

Special issue: *Social Pedagogy in the Nordic Countries*

Article

Social pedagogical practices in Swedish welfare contexts

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How to Cite: Cedersund, E., Eriksson, L., Ringsby Jansson, B., & Svensson, L. A. (2019). Social pedagogical practices in Swedish welfare contexts. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 7(1): 7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2019.v7.1.007>.

Submission date: 5 August 2018; Acceptance date: 29 November 2018; Publication date: 30 January 2019

Peer review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double blind peer-review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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Open access:

International Journal of Social Pedagogy is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

Abstract

This article focuses on social pedagogy and how social pedagogical approaches are used in Swedish welfare contexts. Social pedagogy as a phenomenon has existed in a variety of settings and during different periods of time. However, the meaning of social pedagogy as a concept depends to a great extent on the context in which it occurs, and the concept therefore has various connotations. The aim of this article is to analyse and discuss trends, directions and goals in social pedagogical practice. Three research projects (cases) are described, analysed and related to three theoretical models. The three cases – (1) a ‘drive-in football’ project for young people in a suburb, (2) an alternative residential caresetting for young people with learning disabilities, and (3) a ‘future workshop’ for older people – involved different situations and different audiences, all with elements of marginalisation and exclusion. The analysis of the three examples shows that social pedagogical practice in the Swedish context is characterised by the challenge of balancing the tensions between the individual and the collective, between emancipation and adaptation and between action and negotiation. The social pedagogical activities are also characterised by the fact that they all contain social, practical and existential dimensions of social support and an approach rooted in ethical core values.

Keywords: social pedagogy; line of development; participation; agency; active citizenship; welfare state; Sweden; Nordic countries

Social pedagogical practices in Swedish welfare contexts

This article focuses on how social pedagogical practices are expressed in a Swedish context. We reflect on whether these practices are consistent with various theoretical models developed to describe and provide understanding for social pedagogy as a field of knowledge (Hämäläinen, 2012; Eriksson, 2006; Madsen, 2005). Can these models be identified in the context of Swedish practices? The article focuses primarily on descriptions of concrete practices in which social pedagogy can be viewed as a consistent element. The three cases that were chosen to be included in the article have – according to the documentation that are available about the cases – social pedagogical elements. The cases that are taken up in the article will be analysed as social pedagogical activities, even though the actors themselves might not name them as such. By describing three cases that were found in separate contexts, we have strived to provide a broad picture of social pedagogy as a field of activity.

The introduction describes the welfare state and its challenges, which can be viewed as the foundation for social pedagogy and its forms of expression.

Challenges of the welfare state

Social pedagogy is often described in relation to social policy development, which has pivotal significance for the focus, scope and practice of social pedagogy (Blomberg and Petersson, 2006). The German philosopher Herman Nohl described it as follows: pedagogy and politics are ‘like inhaling and exhaling: they complete each other’ (Hämäläinen, 2003, p. 143).

According to Nohl, politics developed society from the outside, while pedagogy did so from the inside. Social policy is affected in a similar way. As changes occur they affect social pedagogy. Consequently, social pedagogy can be described as trend-sensitive. Social policy is dependent on the welfare policy of a country. This close connection between social pedagogy, social policy and welfare policy also reveals the structural connections of social pedagogy (Eriksson, 2006).

The welfare state continually faces new challenges, and several dimensions in society also affect how social pedagogy is understood and expressed. One such dimension is globalisation and major conflicts around the world. These trends have been accompanied by migration flows, and many who have their permanent residence in Sweden have their origins in non-European countries (Eriksson, 2006). Currently, Sweden is described as segregated in several regards, wherein people born abroad are not offered the same opportunities and possibilities as Swedish natives, despite legislation that in most cases provides everyone with equal rights and obligations. Many people of foreign descent live in vulnerable areas characterised by Swedish authorities as having high rates of crime, ill health and unemployment (Ahmed, 2015).

