

## Book Reviews

There has been a bumper crop of books dedicated to social pedagogy this year - a fortuitous situation for providing a series of relevant reviews for this special issue of the Journal. This offers a nice opportunity to compare, in this case, three newly-published books on social pedagogy. Each of our reviewers gives a nice sense of the tone and slant of their books, giving an indication of some of the differences between them. I hope this will be helpful in deciding about further reading. Another of our reviews in this issue is on a book dedicated to storytelling and while it does not explicitly address social pedagogy, the reviewer clearly and adeptly provides strong connections between the book's content and the practice and philosophy of social pedagogy. Finally, it was no mean feat to find a seminal text or author from the social pedagogic tradition written in English, but we have managed to do so and thus provide a review of a book originally written by Janusz Korczak. Thanks to Ian Milligan, Robyn Kemp, Kiaras Gharabaghi, Dawn Simpson and Evelyn Vrouwenfelder for their generous contributions to our book review section.

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**Storo, J. (2013). *Practical Social Pedagogy: Theories, values and tools for working with children and young people*. Policy Press, Bristol. 160pp, ISBN 978-1447305385, £23.99**

Social pedagogy has become a widely discussed topic throughout the UK in recent years. It has begun to have a significant impact in residential child care in particular, although it is also being explored in relation to youth work and the early years' sector. The fact that the topic has moved from the conference and seminar to the university and the workplace can be gauged by the emergence of a number of textbooks - *Practical Social Pedagogy* being one of three published in 2013 so far. What makes it of particular interest is that it has been written in Norwegian and in English by Jan Storo, who works and writes from Norway. Some other books have been written by British authors seeking to interpret social pedagogy for the British context and audience: with this book we are able to see what it looks like from the 'inside', as it were.

Storo is a professor with many years' experience of residential work. One of his principal aims is to link theory and practice, and he writes in an accessible, almost conversational manner. What makes the book accessible is that each chapter is constructed with several different sections and types of writing; there are real-life case studies, practice examples to illustrate a point, text-boxes, and a 'question and answer' style used throughout. In other words there is a great deal of 'dialogue' built into the book, a typical social pedagogic trait, and practitioners will soon realise that the person writing this book has worked with children for many years.

Social pedagogy -like other broad concepts such as social work or education - is not easy to define, but one of its key features is that it is an approach to the care and upbringing of children which draws on theories and concepts from a number of disciplines; these include sociology and psychology, education, philosophy, advocacy and community development, among others. Storo tackles this challenge head on and has chapters on 'theoretical

perspectives' and 'from theory to practice'. Other chapters have simple -and helpful - goals: 'Who is the social pedagogue?', 'What does the social pedagogue do?' and 'Where does the social pedagogue work?' There is also a comprehensive introductory chapter which explains key words and concepts. The last chapter is a very effective description of key social pedagogy practices, under the heading, 'What are the tools of the social pedagogues' trade?' In my opinion these are all interesting and solid chapters which will repay careful reading. One benefit of this structure is that readers can dip into it wherever they like, and then move back and forward. I think that starting with chapters 4 and 5 - 'Who is the social pedagogue?' and 'what do they do?' may be a good way in for those who don't know too much about social pedagogy.

An extract from Chapter 4 ('Who is the social pedagogue?') exemplifies the author's engaging style and his capacity to make interesting observations, when he answers the question, 'is the social pedagogue a researcher?':

In this book, I am making the point that an important part of social pedagogic work is that it both ordinary and systematic. The systematic aspect points in the direction of certain tasks and ideals that look like those of a researcher. Before doing anything, the social pedagogue needs to investigate (p.66).

The fact that residential care is all about 'relationships' is constantly espoused, but what we mean by that is often not analysed. Storo provides us with some very valuable contributions. Chapter 5 contains some excellent analysis and explanation of what we mean by 'relationships' in the context of milieu work, and the importance of 'credible' relationships being offered to clients:

Making oneself available to the client in a relationship capacity can be hard work. Whoever offers themselves to a client in such a role must appreciate that getting personally involved can be difficult. One has to expect being disappointed, and that the disappointment will not be understood by others...

