

Abstract

Our aim is to show how the theory and philosophy of the person-centred experiential approach, originally developed by the psychologist Carl Rogers, can usefully inform the development of professional practice, educational methods, and critical social theory of social pedagogy. We introduce social pedagogy followed by a description of philosophical and theoretical underpinnings to the person-centred experiential approach. We suggest person-centred experiential theory offers a meta-theoretical basis to social pedagogy. We provide evidence from the social pedagogy literature to support the proposed fit. We propose a radical form of person-centred experiential therapy *is* a form of social pedagogic practice, that it is premised on a pedagogical discourse and not a mental illness discourse, addresses personal and structural power, and the dialectical relation between self and society. We conclude that person-centred experiential theory provides a foundation to social pedagogy as an emerging field of social theory, research and practice.

Contributions from the Person-Centred Experiential Approach to the Field of Social Pedagogy¹

In recent years the topic of social pedagogy has begun to attract serious attention from scholars in the United Kingdom (UK) in the fields of, primarily, education, social work and social care. In recent years there has been some progress in the development of social pedagogic approaches at the level of theory and practice (Petrie & Eichsteller, 2012), but despite the increased interest and scholarly activity there has been little progress towards reaching agreement or a unifying theoretical framework that might inform or underpin a practice of social pedagogy (Janer & Úcar, 2017). In addition, and possibly due to the lack of theoretical unity, fields of education, social work and social care have not made any significant changes in policy towards integrating social pedagogic practice. The corresponding workforces have yet to incorporate developments towards social pedagogy; never mind being part of the emergence of a ‘new profession’ of social pedagogues within the UK. To date, there has been little contribution to these debates from the field of psychology and specifically from the counselling and psychotherapy profession. However, counselling and psychotherapy has some overlap with social pedagogy, consideration of which may help to move forward the debate. It is our aim to provide a synthesis of social pedagogy with a specific theoretical approach to counselling and psychotherapy as a possible contribution to help the development of a unifying theoretical framework of social pedagogy that might inform an emerging practice.

Despite its long history in academia in many parts of Europe, the field of social pedagogy is a relatively new yet growing area of practice within the United Kingdom.

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However, there is not yet and rightly in our view, a single definition of social pedagogy (Hämäläinen, 2012) or a delimited field of practice. Consequently, within the field of social pedagogy there is a pluralistic landscape where a range of conceptualisations currently exist, and many professionals might be considered to engage in social pedagogic work. The various conceptualisations of social pedagogy offer several potential ways forward to developing theory and practice. In the context of a broad range of professional practices, we will suggest, approaches to counselling and psychotherapy that are not aligned to a medical model of distress can also be considered a form of social pedagogic practice. That is, some counselling and psychotherapy approaches engage in a social pedagogic process that is intended to support the development of autonomy, personal agency, and citizenship rather than be concerned with the treatment of mental illnesses. In fact, as we will go on to show, these approaches challenge the validity of certain conceptualisations of mental illness, arguing instead that such difficulties in living are better understood as resulting when the individual's autonomy, agency, and citizenship is threatened. The approach that best exemplifies this is person-centred experiential therapy, originally developed by the psychologist Carl Rogers in the 1940's.

It is our aim to provide a synthesis between the person-centred experiential approach to therapy and social pedagogy. Consequently, we have set about identifying points of convergence and divergence within these two fields. In the following sections we will: (1) describe the field of social pedagogy and its development; (2) position our discussion of social pedagogy in relation to the key concepts of person-centred experiential theory, its underlying philosophy and practice; and finally (3) consider the overlapping aspects of these disciplines and our evaluation of the person-centred experiential practice as a form of social pedagogy. Specifically, we will interrogate whether there is a case for the person-centred experiential approach to provide an underpinning meta-theoretical framework for three levels

of discourse about the application of social pedagogy as first, a form of professional practice; second, an educational method; third, an applied field of critical social theory. To demonstrate the significance of this we have used a theoretical-conceptual methodology to communicate that person-centred experiential theory is not only relevant to counselling and psychotherapy, but also relevant to educators including, teachers, social workers, medical professionals and counsellors.

