are sometimes repressive (if one's temperament is 'too visible', for example). Officially all people are equal, but in reality some students get worse marks just because of working style or 'unproper' emotions. Teachers usually don't feel sorry about this, because one of the school's duties is to socialize reasonable citizens. As a result some students will drop out, and social problems in society increase.

So – if the socialization is too intensive, in some cases instead of effect one can recognize rather a defect. The solution could be a (pro) social pedagogy. If the social pedagogy is rather a way of thinking in which social and educational considerations are united (Hämäläinen 2012), and when in teachers' education the social pedagogy will get a significant role, the temperament probable will not influence students' marks so much anymore. Bierhoff understands prosocial behaviour as part of social competence (Bierhoff 2002, 53) – which is important for both teachers and students. So – the social pedagogy and temperament-conscious pedagogy are (pro)social activities, because they help to avoid social problems.

The meaning of *social pedagogy*

The social pedagogy does not have methods of its own that could be distinguished from pedagogical methods in general (Hämäläinen 2012, 12). Nyqvist stresses empowerment, which in this context means the process of improvement – how to make the situation more com-

fortable for people (Nyqvist 1997, 31). Like a good teacher, the social pedagogue gives an impulse for development. The question is: how to support the development of everybody. The task of social pedagogue is considered to be that of developing social and upbringing theories as well as vocational work and training (Hämäläinen & Kurki 1997, 15). According to Nyqvist (1997) for young people the social pedagogy means "possibilities to increase the social competence: how to avoid bad influences from social and psychological environment. Or, to be more exact – how to support the creativity and activity of youngsters." (Nyqvist 1997, 32). Once again – the border between social and pedagogical is not clear. The concept of social pedagogy is largely a *semantic mess* and the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy is incoherent (Hämäläinen 2012, 3).

Discussion, conclusions

Teacher who wants to support the socialization stresses not only academic content of the curriculum, but social relations too. At least it should be so. This is on the shoulders of a teacher to make studies more humane. The teacher is forced to balance the bureaucratic coldness of school and suggest safety to students (Aittola 1999, 204). From this perspective a paradox arises: school routines do not support behaviour that is suitable for children (joy and play) – this kind of opening oneself is considered to be punishable behaviour. At the same time in the work descriptions of social pedagogue (working with so called problematic children) play, positive emotion and joy dominate. Still the *homo ludens* (the central gist that determines a person's essence is playfulness, see Liimets 1999, 20) causes problems in mainstream education, but as a rehabilitating method, non-academic methods are important already. Paradoxically the shortcomings and problems caused by the ordinary school have to be remedied by the opposite therapy that is practised in social pedagogy. School is a contradictory place. On the one hand teachers have to condemn unsuitable behaviour and admonish the so-called decency, but social pedagogues spend their en-

ergy to (re)form their personal relation with the children. With this kind of 'off-duty' relation social pedagogues are trying to erase the stereotypes of an authoritarian teacher. As an art, effective socialization requires improvisation and spontaneity (Leino 2002a). The ideal social pedagogue is more like a friend than staff of school.

But lets return back to the beginning of this article – to the possibility of avoiding school problems (and dropout) through temperament-conscious teaching. In next view sentences (from Mullolas dissertation (2012, 79) one can change the concept 'temperament-conscious education' easily to the 'social pedagogy' and/or to the 'prosocial education' – and the message will be the same. Mullola (2012) wrote:

”Temperament-conscious education encourages educators to understand and respect students' individual temperamental differences (e.g. in working styles) and to take this into account in their teaching-learning processes. This means that respecting different temperaments equally means equitable treatment for all students. However, temperament-conscious education should not be used to segregate students or for tailored classes and special teaching groups, but rather to create an educational climate with flexible learning circumstances and educational methods that fit all types of temperaments and not only for those who happen to have a so-called affirmative 'school temperament' with high task orientation. (...) Temperament-knowledge might produce the most useful results when used as a supportive and comprehensive practical tool throughout the entire teaching, studying, and learning process, and particularly teachers and students working together. Temperament-conscious teachers can help students to know their strenghts better and provide tools to cope with their weaknesses.”
(Mullola 2012, 79–80.)

So, as was written already: the concept of social pedagogy is largely a *semantic mess* and the theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy is incoherent (Hämäläinen 2012, 3). If the aim of education is *to understand and respect students' individual differences*, both social and temperamental aspects are important. The respect and understanding are pro-social activities, and also a part of social pedagogy. The pedagogue teaches how to act, and so does social pedagogue (and/or tem-

perament-conscious teacher). Education is an active process, and so is social pedagogy. According to Hämäläinen (2012), social pedagogy (as a particular field of social action) is linked to the action theory that requires understanding of both aims (values) and reality (conditions) (Hämäläinen 2012, 11). The general content of social pedagogical thought and temperament-conscious teaching is the same. The (social and/or temperament-conscious and/or 'ordinary') pedagogue should meet every child as a subject, rather than as an object, which can be seen as an indicator of success. Teachers (and students and parents) need to be better educated in context of temperament: 'wrong' behaviour is not automatically the signal of abnormality – sometimes people just are different. Sad, if from temperamental misunderstandings, for example, the dropout process starts.

The founder of social pedagogy in Estonia, Johannes Käis (1885–1950), and the Emeritus Professor of Tallinn Pedagogical University, Inge Unt, have repeatedly stressed the significance of individual relationship with every child in general education. They underline that this should not be used only in a rehabilitative sense, but that individualization should be encouraged continuously, already from the beginning (Käis 1996; Unt 1996). According to the Estonian academician Heino Liimets (1998), the school should fill a role of an integrator in relation to all the other study processes that take place in the student's life.

The background, essence and history of social pedagogy have been as rich as life itself, and this is the reason why one can expect the flexibility of content also. There is no narrow specific meaning of social pedagogy, rather could it be seen as part of universal human behaviour, which is the richness of concept and a sign of high quality.

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