Another dimension of the welfare state involves the changing conditions in the labour market, which is currently in need of greater flexibility. The labour market is also an area where segregation becomes visible. Without at least an upper secondary school degree it is difficult to find a job in Sweden. Unemployment for certain immigrant groups is significantly higher than for Swedish natives (Ahmed, 2015). Unemployment among people with disabilities is also higher than for other groups.

A third dimension involves the changes in how the welfare state is organised, as well as the changes in the ideological basis of welfare (Nygård, 2003). As social policy changes, the focus and formulation of social pedagogical practices also change. It is perhaps in this final dimension that the implications for social pedagogy become clearest. In Sweden a trend has been observed in recent decades emphasising the rights and responsibilities of the individual to influence various forms of assistance. At the same time, the importance of professionals adopting an approach that focuses more on providing advice and guidance, instead of support and treatment, has also been emphasised. Various initiatives are viewed as guidance to those seeking help, and control by professionals should be reduced to allow the individual to exercise greater self-determination (Börjesson and Palmblad, 2003; Järvinen et al., 2002). Assistance has to be requested by the individual or by his or her representatives. At a time of declining finances in the welfare state, when growing needs exceed resources, risks and special challenges arise. The shift of responsibilities from national to local government, and from public to private welfare actors, has also meant that the municipalities have been given more opportunities to shape the welfare service in ways that appears feasible and reasonable in the local context. The consequences have been large differences

between municipalities regarding what kind of support they offer (Meagher and Szebehely, 2018). Access to and influence over assistance is difficult for some individual clients, since the support looks different depending on where the person lives and how they can formulate their needs for support and demands for assistance (Ringsby Jansson and Olsson, 2006; Olin and Ringsby Jansson, 2006, 2009; Meagher and Szebehely, 2018). Several examples from various welfare services in Sweden can be noted indicating conflicting interests that have emerged in the wake of changes in the welfare state (Björkman et al., 2014; Olin and Ringsby Jansson, 2009; Szebehely and Trydegård, 2007).

Understanding social pedagogy – perspectives and models as a guideline

Currently, there is no given theoretical or occupational tradition in Sweden that can be said to be solely social pedagogical; therefore, social pedagogy can be perceived as vague or difficult to define (Eriksson and Markström, 2000). Researchers in Sweden have tried to describe the specific character of social pedagogy in various ways (see e.g. Eriksson, 2006, 2011). The research findings show that individual social pedagogues often build their understanding based on their own theoretical framework (Hämäläinen, 2003; Eriksson, 2006). Consequently, we do not have a uniform understanding of the meaning of social pedagogy in Sweden. However, over the last decade several researchers have developed perspectives and models that can be used to describe social pedagogy as a concept and phenomenon (e.g. Eriksson, 2006). Three different perspectives emerged as more significant than others; one perspective was developed in Sweden, while the other two were borrowed from our Nordic neighbours, Denmark and Finland.

The first perspective comprises Swedish researcher Lisbeth Eriksson's three models: adaptive, mobilising and democratic (Eriksson, 2014). In the adaptive model, the goal is the adaptation of the individual to a specific society. The model is based on good relationships between social pedagogues and clients and it mainly advocates an individualistic approach. In the mobilising model, the goal is emancipation and the model has a radical focus, which emphasises the collective over the individual. Mobilising social pedagogical efforts lead to action and change for the group or the collective. The goal of the democratic model is *Bildung* and citizenship for individuals. This model emphasises dialogue and the social pedagogue is expected to possess a type of practical wisdom, *phronesis* (Eriksson, 2006).

The second perspective comprises Danish researcher Bent Madsen's three discourses: treatment, action and negotiation (Madsen, 2005). The focus of the treatment discourse is also on adaptation of the individual. Here, social pedagogy is relational and intentional. Similarities can be found between Madsen's treatment discourse and Eriksson's adaptive model. The action discourse emphasises solidarity and integration as important elements of human living conditions. The social pedagogue advocates for the vulnerable. In the negotiation discourse dialogue is crucial, while the societal perspective becomes less visible (Madsen, 2005).

