



International Journal of Social Pedagogy

Special issue: Social Pedagogy in Times of Crisis in Greece

Editorial

1844-2014: 170 Years of Social Pedagogy Can Greece's Economic Crisis Highlight the Potential of Social Pedagogy?

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How to cite: Mylonakou-Keke, I. '1844-2014: 170 Years of Social Pedagogy Can Greece's Economic Crisis Highlight the Potential of Social Pedagogy?.' *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 2015, 4(1): 2, pp. 2–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2015.v4.1.002>.

Published: 01 January 2015

Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double blind peer review.

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

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1844-2014: 170 Years of Social Pedagogy

Can Greece's Economic Crisis Highlight the Potential of Social Pedagogy?

Guest Editorial

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Prologue

The Prologue to the present Special Issue of the *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, with the title '*Social pedagogy in times of crisis in Greece*', has three different moments in time as starting points:



A selective timeline as a basis for this prologue

Year 1904:

In Alexandria, Egypt, the Greek poet Constantine P. Cavafy (1863 – 1933) wrote the poem: *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

Waiting for the Barbarians

C. P. Cavafy (1904)

- What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?
The barbarians are due here today.

- Why isn't anything happening in the senate?
Why do the senators sit there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.

What laws can the senators make now?

Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

- Why did our emperor get up so early,
and why is he sitting at the city's main gate
on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and the emperor is waiting to receive their leader.

To cite this article: Mylonakou-Keke, I. (2015). 1844-2014: 170 Years of Social Pedagogy – Can Greece's Economic Crisis Highlight the Potential of Social Pedagogy? *International Journal of Social Pedagogy – Special Issue 'Social Pedagogy in Times of Crisis in Greece'* 4(1), 2-23, DOI: 10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2015.v4.1.002. Available online at <http://www.internationaljournalsofsocialpedagogy.com>

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He has even prepared a scroll to give him,
replete with titles, with imposing names.

- Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today
wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?
Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,
and rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?
Why are they carrying elegant canes
beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

- Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

- Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?
(How serious people's faces have become.)
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution.

This poem by Cavafy is offered for multiple 'readings'. Especially nowadays when we have been experiencing the impact of a huge, not only economic but also moral, value, spiritual, cultural and psychological crisis, Cavafy's allegory is a starting point and a framework for studying this complex situation, with many parameters and at many levels: The decadent society that is on the verge of collapse, the desire for change – even for the worse – the anticipation of the 'barbarians', the peculiar dependence on these powerful 'others', the intention of the unconditional concession to everything, the destructive tradition and the humiliating subordination to the 'barbarians' hoping that the crisis will end, the trivialisation of politicians, the eroded relation between the state and citizens, the orators' silence, the inability of the ordinary citizen against authorities, utopian hope, idleness of strange anticipation, political, social and spiritual indolence, indifference, boredom, confusion, despair for the change that have never been made, resignation, inaction, apathy. Of all possible analogies with the current era and the possibilities of a philosophical and critical reflective approach that the diachronic temporal scope of Cavafy's discourse conveys, many and powerful messages are emerging for our times. One is: *There are no more excuses for apathy and inaction.*

Year 1844:

The term *social pedagogy* was first coined by the educator Karl Mager (1810 – 1858), having as its main orientations (Buchkremer, 2009):

- Social criticism, as the starting point for every social pedagogical effort, aiming at the society's commitment to improve and change the educational and social status of all people, with particular emphasis on vulnerable and underprivileged social groups.
- The ability of each member of society to be educated throughout the course of his/her life, with the ultimate goal of his/her self-realisation and (personal and social) well-being.

Social pedagogy was officially established¹ within the context of activities that developed so that the problems of huge and economic deadlocks that were present in 19th century Europe might be dealt with. Thus, from its very beginning, social pedagogy has been linked with the dynamic addressing of problematic situations.

1844 - 2014: 170-year course of social pedagogy

During these one hundred and seventy years, social pedagogy has been evolving and developing in various parts of the globe, being in a constant interaction with the historical, social, cultural, economic, political, technological and geographic conditions within which it has been operating and with which it has ultimately been co-shaped.

Given the diversity of these conditions and needs in different geographic areas of the world, there is no common acceptable definition of social pedagogy; it manifests a *polyphony*² and a wide range of priorities and orientations. Nevertheless, this polyphony is being made more and more harmonic as time goes by and enhances the ideological, theoretical, epistemological and methodological dimensions of social pedagogy and its research strategies. Thus, this harmonic polyphony, broadness and multiplicity of roles of social pedagogy, which has stimulated many discussions (see Hämäläinen, 2003, 2012; Smith, 2009; Cameron & Moss, 2011; Úcar, 2011), is finally integrated and at the same time feeds and strengthens its scientific and epistemological status, making it an important interdisciplinary scientific field and offering it knowledge, experience, potential and significant effectiveness in practice, in the different and – as a general rule – demanding conditions for its application and action.

Within this context, during its course of about two centuries, social pedagogy has been associated with the significant efforts of individuals and groups who have envisioned, taken initiatives, assumed responsibilities and actions, striving with passion and dedication – and several times 'against the tide' – to make their ideas work and, finally, to contribute to the reformation of social and educational systems.

Year 2014: a) Social Pedagogy...

Studying the presence and the scientific footprint of social pedagogy in various areas around the globe, one finds that, no matter how its respective orientation is differentiated during its course in

¹ Unofficially, actions in purely social pedagogical nature, which could be characterised as 'precursors of social pedagogical actions', developed worldwide much earlier. In Greece, already from antiquity and throughout its historical course, there was a plethora of such 'precursors of social pedagogical actions' and 'early' social pedagogues (i.e. Socrates, Plutarch, St. John Chrysostom, St. Kosmas from Aetolia, Evanthia Kairi and others) with important social pedagogical oeuvres and contributions (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003). To indicate this, we are referring to such precursory social pedagogical actions as *theorika*, which was public money given to poor Athenian citizens in Ancient Athens so they could pay for their participation in theatre, great celebrations and generally social, political and cultural events of the city.

² There has been a long discussion (Kornbeck & Rosendal Jensen, 2009) about the reasons why we claim that there is *polyphony* (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003) in social pedagogy, as well as how this has been evolving as time goes by into a *harmonic polyphony* (Mylonakou - Keke, 2013).

space and time, there are some common elements governing the philosophy, ideology, value system, theory, epistemology, methodology, research orientations and practices of social pedagogy.

Nowadays, social pedagogy is a structured scientific field, with a strong interdisciplinary character and strong tradition and solid scientific origins.

We could define social pedagogy (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2013) as the interdisciplinary field that acts upon, and is a *functional mediator*³ between, human systems and their social, political, cultural, economic and technological hyper-system. Its role is particularly important for all people's adaptation, survival, growth, development, progress and well-being throughout their lifetime. Social pedagogy redefines, in Bakhtin's term (1981), the *chronotope* of education and its effectiveness is influenced, by and large, by the formation of a different *balance* between formal and informal education, especially by the dominance of ICT⁴, through which we have been experiencing a paradigm shift in Kuhn's (2012) terms.