..Having said that, it is, of course also important that the social pedagogue actually does have a personal reaction, that is, that he reacts with himself, with his own emotions. Anything else could easily be seen as mechanistic and 'robot-like'. Only when the contact between client and social pedagogue also contains spontaneity will it be perceived as real (p.86).

Chapter 5 really is a stand-out for me as it provides an analysis of what social work interventions are all about; it identifies three main aspects: 'relationships, structure and change'. It contains some excellent analysis and reflections on the link between the personal and professional goals of relationship-based care work, and it can be applied to many settings.

Readers trained in social work, and indeed teaching and youth work will find familiar topics explored in a recognisable but fresh way. This is a substantial book, albeit one with a very practical focus - it is for students and professionals who want to study and work with children and young people. It is a very accessible, one-volume account of the theory and practice of social pedagogy, and it will allow UK professionals to engage more fully in international dialogues about social pedagogy practice. Its publication is very timely and there is nothing else like it on the market at the moment.

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Petrie, P. (2011). *Communication skills for working with children and young people: Introducing social pedagogy* (H. Venning, Illus.). London: Jessica Kingsley. 176pp, ISBN 978-1849051378, £15.99.

Pat Petrie is Professor of Education at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education where, for a number of decades, she has explored her interests in children and how best to nurture and support them. Her research led her to examining the professional and academic discipline of social pedagogy, a function of many continental European societies, but which is a little recognised term let alone understood discipline in the UK. Her many publications have helped UK practitioners understand this complex yet coherent discipline as a way of being and working with people. Social pedagogy is centrally concerned with relationships: for example, the relationships between individuals, the relationship between an individual and their society and the relationship between theory and practice. People who are new to working with children and young people, and those interested in understanding and developing social pedagogical practice, will find that Petrie's *Communication Skills for Working with Children and Young People* provides excellent foundational reading, with related topics to reflect on and suggestions for activities to test out some of the theories and concepts. This is not an introduction to social pedagogy but social pedagogical communication; through a social pedagogic perspective Petrie helps practitioners to understand, adopt and develop communication skills that are consistent with a social pedagogical value base.

The book is structured into 14 chapters, each with a clear introduction and a section on key messages; every chapter contributes to building a holistic picture of the communication skills that are the cornerstone of a social pedagogic approach. Following the first chapter's 'introduction to interpersonal communication and social pedagogy', Chapter 2 discusses 'preverbal communication' which is important to understand, regardless of whether the reader works with babies or not. Chapter 3 explores a concept of 'careful listening' while Chapter 4 discusses being an 'encouraging listener', highlighting the necessity to understand and develop empathic, attentive and attuned listening in the reader's journey to becoming an effective communicator. The next two chapters discuss more foundation stones of effective communication - Chapter 5, 'feedback', and Chapter 6, 'reflecting feelings. In Chapter 7, 'communications about yourself', the Danish concept of the "3Ps" is introduced and begins to explore how the professional, the personal and the private aspect of the practitioner influence who we are in practice, highlighting the need for reflection as a part of developing self-awareness. Chapter 8, 'questions', discusses some of the complexities around questioning and gives some useful exercises for the reader to try.

Chapter 9, 'Messages about Power and Messages about Equality', stands out for me as very well written and easy to grasp. Petrie tackles this emotive and complicated subject with considerable sensitivity and enviable clarity, no mean feat given the subject matter. How we convey and respond to messages about how we see our own and others' power is discussed without preaching. The nature of control and how we, intentionally and unintentionally, send controlling messages through our communications and how these can be destructive and convey disrespect is presented well. Discrimination is examined in relation to open but also hidden messages within communications between individuals and between individuals and their society. Stereotypes as a form of prejudice is discussed in relation to individual practice but also in the wider context of social control, highlighting the subtle nuances in the relationships

between the individual and society and experiences and consequences of discrimination for identity development. For a social pedagogical practitioner, understanding the nature of power and control is essential as empowerment is at the roots of practice. The key messages on control and disrespect can serve as a useful aid memoire for all practitioners in social care. For me, this chapter could have come much sooner in the book, as it is so pivotal to the way in which we choose to communicate and learn from reflections.