The third perspective is based on Hämäläinen's two lines of development (Hämäläinen, 2012), which may be termed *general social education* and *special social education*. These serve as a guide to understanding social pedagogy in Finland.¹ Hämäläinen argues that social pedagogy as a concept follows two basic lines of development. The first focuses on social pedagogy as a means of strengthening people's sense of belonging in society, linked to a citizen perspective. Social pedagogy becomes a support for human and social growth for everyone in society and throughout life. In this line of development, concepts such as participation, agency and active and critical citizenship become important. Support for this approach can also be found in Paul Natorp's theoretical understanding of social pedagogy. The second line of development in Hämäläinen's presentation addresses social pedagogical efforts to counteract marginalisation and social misery, while promoting social inclusion and reintegration. This line of development, which is based on Herman Nohl's approach, promotes both integration and emancipation (Hämäläinen, 2012).

The three researchers, Eriksson, Madsen and Hämäläinen, differ in how they clarify the meaning of social pedagogical theory and practice, but they also share significant features. All are based on the assumption that social pedagogy is broad and varied, ranging from what relates to the upbringing of the individual to activities in which groups of people actively participate in their daily lives and fully exercise

their citizenship. In this article, we will use Hämäläinen's lines of development as a point of departure, as we analyse three different cases of social pedagogical practices, but we also complement the analyses with aspects of Eriksson's models and Madsen's discourses.

The purpose of the article is to examine how various theoretical perspectives and models can be used to understand and analyse Swedish social pedagogical practices. This leads us to the following questions: how can Swedish social pedagogical practices be characterised, and how can different theoretical perspectives and models be used to develop the knowledge of these practices?

Social pedagogical practices – three cases

Case 1: Drive-in football – work with youth in the suburbs

The first example of social pedagogical practices involves a youth project conducted from 2013 to 2014 in Stockholm County. The project was in 2014 the subject of research (Eriksson and Nylander, 2014). In the present article we use the descriptions of the case, and the findings of the research, in order to theoretically analyse the nature of this social pedagogical practice.

The origin of the ideas behind drive-in football can be found in London, at Charlton Athletic Football Club. The London police received funds from the local government to develop methods to prevent situations such as spectator violence. They contacted Charlton and then started spontaneous football matches in a parking lot. Police and local leaders participated in the matches (Eriksson and Nylander, 2014). The initiative proved to be successful. Contacts with Charlton around 2005 raised the idea of importing the concept to Djurgårdens IF, a football club in Sweden. The association initiated discussions with various municipalities in Stockholm County and neighbourhoods in the city of Stockholm. Several of them had problems with vandalism in residential areas. The participants hoped that the drive-in football concept would radically reduce this vandalism and other criminality. One goal was to promote a sense of community among the various local groups, an outcome that was expected to be achieved by the drive-in football being open to all young people in this municipality. The stakeholders – in this case Djurgårdens IF, the municipality, a local football club and a representative from the business community – wanted to provide young people with meaningful activity on weekend evenings, while communicating healthy values. The basic concept involves renting an indoor gym once or twice weekly (during the weekend), where the 'spontaneous football game' can be played.

Local young people were hired to act as leaders for the activities and they were trained in the values and principles of the Djurgårdens IF spirit which are promoted at the gym. The activity is open to both boys and girls and usually involves ages 16–20. No participants are registered and the activity is completely free. Based on the purpose and structure of the project, it has been described both as a social pedagogical project and as an example of a local development project.

Theories on social pedagogy and local development were key elements when the researchers analysed the project (Eriksson and Nylander, 2014). One aim of the project was to foster good relationships among people of different backgrounds who lived in various places within the municipality and which many considered to be segregated. The people behind the initiative wanted to achieve a sense of community in the local area, helping the municipality residents to experience a sense of belonging. Another aim was to create good relationships between the children and young people and the adults. A sense of belonging to the community is crucial for the individual, while those who do not belong may experience a sense of exclusion. The young people who participated in the project experienced a sense of exclusion prior to their participation, as was noted in earlier studies (De los Reyes et al., 2014). Most of the participants were of foreign descent and came from vulnerable areas in the municipality. At the beginning they experienced a sense of community within their own group, especially with the people who lived in the same area and shared a similar home environment. The project was criticised because it was limited to residents in a specifically designated vulnerable part of the municipality. Consequently, the sense of community within their own group was probably further strengthened. The project leaders argue that those who participated became closer and got to know each other better, with different age groups specifically growing closer. The participants can even extend these relationships beyond the football match, which can be interpreted as a lesson in how to build relationships – a lesson that participants may be able to apply in the future.