Modern social pedagogy develops in all those fields of social educationing reality and is organised around the following key axes:

- (a) *Holistic-systemic*⁵ approaches that are required so that the complexity of the phenomena, together with the unanticipated issues that social pedagogy very often faces, are addressed;
- (b) The *interdisciplinary (and in some cases trans-disciplinary) character* that is generated by the strong interconnections that develop with many other disciplines and scientific fields and the epistemological and methodological parameters that this brings about;
- (c) A *synergy of theory and practice* that is created by their continuous interaction⁶, which is transformed into functional coexistence and, eventually, unites theory and practice;
- (d) A *continuous pursuit for improvement and change* that individuals and groups seek so as to make improvements and bring about changes in issues that concern them, while improving themselves ['everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself', writes Leo Tolstoy];
- (e) The *organised collective and collaborative action* that is required so that the intended improvement of, and change in, issues is achieved, while personal and collective responsibility are undertaken; and

³ 'Functional mediator' refers to the meaning that the term has in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), that is, an organised *mediation* between systems. In the case of social pedagogy, it is an organised *mediation* between the bio-psychological-social system human and the hyper-system that surrounds them; see analytically, Mylonakou-Keke, 2003.

⁴ ICT creates new vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. Social pedagogy has to deal with – different approaches from the traditional ones – a new reality, which results in new forms of social pedagogical issues, such as social digital exclusion, lack of digital opportunities and digital potential, digital divide, digital illiteracy, digital communalism, cyber-bullying, internet addiction etc.

⁵ The main idea of Systems Science (Kekes, 2008) is in Aristotle and his perception that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts' (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, H, 6). Systems Science approaches the system from a holistic point of view; it studies how its elements are linked, interact and are interdependent among them and acknowledges that properties different from the sum of the parts of the system emerge from the whole. Regarding the interconnectedness between social pedagogy and Systems Science, see Mylonakou-Keke, 2013 and her article *Social Pedagogy and School Community: Preventing bullying in schools and dealing with diversity. Two sides of the same coin*, in this Special Issue.

⁶ The interaction between theory and practice in social pedagogy has been indicated by many scholars of this scientific field (Eriksson & Markström, 2003; Mylonakou – Keke, 2003, 2013; Petrie et al. 2006, 2009; Cameron & Moss, 2011; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Hämäläinen, 2012; Smith, 2012; Stephens, 2013).

- (f) The *prevention and intervention* required for social pedagogical issues to be addressed dynamically and effectively in the field of action (intervention), while the development of preventative mechanisms is emphasised.

Social pedagogy offers a particular theoretical and methodological way of thinking, and in practice it offers a set of organised pedagogical actions that seek to influence and change social and educational mechanisms (Petrie et al., 2009; Hämäläinen, 2012; Stephens, 2013). This is often expected to create resistance in people and institutions, who may feel that their homeostatic function and their convenience are being threatened. This critical and sometimes aggressive encounter with the inertia of social systems makes social pedagogy a *revolutionary* science, with much potential for effective intervention in social and pedagogical areas (Mylonakou-Keke, 2013).

b) ... in times of crisis in Greece

Nowadays, we are experiencing increasing uncertainty and insecurity, which are continuously being compounded by globalisation and economic crisis. The recent crisis commenced around the globe in 2008, and since then it has hit Eurozone countries, primarily those in Southern Europe. When compared with other countries, Greece has been affected the most by this crisis (Chomsky, 2012).

Greece is internationally known for its historical past and cultural heritage; having given birth to philosophy, many of the sciences, the Olympic spirit, Greece is known for its generally decisive contribution to global civilisation. It is also known abroad for its many archaeological sites and archaeological treasures of unsurpassed values, some of which enrich and adorn prestigious museums in various Western countries. Furthermore, Greece is very well-known abroad for its many islands and its natural beauty and because it organised the Olympic Games with great success in 2004. Today, however, worldwide references to Greece are related more to the economic crisis the country faces than to the long course of its many achievements.

As shown, however, this crisis is not only economic but also political and primarily humanitarian. Nowadays, in Greece the vast majority of the people strongly question institutions and largely distrust politicians (of all parties in the Parliament) as well as the motives and considerations of their decisions. Questioning and negative criticism of politicians, their decisions and their statutes are made daily by ordinary Greek citizens to the intellectuals⁷ of the country, with questions and criticism becoming increasingly documented and substantial.

In recent years, the Greeks have suffered various devastating and growing consequences of the crisis. These have included: layoffs in the public and private sector; business closures; a vertiginous rise in unemployment; a continuation of the uncontrolled influx and stay of migrants and refugees in Greece⁸; a dramatic reduction in wages and pensions – which have led to humiliating living

⁷ *'Dear Members of Parliament, ... due to the fact that you have already led to unprecedented misery Greek citizens and have condemned them to unemployment, starvation wages and the deprivation of the basics for living food, accommodation, education and health. Now, with the new Loan Agreement, you are selling every Greek property, public or private, at a humiliating price, and you are transforming the Greek people into a modern serfdom. Because, ladies and gentlemen, as Greeks living in Greece or anywhere else, they will eternally condemn you for the crime you have been committing constantly against the Greek people, against Greece, against culture and democracy [I] If you do not come to your senses and you do not realise what they have been doing, you have not only been destroying Greek democracy and the Greek people, but you have also put in the groundwork for the destruction of Europe and the European Union'* (Pavlos, 2012; author's translation).

⁸ The migrants come from the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, countries of the former Eastern Bloc and - in an increasing number, in recent years – refugees come from Asian countries (especially in the Middle East, as a result of civil war in their countries), who – despite the economic crisis – continue to flow to Greece mainly because of its the geographical location and because it is a member of the European Union and, thus, a gateway into it.

standards for the average Greek (among the few exceptions from these reductions is the pay of MPs, Ministers, their advisors, and so forth). There have been great waves of emigration, primarily of Greek scientists to the West. The State's conspicuous mistrust of its citizens and vice versa has become apparent, with political decisions that violate the fundamental rights of citizens. There has been a continuous creation of new taxes and tax increases to unsustainable levels. seizure of real estate have led to an increase in homelessness, poverty and diminished living standards for the vast majority of people, have resulted in the inability of a large number of families to meet basic living needs, provide psychological stability and, generally, support and protect their members. The result has been social unrest, the degradation of institutions and a growing sense of insecurity with a daily experience of prolonged stress, stagnation, frustration and indignation. It is not unreasonable to see all this as underlying a large number of psychosomatic, psycho-social and pedagogical problems, such as the increase in juvenile delinquency, bullying and violence in school and an unusually high level of suicides in Greece today.