Social pedagogy

At its most basic, social pedagogy is concerned with the effect of society on the individual autonomy of its citizens and their agency within society. The roots of social pedagogy can be traced back to 1840s-50s and the early traditions in German education (Karl Mager), and education policy (Adolf Diesterweg) (see, Hämäläinen, 2012). These early interests and thinkers in the field worked to bring about a balance between individual emancipation and social integration through educational practice and policy. Like Dewey's education vision, Natorp defined social pedagogy as the process of teaching young people to become citizens (see, Eriksson & Markström, 2000). Social pedagogy may be of interest to educationalists, but Natorp did not situate social pedagogy within any specific field of professional practice (Hallstedt & Hoegstroem, 2005) and thus the professions of education, social work, care work more generally, and youth work, are all professional activities commonly associated with social pedagogy. In the following sections we will discuss: first, social pedagogy as a form of professional practice; second, as an educational method, and third as branch of critical social theory.

First, we will consider social pedagogy as a form of professional practice. Whilst being a field of both academic study and professional practice for many years, social

pedagogy remains a largely disparate and free from the influence of the State. Since social pedagogy came to be it has been developed and conceptualised within a range of cultural meaning making systems. However, social pedagogy is now evolving within a climate where most educational, social and care professions are increasingly under the control and regulation by the State. This shift towards greater State involvement in the regulation of professional roles is adjacent to reports and high profile legal cases addressing the experiences of children's care, and the care of vulnerable adults; often these reports have revealed places of care as the source of horrific abuse and where education systems are increasingly considered to be harmful to children. That is to say, the development of social pedagogy in the UK is in part a reaction to the past failings of the State sponsored organisations, systems and providers of care; the increasing reach of the State into the lives of young, vulnerable or marginalised groups, is an important part of a social pedagogy discourse.

Considering the issue of state involvement must underpins the development of social pedagogy as a field of practice. As a field of practice that is not currently defined by the State this inevitably means there is a freedom in movement with regards to what constitutes social pedagogic practices. However, whether it will maintain its current self-regulatory functions or come under the control of the State will determine the approach professionals take to social pedagogy and its future development.

Different approaches to social pedagogy each have social structures, actions, aims and methods. Hämäläinen (2012) suggests that whilst all social pedagogues are concerned with education, when looking at the *social* in social pedagogy the focus can be on society, community, or welfare dimensions. However, in discerning the various approaches to social pedagogy from an understanding of the term *social*, Hämäläinen (2012) argues that

community is a cross cutting concept that acts as an important common denominator that holds a diverse field together. Community can refer to either the idea of active citizenship and acquiring human development through informal education; or community-based education actioned through professionals by way of a specific educational approach.

Forms of social pedagogic practice vary across different countries. For example, Smith and White (2008) have suggested that in societies with an Anglo American Saxon culture a relatively narrow conception of education is held. Practices commonly associated to social pedagogy could, maybe, align with early Scottish conceptions of social work (Smith & White, 2008). In this tradition social work focused more on the promotion of wellbeing through social educational practice. In England, social pedagogy has most often been associated with children's care, especially children living in residential care settings; a study exploring the potential implementation strategy of social pedagogy within children's social care recommended greater integration of pedagogical factors within social work (Cameron, 2007). However, there has been little done towards the creation of actual roles that adopt the adjectival title of *social pedagogue*. Whether statutory social work is the right place to locate a more radical social pedagogy is itself debateable. A possible alternative is presented by Ruch et al (2017) who proposed the need for statutory child protection social workers to learn and integrate a social pedagogic approach towards their routine practices in protecting vulnerable children. Adopting the relational and attitudinal qualities that are considered a standard feature of social pedagogy, are often thought lacking in many social work training programmes, could be a useful shift in focus. However, further issues exist associated with positioning statutory child protection workers as social pedagogues because of the role of the state and the limits this creates to supporting the development of autonomous, free beings that this causes (Murphy, Joseph & Duggan, 2013).