The participants also noted that they made new friends through the football. Via this initiative it can be said that the aim of a sense of community was partially achieved, though not with regard to bridging the gap across geographic, socioeconomic and ethnic differences. However, increased solidarity among these young people may be viewed as a positive outcome of the project.

The project also aimed to reduce vandalism and other crime in the community. Yet, it is difficult to determine whether it had such an effect (Eriksson and Nylander, 2014).

With regard to the young people, the project aimed to provide them with exercise, good role models and healthy values, as well as opportunities for meaningful activities on weekend evenings and to encourage them to join various non-profit associations. The project clearly aspired to teach young people to be good citizens.

This case can be recognised as an example that belongs to the adaptive model in the field of social pedagogy (Eriksson, 2006). When working within the adaptive model it is important for the young people to return to the societal sense of community. This model allows little room for deviations and has a standard that everyone is expected to follow. However, the way the leaders thought about the situation went one step further as they worked for a necessary adaptation, where the young people would learn what is and is not possible. The idea was that with this knowledge they could then take responsibility for their own situation and be able to exercise their rights.

The leaders were themselves from the same municipality and therefore they knew the young people who came to play football. Because the leaders were local, the participants were able to identify with them, which was described as a positive experience. The leaders tried to teach the participants to handle conflicts that arose during matches in a manner that could also be applied in the future. Participants were encouraged to engage in a factual discussion with the leaders if they were dissatisfied with something, rather than screaming, fighting and creating chaos. This was a good example of how leaders can act as good role models and convey healthy values to participants.

The leaders highlighted the positive changes they observed, especially in those who at the beginning of the project started fights or played unfairly on the football pitch. After the participants experienced the consequences of their behaviour, the leaders perceived major changes in them as individuals, who were now able to participate and behave appropriately during matches (Eriksson and Nylander, 2014).

Case 2: Cityplace – assisted living for young people with disabilities

Our second case of social pedagogical practice is derived from a research project that describes and analyses opportunities and difficulties in the work of providing daily support to a group of young people with learning disabilities. The research study was published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* (Ringsby Jansson and Olsson, 2006). In this article, we use part of the case description and research findings to theoretically analyse the nature of this social pedagogical practice.

The young people in this context experienced living conditions that varied radically with regard to housing, employment and the extent to which they received interventions from the welfare state, as well as in their social life. Three different patterns were noted. The group of individuals named, *those cared for and represented*, lived in newly built group housing with formally organised daily activities and leisure time. Their parents actively participated in the activities and ensured that everything worked optimally. In contrast, members of the *outsider group* avoided all contact with the welfare state, did not want to be viewed as disabled and did not want interventions that entailed any form of control. They usually lived in their own flats or temporarily with someone they knew, and they occasionally worked, but usually had only temporary jobs. Representatives of socialwelfare organisations knew very little about this group. They were noticed first when problems of different kinds arose, such as their becoming homeless or involved in criminality. An intermediary group, *commuters*, usually lived in some form of supported housing where they had their own flats, but also had access to common facilities with staff support. Sometimes jobs were arranged for them and they received assistance of various types, but their living conditions fell far short of the arrangements seen in the first group. The activities described here applied to this *commuters* group.