Within this framework, some *concerns/questions* are raised more and more strongly, such as:

- How critical and decisive does the description and understanding of these complex phenomena and their impact on our future become?
- What are the social pedagogical dimensions of this new reality?
- What is the necessity, the type and the intensity of an attitude that leaves Cavafy's apathy and inaction and becomes a substantial social pedagogical reaction to all the events taking place and to what is being done in our *absentia*?
- How do scientists approach and deal with various direct and indirect problems that are created by this situation?
- What values, principles, perceptions, attitudes, ways of thinking and actions emerge from these issues and, generally, what social pedagogical responses can be created to deal with these problems?
- How is the social pedagogical role of society and, more specifically, of school determined?
- Finally, can social pedagogy do anything for all this?

The interdisciplinarity of social pedagogy and the organisation of the content of this special issue

Since its inception, social pedagogy has been associated with efforts to resolve important social and educational issues, such as those discussed above. In order to deal with the inherent complexity of these issues and support the actions necessary for active and effective interventions to solve the problems, social pedagogy utilises various sciences and disciplines, functioning as their connective tissue. This highlights its strong interdisciplinary character, which enriches its theoretical and methodological content as well as contributing to the research strategies it develops and the practices it implements. Its interconnective role for different disciplines has attracted the attention of many thinkers in social pedagogy (for instance Eriksson & Markström, 2003; Cameron & Moss, 2011; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Hämäläinen, 2012; Smith, 2012; Mylonakou-Keke, 2013).

It should be noted that the disciplines involved every time that a social pedagogical issue is dealt with do not simply coexist but co-function. In other words, we consider that this is not just coexistence or a cluster assembly of various disciplines that occasionally borrow from each other or simply interact with each other; it is a collaboration and coordination of disciplines in a combined operation that is made at a higher level, from which a new interdisciplinary area emerges

(Mylonakou-Keke, 2013). For precisely this reason, social pedagogy is an interdisciplinary science and not a multi- or pluri- or cross-disciplinary one.

Thus, by nature and because of its research concerns, social pedagogy is an interdisciplinary⁹ field: tackling social pedagogical issues requires the contribution and synergy of different disciplines, which – at a higher level – will create a common philosophical and epistemological view and the resulting methodological practices.

Contributions to this Special Issue

Having a versatile *interdisciplinary character*, social pedagogy acquires the ability to broaden and deepen its view on, and approaches to, the questions and issues that it is concerned with; this ability helps social pedagogy gain both a deeper understanding of the different aspects of these issues and a greater effectiveness in dealing with them.

In this Special Issue, we have collected articles that try to approach the complex concerns/problems raised above. The contributors to this Special Issue are academics, researchers, graduate students, volunteers and practitioners, who do not come exclusively from the field of social pedagogy but also from other scientific fields, which nurture, enrich and broaden the interdisciplinarity, orientations, perspectives, methodological approaches, practices and the scope and potential of social pedagogy. Together they utilise and enhance *the dynamic interaction of the social dimension of pedagogy with the pedagogical dimension of social life*.

These two dimensions, which have a continuous interaction in the form of a feedback loop are the backbone of how the content of this Special Issue is organised (see Diagram 1). We are interweaving the contributions to this Special Issue with these dimensions in mind, so that their interactivity and the multiplicity of roles of social pedagogy may be highlighted.

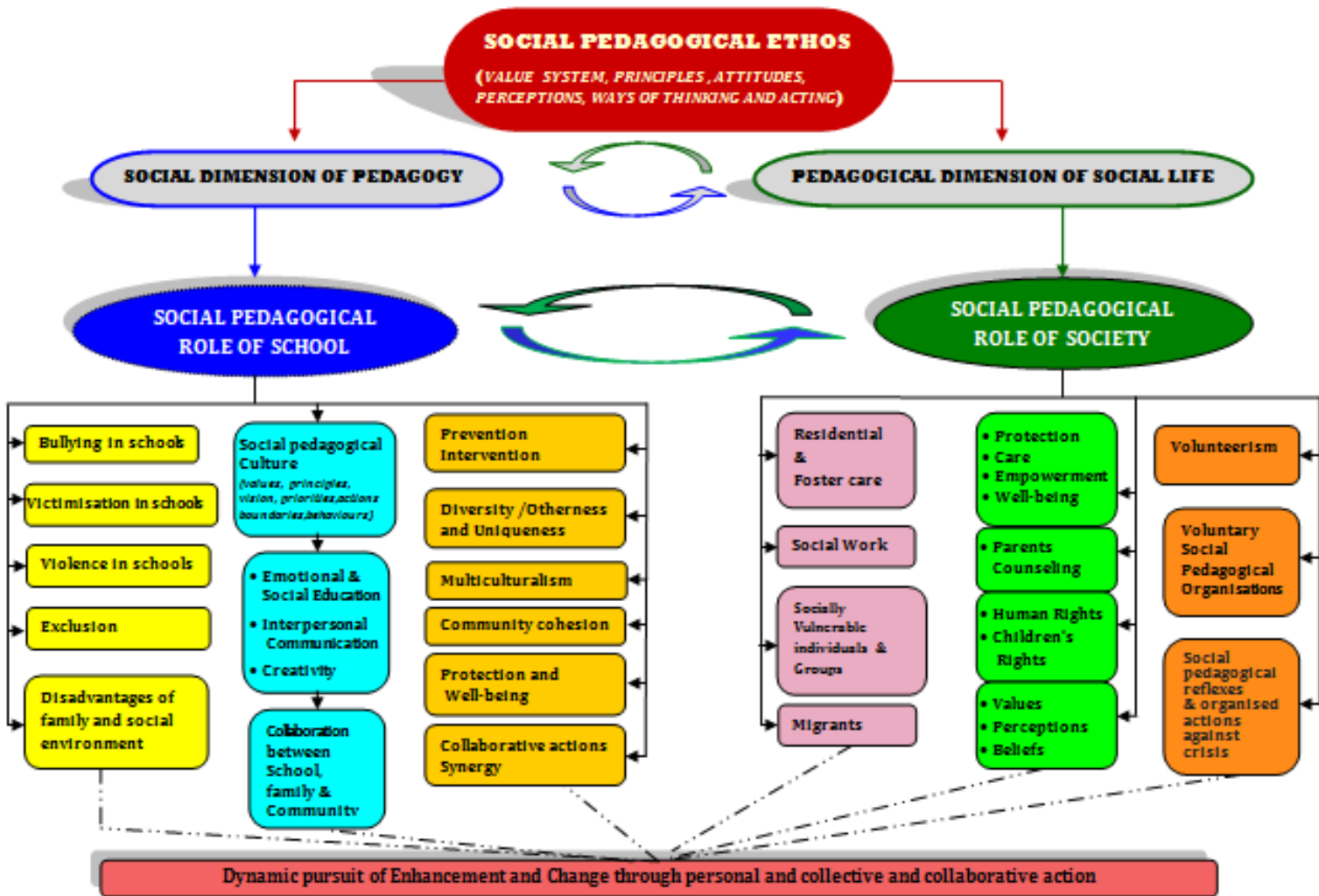
The articles in this Issue have been organised according to the content (see Diagram 1) in two parts:

- A) THE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF THE SCHOOL and
- B) THE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF SOCIETY

From the contributions to each part there are themes emerging (which also interact with each other) and demonstrate the multifaceted role of social pedagogy.