Chapters 10 and 11 discuss conflict in terms of 'when you are criticised' (a challenge for most, if not all of us) and 'confronting problems' (ditto). Avoiding implied blame and criticism within our communications is discussed in terms of how 'I' and 'you' language can be used and in setting boundaries for children that are explanative and appeal to the children's sense of fairness. Chapter 12 discusses some of the complexities of communicating in groups and meetings and draws on previous chapters for underpinning principles. Chapter 13 discusses confidentiality before the final chapter that gives an overview of the whole book.

Charming illustrations by Harry Venning complement Petrie's engaging voice throughout the book and present a wide range of practice examples to help the reader consider the concepts in different settings and situations. More experienced people may find the narrative voice difficult at times, as some of the deeper complexities within communication are not discussed; given the target audience, the need for readability and the vast and complex nature of social pedagogy, discussion of deeper complexities may only serve to confuse. As she avoids making any assumptions about the reader's level of experience, Petrie's narrative voice speaks well to less experienced practitioners by clearly explaining the concepts and ideas, and examining them in different practice settings and situations. Peppered throughout the book are topical suggestions for the reader to reflect on; she provides no right or wrong answer for the reflection, and whilst not prescribing methods, Petrie gently encourages the reader to develop critically reflective skills - a crucially important, yet perhaps misunderstood and undervalued, aspect of relational work.

Petrie describes and explores some of the many complexities within communication with reference to the purpose of social pedagogical communications in establishing a valuing and respectful professional stance based on equality. Perhaps there are some missed opportunities for relating the discussions to more social pedagogical theories and theorists, but as this book is aimed at a first level of understanding, perhaps Petrie was avoiding over-complicating an already complex area. There are explicit and implicit messages throughout that there is more to read and learn, so as a first-line entry into the world of social pedagogy and interpersonal communication this book provides an invaluable source for insight and professional development.

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Stephens, P. (2013). *Social pedagogy: Heart and Head, Volume XXIV*. Bremen: Europäischer Hochschulverlag. 157pp, ISBN 978-3867418300, £34.00.

If ever you have dreaded the inevitable boredom that comes with a transatlantic flight, a psychiatric consultation or a Man City match, dread no more; *Social Pedagogy: Heart and Head* by Paul Stephens provides the kind of engaging, informative and at times humorous distraction you need. Dr. Stephens aims to provide a 'precise textbook' in order to 'present and explore the relationship between social pedagogic theory and practice in an introductory text, and to do so in easy-to-understand, but not trivializing, language' (back cover). On the whole, he has succeeded in doing so.

Social pedagogy has a long and rich history in Continental Europe, and especially in Germany where much of its founding theoretical writing originates. Dr. Stephens is currently based at the University of Stavanger in Norway, and a significant and at times explicitly stated argument in this book is to look to the Nordic countries, and especially Norway, for a contemporary and particularly meaningful example of how social pedagogy can function in a social democratic context. Social pedagogy is both a theoretical formulation of social justice and a (professional) practice geared toward being with those facing adversity, inequity and injustice in society. Although often thought about in terms of child and youth care services, social pedagogy concerns itself with all stages of life, and many examples cited in the book relate to social issues that transcend such services.