The setting for social practices that were studied is referred to as Cityplace. Its assisted living facility was created to provide a housing option for young people with disabilities who did not want to live in

assisted living facilities with more extensive staff support. The residents had the opportunity to live with a relatively high degree of independence, but with common facilities where they could socialise with others when they wanted and receive support and care to the extent that they felt necessary. A key concept had also been that this form of housing would provide young people with greater participation and access to venues in the community. The project analysed how they availed themselves of the venues offered by this form of housing and the local neighbourhood, as well as their significance in relation to the young people. Typical of the supportive activities described here is that the young people were largely able and willing to manage on their own, but needed support with certain aspects of daily life. In the Cityplace accommodation, there were seven or eight young people who lived in small flats of their own in an older apartment building, located close to the centre of town, where they also had access to common facilities.

Several of the young people in the housing facility had strong family networks, but the parents did not have the same type of contact with the staff in the housing facility or at work as they would in more traditional forms of group housing. Consequently, these networks were looser. For this group, formally organised leisure activities were available only to a limited extent. This way of life, which was associated with a rather high degree of independence and relative freedom from social control, had not previously been available for the group of young people whose background included school for students with disabilities. The housing manager expressed it as follows: 'It's impossible to really keep track of this kind of residential facility; we don't even always know how many people live there. Before you know it someone has moved in or out of the flats.'

The young people in this type of assisted housing often visited public places in the city centre, preferably those that also attracted other groups of people who did not quite fit in with society in various ways. They had acquired a lifestyle that was largely separated from the staff and free of parental supervision and control. The staff did not always know how the young people spent their leisure time, who they socialised with and what they did. Moreover, the young people did not allow themselves to be controlled. If the staff tried to control their lives too rigidly, the young people withdrew and avoided visiting the common facilities or receiving help from the staff in their flat. This created concern and insecurity among the staff, but at the same time they recognised that independence was positive for the young people. This was both frightening and fascinating. The analysis conducted in the Cityspace study showed that access to a common facility had been of great significance to the young people. For this group, the common facility served as a venue for socialising, developing new patterns of action, and identifying and exchanging experiences with other young people living in similar conditions. The common facility also served as a bridge to other venues in the area and to contacts and interaction with people in the community. Since a variety of support interventions were offered in the common facility, the individual flats could be preserved as a private sphere for those who did not want to feel managed and controlled by the staff in their homes.

Access to the neighbourhood also proved to be of great significance. The young people in the study spent a considerable amount of time in the community. They were often in town, in the square, in small businesses like snack stands, pizzerias, sports venues and cafes. However, these were not just random environments; usually they visited places where they were regulars, where they recognised the environment and the people and perhaps had developed a relationship with others who frequented the same locations. Typically these were public spaces, but at the same time well-known environments that provided an overview – locations containing both the familiar and the unknown. They were easily accessible places where visitors could drop in and where people could come and go without having a particular reason for doing so. There were small businesses where the young people had got to know the staff, but where there was also a chance to meet new people as customers came and went. They interacted with others, observed what was happening, processed impressions, and became familiar with the rules of social engagement, while also conveying an image of themselves to others. These environments did not require much from their visitors, either in terms of dress, ability to pay or conduct, but rather could be said to be accepting everyday environments where different types of people could meet. Above all, the young people appeared to be attracted by the mood and atmosphere of these places. A hint of the familiar, yet still unknown, a vibrant atmosphere where they could be both participant and silent observer,

undemanding and uncomplicated, where individuals could participate in their own way and on their own terms. This arrangement provided greater potential for young people with disabilities as a group, with less control and supervision and fairly large free zones. Both risks and opportunities were present.

The social practice at Cityplace encompassed both individual and community goals. At the individual level, traces of both adaptation and emancipation could be seen, a support that balanced the requirement for protection and care, as well as for freedom and independence, all equally fundamental needs. The common facility provided the social space where individuals could be invited to dialogue and negotiate about what support was significant for the opportunity to live on their own terms, while relationships and meetings in the community provided a setting for citizenship, learning and social education in a way that is connected to the dimensions of action and mobilisation in social pedagogical work.