⁹ In some cases it may be trans-disciplinary, too (Kekes & Mylonakou, 2006; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Mylonakou-Keke, 2013).

Diagram 1: Presentation of parts and topics of IJSP Special Issue on “Social Pedagogy in times of crisis in Greece”



Part A: THE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

‘Historically, social pedagogy is based on the belief that you can decisively influence social circumstances through education’ (Hämäläinen, 2003, p. 71). Nowadays, more and more social pedagogues and thinkers from various parts of Europe are stressing the need to redefine the role of the school and educational work, with a stronger and wider social pedagogical orientation (Petrus, 2000; Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2013; Petrie, 2005; Buchkremer, 2009; Kyriacou et al., 2009; Kornbeck et al., 2011; Stephens, 2012).

Values, education and social pedagogy

It is argued that schools should play a more effective and efficient, but mainly preventive interventionist role in encountering and fighting against a series of social pedagogical problems such as: children’s marginalisation and exclusion in and out of the school, bullying, victimisation and violence in the school environment, the violation of children’s rights, discrimination, stereotypes, social disadvantage and ‘otherness’, the oppression of vulnerable social groups, absenteeism and dropping out of school.

The social pedagogical role of the school is crucial in the creation, establishment and strengthening of a strong value system for its students, which will eventually create a culture and an embedded moral attitude, which - combined with the strengthening and enhancement of emotional and social skills - will guide their behaviours and actions. Undoubtedly, the role of social pedagogy in schools has several components. Part A of this Special Issue attempts to approach some of them.

Argyris Kyridis, Anastasia Christodoulou, Ifigeneia Vamvakidou and Maria Pavlis-Korres start Part A with their article '*Fighting Corruption: Values Education and Social Pedagogy in Greece in the Middle of the Crisis*'. The authors discuss the effects of corruption in Greece during the crisis and are concerned whether an educational system that does not care for consolidating basic moral values is responsible for generating social crises. From their article there clearly emerges the need for *values education*, and hence a stronger social pedagogical role of the school and a more comprehensive and in-depth social pedagogical function of the school, in all its dimensions, would contribute to the prevention of corruption in Greek and in any other society.¹⁰ In essence, values education would strengthen and consolidate a strong value system in students and tomorrow's managers and the stakeholders of socio-cultural and political-economic systems. The writers propose this through a research proposal and a model that they themselves created, focusing on and presenting specific educational actions. In this model, the authors utilise some basic theoretical and methodological dimensions and subsequent practices of social pedagogy, thus highlighting – among others – the potential and prospects of social pedagogy, mainly through its preventive role.

Bullying, violence and victimisation in schools and diversity/otherness

Nowadays, different scientific areas and fields have recognised, highlighted and studied the phenomenon of bullying in schools and related problems, such as violence and victimisation, and have recommended various approaches to and methods for its effective tackling through prevention and intervention. The majority of these methods and the consequent strategies, programmes and practices emphasise the preventive role that schools¹¹ should take over and develop in order to deal with it.

One of these methods, strategies and practices to prevent bullying in schools is to deal with attitudes towards diversity/otherness, an issue that is also of great interest for social pedagogy. For social pedagogy, the role of the school is enhanced when it educates its students by strengthening and developing their emotional and social skills, accepting diversity, taking a positive attitude towards the other by respecting their dignity and by highlighting their uniqueness and their

¹⁰ The magnitude of the problem of corruption in the countries of the European Union pushed the homonymous European Commission to agree to establish the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) as an International Organisation. The agreement was ratified when the relevant Bill passed in each member-country of the European Union (Government Gazette: 198 A'/24.09.2014).

¹¹ The organised prevention and tackling of the phenomena of bullying and violence in schools has now become a necessity, and, therefore, it has been institutionalised by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religion. More specifically, the Ministry – under the Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning' and the priority keystone 'Upgrading the quality of education and promote social inclusion' – has established the Central Scientific Committee (CSC / K.E.E. in Greek) so that the Act: '*Development and Prevention Network Operation and Tackling of Phenomena of Violence in Schools and Intimidation*' can be supported scientifically. The main goal is that all teaching staff (regional principals, directors of educational divisions, school counselors) and all teachers of every school unit of Primary and Secondary Education in Greece should be trained so to be able to develop organised programmes and actions to tackle and most importantly prevent the phenomena of violence and bullying in schools in every school community in the country.

Each member of the Central Scientific Committee (K.E.E. in Greek), which was established in the Ministry, comes from a different academic field and contributes to approaching the phenomenon of bullying from his / her own scientific point of view. Thus, various dimensions of the phenomenon of bullying and violence in schools are highlighted. The scientific support and guidance of the development and operation of the Prevention Network as well as tackling of these phenomena are accomplished with the interdisciplinary collaboration of the K.E.E. members. In this Committee social pedagogy is also represented, thus highlighting how much potential there is to intervene effectively and, importantly to prevent violence and bullying in schools in the social and educational space.

potential for empathic understanding. This fundamental social pedagogical need and priority for us to be trained so we accept people different from ourselves and respect others (without losing our personal identity) has been pointed out by many scholars (Eriksson & Markström, 2003; Petrie, 2005, 2011; Buchkremer, 2009; Kyriacou et al., 2009; Mylonakou-Keke, 2009b, 2012, 2013; Eichsteller, 2010; Coussée & Williamson, 2011; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011).

On the one hand, the first two articles in this section of the Special Issue focus on the serious and multifaceted psycho-social pedagogical problem that has been steadily increasing in recent years: *bullying in schools*, in which social pedagogy is particularly interested at a philosophical, theoretical, epistemological, research and practical level (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2013; Stephens, 2012; Kyriacou et al., 2014). On the other hand, the third and fourth articles present and discuss bullying in schools and propose that dealing with attitudes towards diversity/otherness in schools can help students to accept different aspects of diversity and to learn how to respect the other. Furthermore, they discuss and highlight how a positive attitude towards the other – that is, respecting the other's dignity and understanding his/her uniqueness without losing one's own personal identity – is a fundamental social pedagogical need and priority for all stakeholders as it supports and contributes to community cohesion.

The next article refers to a multicultural school in Athens where there are very pronounced cases of diversity manifested by students from different ethnic, religious backgrounds and/or ideologies and proposes a special social pedagogical model so that students' extreme antisocial behaviours can be smoothed out.

Stelios N. Georgiou, Panayiotis Stavrinos and Militsa Nikiforou, in their article *'Bullying and Victimization in Cyprus: The Role of Social Pedagogy'*, initially highlight many factors and parameters associated with these phenomena and then focus on the study of these phenomena in schools in Cyprus.¹² Their article is a review of bullying in schools and victimisation. By referring to a large number of research papers and important documents, the authors show in detail many aspects of these phenomena from an international perspective and from schools in Cyprus. Then, they contextualise these phenomena within the current economic crisis. For bullying and victimisation in schools to be dealt with the writers recommend that systematic and collaborative efforts be made with a more social pedagogical orientation, aiming not only at intervention but primarily at prevention. Within this context, they highlight the need to strengthen the social pedagogical role of school and the consequent redefinition of educational work, which would additionally utilise the family context and cooperation between schools and families, the keystones that are among the main priorities of social pedagogy.