*Social Pedagogy: Heart and Head* provides insightful commentary on two levels of social pedagogic theory. First, it addresses the core social theory elements of social pedagogy and how these impact practice. Of particular relevance here is the concept of self-efficacy, articulated perhaps most comprehensively by Bandura. Self-efficacy refers to the real or perceived capacity on the part of individuals (or groups) to see themselves as potential agents of change, particularly in the context of whatever adversity or injustice they may be facing. This is indeed a critical concept in social pedagogy that distinguishes it from the North American and at times UK-based articulations of 'treatment' and 'intervention'. As Stephens points out repeatedly, social pedagogy takes as its starting point the agency (ie: the capacity to effect change) of service users (his term) and defines the role of service providers (or social pedagogues) as fundamentally being about enabling and nurturing this sense of self-efficacy. The social pedagogue, in most situations, does things with the service users, not for the service user, and never to the service user. Stephens provides several hints about the methods used in social pedagogy, and emphasizes in particular the notion of horizontal communication and dialogical engagement, which together serve to ensure a democratic context of the relationship and joint endeavor of service user and service provider.

This book is not, however, a guide to 'being or becoming' a social pedagogue; readers looking for practice hints or new ideas for everyday activities in child and youth serving contexts will be somewhat disappointed. To be fair, this is not the intention of the book; instead, Stephens aims to provide a theoretical foundation for those interested in social pedagogy, particularly those currently encountering this term for the first time in national contexts trying to acquaint themselves with the field (notably Stephen's home country, the UK). This, then, brings us to the second level of social pedagogy theory thoroughly addressed in this book; this is the level

of politics, and specifically the relationship between a social pedagogical orientation and the fight for social justice. Social pedagogy is, according to Stephens, first and foremost a philosophical and ethical commitment to overcoming structurally embedded social injustice, both as a response to specific adversities faced by service users and as an approach to the prevention of social injustice. Indeed, quite aside from its focus on social pedagogy, the book at times reads much like a very thoughtful manifesto of the political left wing - not radical, not reactionary, but dedicated to the emancipation and celebration of fundamentally political values, such as empathy, compassion, righteousness and generosity. Accordingly, extensive sections of the book explore some of the core ideas of people like Paolo Freire, John Rawls and Kurt Lewin.

At times, the book struggles to find its focus. As pointed out repeatedly throughout the book, there is an obvious connection between the 'social' and the 'pedagogic' components of the term social pedagogy. Stephens does very well to explain the genesis of this connection and cites several of the German pioneers in the field of social pedagogy in order to highlight the theoretical framework through which these terms become interdependent (he does particularly well at incorporating Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed in this context). Not unlike his colleagues in the UK, who have been working hard and to very positive effect to introduce the scholarly and practice communities there to the field of social pedagogy, Stephens too struggles with translating concepts from German into English. The repeated use of the term "education" in this context becomes distracting and potentially misleading. Education in the Anglo Saxon tradition is far too closely linked with schooling to help illuminate the nuances of social pedagogy. In reality, the field of social pedagogy, at least in its original homeland of Germany, has distanced itself (perhaps too much so) from the school-based notion of education, preferring instead the definition of social pedagogy offered by one of its pioneers, Gertrud Bäumer (1873-1954): social pedagogy is about "the upbringing of children", but excludes both family and school. Indeed, somewhat absent from this book are core components of social pedagogy that certainly frame the field in Germany: the concept of upbringing, the method of biographical narration, the at times very complex articulations of relational practice.

Nevertheless, this is a book worth reading; it will leave a lasting impression that transcends the theory of social pedagogy and includes also a wonderfully articulate and heart-warming appeal for more justice, less imposition, and an openness to new ideas that leads neither to an uncritical and spontaneous acceptance of a 'service model' (which Stephens is very clear social pedagogy is not) nor to an immediate rejection of another way of seeing the worlds of human service provision.

Quite aside from its scholarly merits, this book is a joy to read, provides an enormous number of really interesting references, and allows the reader to connect with the author in a way that itself reflects the theory, practice and values of social pedagogy.