Case 3: Future workshop – an activity for older people

Our third case concerns elder care and older people's opportunities for meaningful activities in everyday life. Elder care in Sweden is based on the principle of remaining in the home (SOU, 2015), according to which older people do not move to senior housing or care homes to the same extent as was common in the past. Nowadays, older individuals usually remain in their own homes even at advanced ages. The fundamental values underlying the principle of remaining in the home can be summarised by the concepts of self-determination, participation and dignity for older people. Thus, institutional housing has increasingly been replaced by opportunities for older people to remain in their regular homes. New forms of social interaction and community are therefore now in demand as a complement to remaining in the home, which has led to the need to develop meeting places for older people. Social pedagogy has been identified as a useful resource in conjunction with this need. As an example we will describe part of a project conducted by researchers at University College West in Trollhättan and Jönköping University, in collaboration with eldercare services in the City of Trollhättan (Åhnby et al., 2013; Henning et al., 2015). The project, which was carried out between 2012 and 2014, comprised a Future Workshop (Åhnby et al., 2013) and an in-depth research study (Henning et al., 2015).

This article describes the work of the 'future workshop', the theme of which was 'How can we work together to develop meeting places and meeting points for older people?' (Henning et al., 2015, p. 16). The actual workshop was carried out over two days. After that, working groups were formed and met during an afternoon together with one of the leaders of the workshop. Finally, everyone who attended the future workshop met for a half-day.

The participants in the future workshop were chosen by the municipality and consisted of older people, volunteers from non-profit associations and staff from elder care. The idea of the workshop was to create concrete proposals to improve municipal meeting points for older people. It aimed to promote participation, providing people with the opportunity to come together, develop new ideas and work for something that they share and want to change, thereby providing people with real opportunities to make a difference. The future workshop culminated with the formation of working groups, representatives of which were then invited to a meeting in the autumn of 2012. Finally, all workshop participants were invited to a six-month follow-up meeting in the spring of 2013. Politicians from the social services committee in the municipality of Trollhättan also participated in this event.

The point of departure for the future workshop – and the project as a whole – was to develop and improve, from the perspective of the participants, meeting points for older individuals (Åhnby et al., 2013). The project showed that this type of workshop can also create commitment and be significant for participants, beginning with opportunities for increased participation and a sense of community. Several characteristics of this workshop resembled elements found in what is usually characterised as a social pedagogical approach, for example group work, creative elements and development of new activities based on the needs of the participants. Opportunities for participants to exert influence and share responsibility are of particular interest. Moreover, this type of future workshop is a method of change wherein participation and community are key concepts.

The future workshop provided many experiences and in-depth knowledge. The researchers noted that it allowed workshop leaders to focus on the problems associated with creating and arranging effective

meeting points. This was done in a brainstorming session involving the entire group and in smaller groups, as well as through a collage illustrating future meeting points for older people. The conversations focused on recognising relevant issues. Through the workshop the working group could also be convinced that the ideas that were developed were important and could be implemented. The future workshop made participants aware of social structures and processes that might lead to several shortcomings in society, e.g. too few meeting points for older people, and poor conditions in public transportation, including problems with accessibility and high prices on tickets. The working group from the future workshop also showed scope for use as a reference group, which could be called upon in the future when discussing current issues of meeting points for older people. The future workshop may thus be regarded as an example of how a group of vulnerable people can actively participate in change. An example of this would be when the group met after six months and were able to ask the invited politicians questions. Finally, the researchers who followed the project concluded that the workshop could be described as being based on the concept of emancipation since it allowed older individuals to be freed from what can be perceived as a form of subordination (e.g. that professionals determine the meeting points), and because all participants learned about various activities conducted by volunteer organisations.

Analytical reflections

The examples described in cases one to three address different situations and contexts, all of which include elements of human marginalisation or exclusion. This marginalisation can be assumed to have arisen because of trends in the welfare society with large migration flows, changing conditions in working life, and changes in the organisation and philosophy of welfare initiatives. Marginalisation is constructed and reproduced both spatially and socially, and is transitory and contextual. Consequently, social changes create new problems relating to exclusion that are not quite the same as before, and new categories are also created as descriptions of the abnormal or different (Dominelli, 2004; Payne, 2014). Exclusion arises through social, political and cultural processes, and can be understood as a dimension of relationships that are continually constructed and reproduced in society. Here, the dual focus of social pedagogy can be observed: the focus on social services and welfare (care activities) and the focus on learning in civil society (Hämäläinen, 2012).