The following article, entitled *'The Interaction between Theory and Practice in Social Pedagogy: A European Campaign and an Interactive Social Pedagogical Tool Against Bullying in Schools'*, is written by three young scientists, **Stefanos Alevizos, Ioanna Lagoumintzi and Pavlos Salichos**. The authors first show the outcomes of a European survey on bullying, which was held during the crisis, under the European Anti-Bullying Campaign of the European Committee's Programme DAPHNE III. Then, the writers emphasise the unity of theory and practice in social pedagogy, highlighting the need to develop the social pedagogical role of schools, especially in terms of prevention, through organised practices. The authors present proposals that have already been

¹² Cyprus is an island (the third largest in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia); it is located southeastern of Greece and has a long and important history. Since ancient times, Cyprus has been inhabited by Greeks who have always been the vast majority of its population. The Republic of Cyprus is now the southeastern edge of the European Union; its official language is Greek and maintains, in the long course of history, strong historical, ethnic, religious, spiritual, cultural and economic ties with Greece, with which it has been caught in the spiral of economic crisis that has been plaguing the countries of southern Europe in recent years.

implemented in collaboration with schools in Greece and Cyprus and have been assessed very positively by students, parents and teachers in both countries. More particularly, the writers present a social pedagogically oriented interactive educational tool against bullying that has already been used by secondary schools most effectively and maximises its potential within an interactive framework between teachers and students that work in cooperative groups.

The article entitled '*Social Pedagogy and School Community – Preventing Bullying in Schools and Dealing with Diversity: Two Sides of the Same Coin*' is written by **Iro Mylonakou-Keke** and refers to a social pedagogical research programme that has been carried out during the years of economic crisis in Greece. The programme focuses on preventing bullying in the school community, through a positive perception of diversity/otherness as well as by expanding and strengthening emotional, communication and general social skills. The participants of the social pedagogical programme were all directly or indirectly involved in incidents of bullying in schools, constituting a broad base of stakeholders who came from the school and the wider community. The methodology of social pedagogical programme was based on Systems Science. This research programme proposes the prevention of bullying in schools through employing a social pedagogical perspective, through the establishment, consolidation, enhancement and utilisation of a social pedagogical ethos, which aims at a systemic transformation of the culture of the school, the family, the wider school environment and the community and will establish a new social pedagogical culture.

The other article that utilises a social pedagogical perception on diversity/otherness is written by **Marios Koukounaras-Liagkis** and entitled '*Religion and Religious Diversity within Education in a Social Pedagogical Context in Times of Crisis: Can Religious Education Contribute to Community Cohesion?*' The author focuses on religious and cultural diversity and religious education in relation to community cohesion, a really sensitive and difficult (if not thorny) subject, which – in our days and with the events that take place worldwide – is extremely apropos and critical. Applying consistently the methodology of qualitative research (action research and case studies) and utilising theatre in education, the writer presents comparative research that was carried out in different types of schools in Northern Greece with students who were Orthodox Christians and Muslims. He proposes a programme of religious education that promotes the prevention of social exclusion and is based on basic social pedagogical principles, such as the constant pursuit of improvement and change as well as respect for diversity, without changing personal identity. In our opinion, the author neither supports children's departure from their own faith; that is, the secession by Orthodox Christians from Orthodox Christianity or Muslims from Islam. Nor does he support children's integration in a multi-faith religiosity. Instead, the writer supports respect for the faith of every person, without bigotry, respect for the other's diversity, while the person can maintain his/her own faith at the same time. And, since we live in Greece and the vast majority of the population is Greek Orthodox Christians, this specific article does not imply the elimination of Orthodox Christian education and its substitution by a world religion. Instead, the goal is that we should be trained to respect the different other with a different ethnic identity and faith, while educating the others to respect our own national and religious identity and its integral components.

Panagiotis Kalagiakos, in his article entitled '*Social Pedagogy under Very Difficult Conditions: The Case of the Multicultural School of Athens*', presents the social pedagogical work done in the Multicultural School located in the centre of Athens. The school provides secondary education and has students that come from migrant parents of various ethnicities, languages, religions, values, cultural backgrounds, beliefs and interpretation codes. The majority of these students carry to school cognitive, psychological and social 'baggage' that is often unbearable due to the fact that they have experienced trauma and life-threatening situations, such as extreme poverty, political persecution, multifaceted brutality of war, both in their countries of origin and during the often inhumane conditions of their escape, and their displacement to Greece. Pronounced diversities among students who come from the same country, the same religion and language but with different ideologies often leads to extreme conflicting relations and situations. Given that this conflict is nourished and usually maintained by the family environment, the conditions at the

Multicultural School of Athens are really difficult at many levels. Teachers have to deal with – among other problems – extreme antisocial behaviours that are manifested primarily by negative interactions and relationships among students, which are often at deadlock. In the same article, the author presents some of the social pedagogical work that has been done in the Multicultural School of Athens to address these acute problems. The social pedagogical model that the writer proposes and applies, by using Information and Communications Technology (ICT), has so far yielded very positive and encouraging results, especially regarding the creation and gradual development of positive interactions, and communication relationships as well as the development of collective and collaborative actions among the students.

Social pedagogy and communication among the school, the family and the community

From the early years of its inception, social pedagogy has been connected directly to the care and education of children and young people with the aim to deal with their problems and their personal and social well-being through the support and enhancement of the family and the school (Buchkremer, 2009; Petrie et al., 2009; Petrie, 2011; Mylonakou-Keke, 2013). When there is functional communication between the family and the school, goals are achieved more easily and efficiently. Nowadays, communication between the family, the school and the community has become a coherent scientific field with an important philosophical and theoretical framework and methodological background, which is part of the wider field of social pedagogy (Mylonakou-Keke, 2009a). As an academic module, it has been taught in most of the University Departments of Education in Greece only in the last decade. The person who plays an important role in the form and effectiveness of communication among the family, the school and the community is the school principal.

Thomas Babalis, Foteini Kirkigianni and Konstantina Tsoli, in their article entitled '*School and Student Families' Communication Techniques and Relevant Practices in a Social Pedagogical Context: Primary School Principals' Views in Greece During the Economic Crisis*', have focused on exploring some views of primary school principals in the Cyclades (an island group in the Aegean Sea) on their communication with their pupils' families. The school principals who participated in this research did not receive any training in communication between the school and the family while studying at university. Thus, these school principals' communication with the pupils' families has not been based on scientific knowledge; it has been rather intuitive and has been determined by experience and the character and intentions of each school principal. In their research, the authors highlight both the need for systematic training of students in Departments of Education in issues of communication among the family, the school and the community and the need for change in the institutional framework so that a systematic re-education of practicing teachers and school principals on these issues should take place to make the school community more effective and efficient in dealing with key social pedagogical issues.