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**Kirkpatrick, R. (2012). *Stories allways: Tales for children's well-being*. Penicuik, Scotland: Stories Allways. 138pp, ISBN 978-0957463905, £35.00.**

When working in Residential Child Care, creative practice can often be inhibited by the daily demands of services and the complex needs of working with children in care. This can limit the potential for therapeutic practice. Social Pedagogy works from the belief that an educationally rich environment that embraces everyday activities can influence positive change (Hämäläinen, 2003). Ruth Kirkpatrick's book *Stories Allways: Tales for Children's Well-being* offers readers the inspiration and guidance to engage in creative relational practice through the medium of storytelling as part of everyday practice that can enhance young people's wellbeing. The book is motivated by Kirkpatrick's passion for and dedication to storytelling as a therapeutic tool for communicating with and supporting the development of children who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. She says this book introduces the reader to her most loved stories; I would like to introduce you to her book in the hope that it inspires you as much as it has inspired me.

Writing from her vast experience of utilising storytelling as a Social Worker, Kirkpatrick's book is a collection of 10 purposefully-selected historical and mythical stories. Prior to each story, Kirkpatrick provides a synopsis and skeleton overview of the story alongside background information and key themes. Using this step-by-step approach increases the reader's ability to memorise the story; it also guides the reader in selecting a suitable story for the young person and enhances their ability to tell the story from memory. All stories are accompanied by follow up activities and themed exercises that aim to develop children's social, emotional and physical development. This resonates with the principles of social pedagogy to develop the whole child: mind, body, feelings, spirit and creativity (Petrie et al., 2009). The activities are suitable to use with groups of children or, more intimately, one to one with a child. The book includes two CDs which enable the reader to listen to Kirkpatrick reading each story. Through integrating child developmental theory with activities suitable for everyday practice, this book serves as a resource-pack that is suitable for any practitioner who works with children. The book is easy to read and provides good guidance for those keen to embark on storytelling. The activities are creative and diverse; this enables them to appeal to a vast range of young people such as those with learning difficulties, speech impairments or communication/emotional difficulties. This book has the potential to enhance what Hämäläinen (2012, p.8) describes as a 'Social Pedagogic way of thinking'. Through promoting a creative approach to practice that embodies a worker's head, heart and hands and the use of shared activities, also known as the common third, it demonstrates a therapeutic approach to activities that could enable an adult to become a secure base where a young person can seek safety, nurture and comfort.

The key themes that characterise the stories are: relationships, hope, betrayal, bravery, strength, perseverance, transitions and ultimately, resilience. The stories originate from a vast range of sources including the Brothers Grim and Celtic, Norse and Greek mythology. Part of the magic of this book is that, without speaking explicitly about residential child care, these stories have the potential to resonate with the lived experiences of children in care. This is evident in stories such as 'Finn McCool' (p.41-45) where children are snatched away from their parents. The suitability of this story would therefore require the judgement of the worker. Most encouragingly, the stories provide opportunities for young people to reframe their

experiences through the stories of characters who overcome trials and tribulations to achieve heroic status and happiness. This could potentially provide young people with role models that give meaning to their life experiences, whilst enabling them to live vicariously through the trials, tribulations and victories of a central character. Many of the activities that accompany each story are rich in rhythms and rituals. When considering rhythm and ritual, Smith (2005, 2009) asserts that simple yet powerful activities and routines can promote a connectedness which can convey warmth and meaning. The activities therefore aim to create a reverential space for young people and workers alike.

The activities are also designed to build on young people's strengths, develop their communication and through these shared activities enhance their relationships. The stories and activities potentially could create what Phelan (1999, 2000) describes as an 'experience gap'; this provides young people with space to challenge their sense of self, shapes how they view the world and aims to help them develop a positive self-image. Whilst Kirkpatrick recommends that this book is suitable for 7-14 year olds, I would suggest that practitioners should consider that young people in care may not have experienced storytelling and in my experience, regardless of their age, may welcome the activity. The indirect and unthreatening approach inherent within storytelling provides a therapeutic tool for practitioners. There is an abundance of opportunities to utilise this approach when working in the lifespace with young people in residential child care. Used sensitively and appropriately, practitioners have the opportunity to develop a dialogue with young people about challenges or trauma in their lives which aims to enhance their emotional awareness, communication and resilience.