If we consider the three activities described in cases one to three using Hämäläinen's lines of development as a framework, we discover that the lines of development are intertwined and difficult to distinguish. The question is whether it is not this specific duality that constitutes social pedagogy. According to Hämäläinen, the two lines of development are closely linked. We find that Hämäläinen's lines of development are well-suited to analysing the goals of the different activities. One important question is how we view the groups who are the subjects of the activities: young people in the suburbs, young people with disabilities and older people. The first two are groups that we traditionally consider to be vulnerable and disadvantaged. However, the group of older individuals is more heterogeneous and therefore more difficult to categorise. If older people are not viewed as a vulnerable group, it would be difficult to apply Hämäläinen's second line of development, special social education. Let us now review each case separately.

The goal and visions of drive-in football included an element of upbringing to teach the young people to be competent social citizens. Thus, the case involved a form of learning in civil society, general social education, a type of social upbringing aimed at 'everyone'. One goal of the project was to reduce crime, implying that the participants were engaged in such activities and could therefore be viewed as a vulnerable group. Based on such thinking, the project could also function as special social education. If Eriksson's (2006) models are used, the project can be recognised as fitting the adaptive model, where the initiators want to adapt the young people so that they are included in the social community from which some of them are assumed to be excluded. In Madsen's (2005) terminology the treatment discourse could be applied. The project could also be understood via Eriksson's democratic model, where stakeholders in various ways want to teach the young people to become social citizens who can make their voices heard and fully express their citizenship, which Madsen refers to as negotiation.

With regard to the situation of young people with disabilities in our example, the watchwords included increased participation and capacity to access the community, suggesting that the living conditions of this group could be improved. The work is based on preventing marginalisation and exclusion in various ways. The term special social education then comes to mind. However, at the same time there are aspirations that the group should be given the same opportunities as everyone else, and in this way be able to benefit from the societal offering of education, community and commercial activities. Given a narrow interpretation in accordance with the Eriksson model of adaptation, it can be said that this form of housing was designed with the idea that the young people should live as ‘normally’ as possible, ultimately adapting to society’s standards. In a further interpretation the mobilising model can be used to claim that young people were given the opportunity to emancipate and mobilise their own resources and acquire a place in society on their own terms.

We consider the third case to be a clear expression of Hämäläinen’s first line of development – a form of general social education involving the support of human and social growth for everyone in the community throughout the lifetime of the individual. This involved promoting participation in social life and working to achieve active and critical citizenship. Eriksson’s democratic model, with dialogue as its central aspect, is also a possible description of the future workshop, as is Madsen’s negotiation discourse.

We can conclude that both of Hämäläinen’s lines of development are visible in the activities we studied. They provide an opportunity to reflect on both the explicit and implicit goals of the activities. In simple terms we can say that general social education can be found in all three activities, while special social education can be found in the first two, but not in the third, though we consider this to be somewhat uncommon in social pedagogical practices. In our analysis of the activities and while writing our article, we also used Madsen’s discourses and Eriksson’s models. Our results are summarised in the table below. Through the work of these three researchers and their different perspectives, we have acquired a complete picture of how we can understand social pedagogical practices in a Swedish welfare context.

Table 1 Analysis of Swedish social pedagogical practices described in three cases: three approaches for analysis.

<i>Three social practice cases</i>	<i>Eriksson (2006) – models</i>	<i>Madsen (2005) – discourses</i>	<i>Hämäläinen (2012) – lines of development</i>
Drive-in football for young people in the suburbs (Case 1)	Adaptive Democratic	Treatment Negotiation	General social education Special social education
Assisted living for young people with disabilities (Case 2)	Adaptive Mobilising	Treatment Action Negotiation	General social education? Special social education
Future workshop for older people (Case 3)	Democratic	Negotiation	General social education

When using the development lines Hämäläinen devised, dimensions such as mobilisation and adaptation are not clarified. Therefore, we see the three models as complementary, not as alternatives to one another.