The institution of all-day schools and free school meals: A historical and social pedagogical dimension

Ioannis Thoidis and Nikos Chaniotakis, in their article '*All-Day School: A School in Crisis or a Social Pedagogical Solution to the Crisis?*', study the function of the all-day school in Greece during the crisis. The authors approach critically the function of the all-day school since its institution in Greece until today, highlighting its role from a social pedagogical point of view. More specifically, based on research data, they first create a typology of day-schools from the 19th century onwards and the parameters of their operation. They then proceed to a systematic assessment of all types of such schools and turn their attention to the critical assessment of the social pedagogical function of all-day schools in Greece during the crisis. They illustrate and take into account issues, such as the

emerging problems and resulting dysfunctions that the financial crisis has caused and/or exacerbated. Finally, the authors make recommendations and highlight the social pedagogical role and potential of the all-day school in the midst of a financial crisis so that all the aforementioned issues can be dealt with effectively.

History has shown that, in times of crisis, Greek society – through its statutory bodies (whether of the Church or the State), its organisations, collective and private initiatives – has demonstrated strong social pedagogical reflexes and actions to address various consequences of the crisis.

Labrini Th. Skoura, in her article *'The Institution of Free School Meals in Times of Crisis in Greece (1924-1964): A Historical and Social Pedagogical Dimension'*, presents and highlights the case of meal provision operating for several years before the crisis hit Greece. The author presents this, in detail, not only as a form of charity, providing necessary food to needy students, but as a well-coordinated procedure organised and implemented on social pedagogical fundamental principles and priorities, such as the generation of conditions to support a rounded development of all children and young people and their well-being and to ensure their dignity. The provision of student meals was essentially a policy with a social political basis and vision. For this reason, despite the prevailing difficult conditions, they were treated not as a means of preventive care or simply of social responsibility but rather as a social pedagogical means. This was seeking to avoid marginalisation, strengthen social inclusion. It sought to support personal development and a culture of respect for others with the development of interpersonal communication skills, the utilisation of social interaction and participatory collaborative actions to improve and change the existing situation by those involved.

Part B: THE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF SOCIETY

According to Hämäläinen (2003), social pedagogy started with efforts to address in theory and in practice (mainly through educational means) social distress arising from various social issues, which was enlarged in times of crisis. Some key issues on which social pedagogy focuses are: human rights, children's rights, issues that social work addresses, such as social welfare, residential care, foster care, and preventive medicine. It also places emphasis on vulnerable groups such as migrants and disadvantaged families or children at risk (such as abused and exploited children). In order for all these issues to be addressed and dealt with, voluntary organisations have been established, social pedagogical programmes of prevention and intervention have developed and activities have been organised and implemented – activities that provide psycho-pedagogical, social and even material support to individuals and groups in need, aiming at their health, dignity and their emotional and social well-being. Some of these issues, such as children's rights, childhood and human rights, social work, are addressed in Part B of this Special Issue.

Children's rights, childhood, human rights and social work

Dimosthenis Daskalakis begins Part B with the article *'Crisis, Childhood and Children's Rights: A Modern Sociological Approach'*. The author discusses in detail childhood and children's rights in times of crisis in a sociological context, from which the potential of interdisciplinary communication between sociology and social pedagogy emerges. The duration and addressing of childhood is the result of historical, cultural, social and economic determinants. After he has shown this, the writer goes on to illustrate – in a well-documented way through a sociological lens as well as through the conceptual reconstruction of childhood at the present time – the effects of the current economic crisis on childhood and children's rights.

Childhood and children's rights are crucial areas for sociology and, simultaneously, fundamental priorities for social pedagogy, which places particular emphasis on the practical application of theoretical pursuits, approaches and potential in order to attain the child's all-round development and welfare, through a wide range of methods, techniques and practices.

Theano Kallinikaki, in her article entitled '*Child Protection in Times of Crisis in Greece*', initially captures various problems generated by the economic crisis in Greece, drawing on a large number of studies. Furthermore, she aims to delineate the crisis's direct and indirect effects on the population, especially on the living conditions of parents and children, children's psychosocial development, social adjustment and their well-being, the function and dynamics of children's families and the impact that the crisis has on school and community integration. Then, taking a social work point of view, the author proposes the development of specific strategies, policies, priorities and interventions and categorises them so that a large number of problems generated by the crisis may be dealt with. More specifically, Theano Kallinikaki mentions an issue that is of interest internationally for social work and social pedagogy, such as foster and institutional care. She presents indicative evidence provided by young people who lived in foster families and data from recent qualitative research into Greek foster care. Thus, the writer draws a clear picture of the potential of social work in Greece and the preventive, supportive and resilient interventions in children and family crisis conditions to be developed.

In their article, **Vassilis Pantazis and Georgia Pantazi** present '*The Socio-Economic Crisis and Human Rights in Greece: The Role of Social Work*'. The authors focus on human rights, which they gradually examine at a global level, in relation to social work within the context of the crisis in Greece. They then propose human rights education as a special field in education with specific objectives and methodology. Additionally, they argue that this field should be treated as a coherent field and taught in a systematic way in social workers' training (while they present their profession before and during the crisis in Greece). The writers argue that with such specific training the transformative role of social pedagogues and social workers would be enhanced, and they themselves would be able to develop organised actions to empower people to change their lives and contribute to social change. The objectives of social change, social justice and professionals' transformative role are common principles of social pedagogy and social work.

It is also worth mentioning that the last two articles highlight the interdisciplinary connection between social pedagogy and social work, about which there has been a great and long discussion. A common starting point in social pedagogy and social work has been the establishment of society's obligation to act to help the poor and socially weak. Since then, both disciplines have taken a course¹³ that they are becoming more and more distinct and divergent over time. In recent years, more and more studies advocate a clear distinction between social pedagogy and social work. It is even suggested that the view that social pedagogy is closely linked with social work and is somehow affected by or subject to it may hamper the development of social pedagogy as an autonomous discipline with a distinct philosophy, content, priorities, potential and practices (Hämäläinen, 2003).

The phrase underlying all the (recent and monumental) work edited by Jacob Kornbeck and Niels Rosendal Jensen is '*we understand social pedagogy as being necessarily different from social work*'

¹³ On this relationship there is a very important study by A. Mühlum (1981) that is a rare self-edition that gathers in detail, through a systematic literature review of German literature, views on the interrelation between social pedagogy and social work until the 1970s. Mühlum studies the general views on the association or not of the two disciplines that dominated international literature (until early 1980), especially in terms of the conceptual content of the two terms. Based on this rationale, he records the mainstream opinions on the relationship between social pedagogy and social work (Mühlum, 1981; Kanavakis, 2002). These perspectives may be of a wide range; at one end, there is the perspective that the two disciplines are identical and, at the other end, there is the perspective that they are two different disciplines.