To conclude I will share with you my favourite story, 'the Cockerel and the Sultan' (pp.64-72). The cockerel was small in size but quick with wit and mind. He used these strengths to overcome the bigger and seemingly more powerful sultan who had stolen a golden penny from him. The cockerel's characteristics reminded me of a young person in care with whom I had previously worked. Had I owned this book, this story and the activities that accompany it could have provided him with positive, enabling images of his strengths and how they could support him to overcome the challenges he faced from those bigger than him. *Stories Always: Tales for Children's Well-being* provides residential workers with insightful and easily accessible guidance that has the potential to enhance their Social Pedagogic thinking through the use of storytelling as a creative and therapeutic approach to practice. Fundamentally, the use of these stories and activities has the potential to resonate deeply with young people and enhance their wellbeing.

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**Korczak J. (1999/2007). *Loving every child: Wisdom for parents*. S. Joseph (Ed), (T. Prout and A. Hargest Gorzelak, Trans.). Chapel Hill, North Carolina: AlgonQuin Books of Chapel Hill. 96pp, ISBN 978-1565124899, £8.99.**

Despite Bruno Bettelheim and Alice Miller, two of the world's most famous child psychologists, describing Janusz Korczak as one of the greatest educators of all times and a true pedagogue, Sandra Joseph, the editor of this 'must have' 85 page small-size book could not find any of his work in English. She took it upon herself to have this book by Korczak, a Polish physician, children's author and seminal contributor to social pedagogy, translated. The book consists of a series of quotations and contemplations divided into 13 small chapters and ending with Korczak's life story. It is easy, poetic and full of wisdom as well as humour. I would recommend not reading it all in one go, but to digest it little by little and let the content do its work. I found that the messages stayed in my head and made me think of situations I had been in, either at work with children or with my own children, and encouraged me to look at situations differently than I had done before. Other messages simply offered good reminders.

This book could be used at a team meeting as a starting point for discussion around children whom we work with and situations we meet; it could similarly be used in discussions with children on how we interact and engage with them. Certainly in my household some of the quotations have offered some interesting reflections from the point of view of my eight year-old. The book opens with Ari Goldman talking about the insecurities of first-time parenting and how Korczak's words offered him some helpful guidance: 'How many hours should a baby

sleep? As long as she needs to', says Korczak who suggests that 'children themselves will teach us how to be parents if we are willing to listen' (p.v). Korczak asks us to 'respect the mysteries and the ups and downs of that difficult task of growing up, to respect the here and now, to remain in the present'. How will a child be able to get on in life tomorrow, he asks, 'if we are not allowing her to live a conscious, responsible life today?' 'We must respect (and enjoy) every moment, because each will pass and never return' (p.30).

Some of the key messages from this book that most resonated with me include: 'a child hungry for advice and direction will absorb it, digest it, and assimilate it; A child overfed with moral rules will suffer from nausea' (p.6). He also helpfully states that a good child should not be confused with an easy one and reminds us that a child who has lived a life where cruelty has become the norm will be powerfully effected by the memory of that person - perhaps the only one - who showed kindness, understanding and respect; a child's future life and sense of self could take a different course, knowing there was one person who would not fail him.

I could go on offering more of these inspiring examples and reminders, but would instead encourage readers to get a copy of this book. Korczak's messages are grounded in his day-to-day experience of looking after 200 or so orphans in the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, and as such we could claim him to be a residential child care worker as well as a physician. Korczak had a deep concern for children's rights and spoke of the need for a Declaration of Children's Rights, long before the one adopted by the League of Nations in 1924. Tragically, Korczak's life ended together with the orphans from the Warsaw Ghetto at the hands of the Nazi's in 1942 in Treblinka, a heart wrenching story which is told at the end of the booklet.

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