What is missing, or at least not clearly expressed in Hämäläinen’s lines of development, as we understand it, is a more radical perspective: what Eriksson calls the mobilising model and Madsen calls action discourse. We could interpret this as a type of Nordic understanding of social pedagogy, characterised by the challenge of balancing the tension between the individual and the collective, between dependence and independence, between emancipation, mobilisation and adaptation, as well as between action and negotiation.

Conclusion

The intentions and focus of interest of general social education and special social education differ to some extent, but the complementarity between the two lines of development is of central importance to

social pedagogical practices. The focus of social pedagogical practices, as indicated in the three Swedish cases described above, differs depending on the target group, context, situation and environment, but these viewpoints are united in that they all include social, practical and existential dimensions of a professional approach – an approach supported by ethical values in which reciprocity and solidarity among people are key aspects.

Note

¹In this article, we choose to use [Nivala's \(2018\)](#) terminology when we refer to Hämmäläinen's development lines; general social education and special social education.

Author biographies

Elisabet Cedersund received her PhD in communication studies from Linköping University in 1992. She has been professor of social work at Jönköping University (2006–11), and professor of ageing and later life at Linköping University (2011–16). She has conducted research on the client/social worker encounter, and on interaction between older people and professionals in health and social care. Many of her studies deal with human interaction in various types of casework where oral communication is used as the basis for decision-making, and with how the construction of 'social problems' and 'care needs' in talk contributes to a deeper understanding of how cases are managed in welfare work and elder care. Cedersund was leader of the research project 'Social Pedagogy in Society' (2002–5), which was oriented towards developing social pedagogy in research and theory through studying practice. She has been the coordinator of several networks in social work and social pedagogy with the goal of developing and strengthening the cooperation between researchers in the Nordic countries. Since 2016 she has been professor emerita at Linköping University, and affiliated professor at Jönköping University.

Lisbeth Eriksson has worked as a social worker for 17 years in various fields such as social services, the prison and correctional sectors and hospital care. She received her PhD in educational sciences from Linköping University in 2002 and became an associate professor at the same university in 2007. Her research has two different focuses. One is on immigrants, the multicultural society and popular education, and the other is on social pedagogy. Her research in the field of social pedagogy includes theoretical issues and the meanings and understandings of social pedagogy. She has written several articles and books about popular education and social pedagogy. Currently she is working as a researcher at the division of social work and social pedagogy at University West in Trollhättan.

Bibbi Ringsby Jansson has a professional background in disability care for people with learning disabilities. For several years she has worked as a university lecturer within the programme of social work and social pedagogy, and has been head of unit at the division of social work and social pedagogy at University West in Trollhättan. She received her PhD in social work from the University of Gothenburg in 2002. Her research interest is focused on two main areas: social life and the importance of participation in the local public environment for young people with learning disabilities, and social pedagogy as theory, activity and as a research area, related to the field of disability care. She has written articles and book chapters on how social life, working life and living conditions are influenced by spatial design and organisation of housing, neighbourhoods and the local public environment for young people with disabilities. Currently, she is working as a researcher and university lecturer at University West in Trollhättan.

Lars A. Svensson has a professional background in municipal elder care and worked for several years as director of a home for older people. Between 1985 and 2016, he taught at University West in the social work and social pedagogy programme. His teaching focus was on older people, aging and elder care. He received his PhD in social work from the University of Gothenburg in 2006. His current research has two different focuses. One is on the importance of meeting places in the neighbourhood for older people; the other focus is on social pedagogy as a theoretical concept, practical activity and education, and how it can be applied to the field of social gerontology. He has written several articles and has contributed to books about the importance of meeting places for older people and social pedagogy. Currently he is an affiliated researcher in social work in the division of social work and social pedagogy at University West in Trollhättan.

Declarations and conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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