(2011, p. 3). Arguing for this view, Peter Lüssi¹⁴ states that the question of whether or not there is a difference between social pedagogy and social work is, in fact, confined within a purely academic debate. Practitioners, states Lüssi, know very well that there is a real difference (Lüssi, 2008). In fact, he argues that there is a need to focus our attention on the *centre*, that is, on the general philosophy that underlies and guides these two disciplines and not on the *periphery*, that is, on the details of the practice and the actions of people or organisations that implement this philosophy. Social pedagogy deals with people's life as a whole and seeks to influence them so they can develop continuously, both personally and socially. The social pedagogue's role is educational in nature for children and young people, whereas it is related to lifelong education and care for adults (Lüssi, 2008). On the contrary, the social worker's workplace is associated with certain moments, when a person encounters a specific problem and will resort to a social worker or the social worker will try initiate help to that person. For this reason, the social worker does not participate in the person's daily life in the same way as the social educator.

Our opinion is that, despite the undeniable commonalities, social pedagogy is clearly distinct from social work. In Greece this distinction is absolutely apparent and starts with the noteworthy distinction that there is the name of each discipline, that is, between the words 'pedagogy' and 'work' both in their conceptual and semiotic content. This distinction continues to be evident in their objectives, content, epistemological identity, methodological approaches to time, field and applications, priorities as well as in their orientations and potential; it is also reflected both in different university course programmes and in practice placements.

Family values in the wider Greek society and parent education

Since the early years of its creation, some of the objectives of social pedagogy have been to establish social cohesion, social well-being and social development. It is within this context that it studies issues related to migrants – such as their living conditions, their rights, and their social and cultural integration. At the same time, since its early days social pedagogy has highlighted the role of the family, and family dynamics and function, as having a privileged pedagogical role, given that it affects each person's value system and code interpretation.

Alexander - Stamatios Antoniou, and Marina Dalla, in their article entitled '*Greeks and Albanian Immigrants' Perceptions on Family Values, Marriage Myths and Love: The Role of Acculturation*', make a comparative study of certain values and beliefs held by Greeks and by Albanian migrants in Greece. In today's Greek society a large part of the migrant population consists of Albanians, who have been steadily migrating to Greece since the 1990s. After both economic and political crises in Albania (1990-1991 and 1996-1997), migration flows to neighbouring countries, such as Greece and Italy, were repeated and large. The authors' article is a systematic research, consistent with the methodology of quantitative research, aiming to compare Greeks' and Albanian migrants' perceptions of family values, beliefs about marriage, emotional patterns within the family, cultural differences and attitudes to cultural assimilation. Such factors largely determine people's interpretive frameworks and related behaviours. Extending the results of the research, they could help us better understand children's emotional patterns and behaviours in school and the wider social environment, and thus we can take them into account when designing social pedagogical programmes concerning the emotions and social pedagogy.

¹⁴ Peter Lüssi is a distinguished scientist in the field of social work, known as a proponent of Systems Science, with the utilisation of which he has proposed a new systemic model for social work (since 1991), having been influenced mainly by Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann's views.

In her article entitled '*Social Psychology and Social Pedagogy: Their Interdisciplinarity in Group Counselling for Parents*', **Artemis Giotsa** presents how, in Greece, family support is accomplished by means of parenting schools. The author presents aspects of the operation of parenting schools by focusing on relationships and the interdisciplinary connections between social psychology and social pedagogy that have been developed in these schools and suggests that these connections be utilised further. The author refers to values, principles, standpoints and priorities held in common by both disciplines, using Systems Science methodology. Within this framework, the writer presents the operation of parenting schools and the potential they offer to parents or people who may become parents in the future. It is worth noting that in Greece parenting schools operate free of charge and are offered by the state to all resident in the country, thus strengthening – among others outcomes – social inclusion and the integration of different populations.

Volunteerism within the Greek social pedagogical context

From its strong interventionist role, social pedagogy derives one of its fundamental objectives: to improve and change an existing situation. This is eventually attained by active participation, personal responsibility and, often, voluntary work.

An excellent case of a Greek voluntary social-pedagogy-oriented organisation is summarised in the article by **Costas Yannopoulos, Stefanos Alevizos and Marina Kavallieraki** entitled '*Multiple Practices of Social Pedagogy: The Case of "The Smile of the Child", a Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Children's Protection and Well-Being*'. 'The Smile of the Child' is a successful and world-renowned organisation, which was founded on a child's wish. The authors present briefly some of the organisation's actions and highlight the range and scope of its work in the social pedagogical field. 'The Smile of the Child' aims, holistically, at children's protection and support, development, progress and well-being. At the same time it deals efficiently with a wide range of needs and problems, arising at different levels, affecting children themselves and their families, especially when the latter have reduced ability to support their children and may indeed present some danger to them. At the same time, the volunteer organisation supports various institutions in the country to become as effective and efficient as they can in those functions that relate mainly to children and their families.

Father Vassilios Kontogiannis, in his article '*The Value of Social Pedagogical Volunteerism in the Midst of the Greek Economic Crisis: The Example of Voluntary Caring for Patients in the Hospitals (EDANI)*', presents a special case of social pedagogical volunteer work with the organisation and systematic development of relevant social pedagogical actions. Within the supportive framework of the Orthodox Church, the author – as a priest, spiritual father and founder of the volunteer organisation EDANI – focuses on vulnerable groups of patients, adults and, especially, children who are admitted to hospitals and have either no supportive family or network of friends or only those with many shortcomings and drawbacks. This voluntary organisation seeks to provide psychosocial support and empowerment to all these people by developing organised and systematic actions. EDANI volunteers, after having been through the appropriate training and having outdistanced themselves, demonstrate strong moral and social pedagogical reflexes by serving a large number of patients and trying to help them improve their ways of lives and deal with emotional, social and educational needs.

Additional social pedagogical reflexes of the Greek society as manifested in practice

So far, contributions to the Special Issue have highlighted a large range of social pedagogical responses in Greece, so that the multi-parameter issues generated or exacerbated by the economic crisis can be dealt with. The remaining contributions come from three young people, who are female students on the postgraduate programme in social pedagogy at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and focus their interest on practitioners of social pedagogy.

Panagiota Gogoni, Evangelia Athanasaki and Evgenia Venni, with their article '*Social Pedagogical Reflexes of Greek Society during the Economic Crisis Period: Indicative Social Pedagogical Actions*', have recorded indicative social pedagogical actions exhibited by individuals and, mainly, by organisations throughout the country during the difficult period that Greece has been going through. In presenting their research, the authors group these actions so as to highlight the key axes of interest and priorities of social pedagogy at practice level. Their article concludes that, despite the multiple difficulties and problems that the economic crisis has brought to Greece, people and organisations have, in the end, strong social pedagogical reflexes that both make up and imply a remarkable social pedagogical ethos. This ethos increases volunteerism and nurtures collective and collaborative effort so that problematic situations can be dealt with, and social pedagogical contributions, improvement and change can be pursued on a regular basis.

Social pedagogy in Greek Higher Education

Social pedagogy in Greece has always been distinguished from social work at philosophical, conceptual, theoretical and practical levels. This distinction is reflected in professionals' level of education, studies and training. In Greek academia, social pedagogy is taught as a compulsory subject on the *undergraduate course programmes* in Schools of Education and more specifically in the Departments of Primary Education (but not yet in all). This means that Bachelor level graduates from these departments, who usually work as teachers in primary schools, are trained in social pedagogy at a theoretical, methodological and practical level. Where social pedagogy is taught as one of the compulsory subjects, after the students have been trained in the basic issues of social pedagogy the emphasis shifts to its different orientations, such as communication at school, in the family and in the community, human rights, peace education, the pedagogical utilisation of leisure time and so forth.

Today, at *postgraduate studies level*, in the Pedagogical Faculty of Primary Education in the School of Education at the University of Athens and at the peak of the financial crisis in Greece, it was essential to establish a Master's programme focused on social pedagogy and more specifically '*Social Neurosciences, Social Pedagogy and Education*'. The programme has a strong interdisciplinary character, looking at the use of dynamic synergies between social pedagogy and social neurosciences¹⁵. This Master's programme seeks to integrate and utilise these interdisciplinary research results in school (formal education), in social space (informal education) and, generally, in all fields of social pedagogical action so as to improve as effectively as possible human and social capital as well as the operations of educational and social systems. Moreover, *at a postgraduate studies level*, there are programmes at various universities in Greece that focus on dimensions or aspects of social pedagogy, such as intercultural education, diversity in education, human rights education, peace education and vulnerable or disadvantaged social groups.

It is important to mention that, in terms of schools – that is, in Primary and Secondary Education today – a satisfactory number (increased during the crisis) of social pedagogical programmes have been developed and completed or are still in progress. These are usually developed in collaboration with universities and various agencies. These programmes are sometimes interventionist but primarily preventive in nature, applying social pedagogical approaches to various concerns,

¹⁵ Social neurosciences are an interdisciplinary academic field focused on the study and understanding of the ways in which biological systems exhibit behaviours and develop social processes and structures, and the ways in which these behaviours, social processes and structures affect the brain, the nervous system and biological mechanisms in general.

emphasising those that arise in the classroom, the school and, more generally, in the community. They include bullying and violence at school and in the community, and address otherness, prejudices, stereotypes and strengthening emotional and social skills as well as cooperation between school, family and community.

Epilogue: The 'Lernaean Hydra' of crisis and social pedagogy in Greece

Nowadays, we have entered a period during which most issues we have been facing as a society have a high degree of complexity. More generally, within a worldwide context where globalisation is being imposed, the underlying but significant interdependence between the social systems of different countries has great effects on the stability of human subsystems, whether these subsystems are citizens or other individuals living in a country, or are organisations. The complexity of the issues increases from uncertainty about the future, the ambiguity concerning the options that are open and increasing insecurity that the current multi-leveled crisis poses. This increasing complexity requires the pursuit of new scientific and epistemological approaches that deal with many critical issues arising.

Within this context, social pedagogy – bound from its beginning to the dynamic encounter with difficult situations – today is being called upon to further strengthen its role and highlight its potential, especially in a country such as Greece, whose citizens are now fighting against the many-headed 'Lernaean Hydra'¹⁶ of crisis.

Social pedagogy's fundamental vision is its quest for educational and social enhancement and change. By adopting holistic approaches embedding a unity of theory and practice and by utilising interdisciplinary links, social pedagogy in the end manages to embody and implement this vision, transforming all in a collaborative, preventive and interventionist action.

In conclusion, social pedagogy is not only:

- ✦ an ideology or a philosophy or a view or an applied theory or a set of programmes and practical applications of some important ideas, values and principles;
- ✦ a scientific field with major thinkers as 'intellectual ancestors' and founders, with tradition, heritage and a legacy of almost two centuries;
- ✦ an interdisciplinary field that feeds upon and is fed by the synergy of different disciplines, with consequent (to its interdisciplinarity) epistemological, methodological, and practical research orientations.

In reality, social pedagogy is all the aforementioned that compose a coherent discipline with solid scientific roots, productive potential and dynamic perspectives. It is a discipline that is directly transformed into a way of thinking and a way of life which 'invades' people's everyday life, becomes a way of life, a mode of action, an experience, and ultimately a reflection, practice and action of what we call **social pedagogical ethos**.

Summing up, as has been discussed, in times of crisis in Greece and elsewhere, this social pedagogical ethos is combined with values and actions that inspire and teach people how to continue, envision, and strive; it inspires them to become aware of and activate the abilities and

¹⁶ In Greek Mythology the Lernaean Hydra was a huge reptilian monster with nine heads, which the mythical hero Hercules fought and finally defeated. Thus he liberated the citizens of Mykines-Argos (an area of Greece) from its destructive presence. While Hercules was beheading one head of the Lernaean Hydra, two other heads were growing immediately in the head's initial position.

skills that they have individually and collectively, as well as to how trust each other, work together, help each other and strive to improve and change difficult situations.

Social pedagogy does not claim that it would 'save the world'; what it envisions is to educate individuals and groups how to fight, so that they can pursue their own personal and multi-faceted development as well as collective social change throughout their lifetime, thus being able to live a self-determined life with completeness, opportunities and positive relationships. Continuous efforts have been made in this direction so that both the social pedagogical role of school and the potential of the society that is *educating* and *educated* at the same time can be strengthened and widened.

As shown, social pedagogy in Greece in this difficult time of crisis envisions the education of individuals and groups to fight for social progress and prosperity, trying – within a methodologically organised way – to enhance and change existing conditions, assuming substantial individual and collective and collaborative action.

It is exactly this very strong willingness to fight – this 'Herculean labour' – especially under difficult conditions, that seems to be a key component of the Greek temperament, as their long history shows. It is what the poet George Seferis first noted during his speech at the Swedish Academy in 1963, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature:

I belong to a small country. A rocky cape in the Mediterranean that has nothing else but its people's toil, the sea, and the brightness of the sun.

Finally, in Greece, which has undoubtedly been experiencing one of the biggest crises in its modern history, there seems to be a strong incumbent social pedagogical ethos, which strongly activates social pedagogical reflexes, and it is exactly that which allows us to be optimistic and to strive for the future.

Iro Mylonakou-Keke
Special Issue Editor
July 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all participant writers of this Special Issue for their very important contribution to it.

We would also like to express our sincerest gratitude to all members of the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Social Pedagogy (IJSP) and more particularly to Pat Petrie, Emeritus Professor at the UCL Institute of Education and Gabriel Eichsteller, co-founder of ThemPra Social Pedagogy for their unconditional solidarity, continuous support and their constructive interaction that made this collaborative work feasible. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to the UCL Institute of Education and ThemPra Social Pedagogy for publishing the present Special Issue (the first for the IJSP).

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