In the context of school teaching, Kyriacou and colleagues (2009) considered the role that a teacher plays as a social pedagogue. For example, they considered the responsibility of the school to meet its obligations in fulfilling the Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) agenda and the role of pastoral care within schools. Kyriacou et al (2009) proposed drawing on social pedagogical practices to inform schools and teachers how they can respond to such policy agendas and meet children's needs in a more wholistic manner. The move towards both an audit culture and performativity within education systems, schools and teachers have, it can be argued, become divorced from the concept of 'relationship' with their students. Consequently, if teachers are to adopt a social pedagogic stance in their work with pupils they will themselves need to become (re)acquainted with the importance of relational ways of working in schools. This has perhaps been acknowledged in the Department for Education (2010a) priorities for reform 2011-2015. And, according to these proposals, Kyriacou, Avramidis, Stephens and Werler (2013) suggest that school teachers now need to have the skills and attitudes that enables them to respond to a range of needs of a child to support their development.

In parts of Europe other than the UK the practice of social pedagogy is more established, especially in northern parts and Scandinavia in particular. In each of these regions the roles that adopt a social pedagogic approach vary between child care and educational settings. Educator, social worker, or counsellor have all been identified with the role in Romania (Ezechil, 2015) suggesting a pluralistic professional field to the practice.

Second, as an educational method, social pedagogy can be considered not only as a system of thought (Hämäläinen, 2012) but also as a way of being. In fact, it could, arguably, be said the paradigm of social pedagogy is relationship. Taking this perspective to social pedagogy is the key to understanding social pedagogy not only as a pedagogic system for

emancipation but also as a professional action. Central within the field of social pedagogy is the notion of a positive, egalitarian, mutual relationship between client and pedagogue that is not dissimilar to the Steiner and Montessori pedagogy (Kyriacou et al., 2009). Whilst social pedagogues might typically be considered to work in child care (residential or non-residential), early years settings, through primary, secondary, further and higher education systems they can also work with marginalised or vulnerable groups outside of formal education settings. This can include working with the elderly, those with learning disabilities, addicts, ex-offenders, or people experiencing mental health difficulties. This might often occur through services undertaken by voluntary or third sector (in the UK)/ non-governmental organisations (NGO). In these contexts, the relationship between learner and social pedagogue is important for many reasons. The recognition of structural power and inequality is key to understanding the genesis of distress and disadvantage faced by people in these groups; power inequalities also act to limit development, and social integration, leaving people marginalised and excluded from participating fully in society.

Hallstedt and Hoegstroem (2005) have suggested that whilst professional work in the field of social pedagogy rises in conjunction with the emergence of a welfare state, social pedagogues do not themselves belong to the State. Social pedagogy as an activity is a part of civic society and, therefore, is best located within the realm of a self-regulating part of modern life. The suggestion being that the social pedagogical professions provide a link between the civic society and the State and therefore are best not controlled or regulated by the State. Of course, this poses a problem for the profession of social work adopting a social pedagogic approach because it is a statutory regulated profession. Whilst qualified teachers are also regulated by the state it is also possible for teachers to be 'non-qualified' or work in other contexts outside of schools and here the role is more likely to take the form of social

pedagogue, as the children are likely to have been excluded or on the fringes of the education system or the work is with other marginalised groups.

There are yet further reasons for a close consideration of the concept of a *relationship* paradigm within social pedagogic practice and as an educational method. Social pedagogues work in settings where the client will likely feel vulnerable, is at risk, or feel under threat from sources of power within society. Because of these feelings, the working relationship becomes a key factor in creating a socio-environmental climate in which the client can develop and learn whilst feeling free from threat. To this end, the relationship provides, as far as is possible, an alternative to the dominant structural ‘power over’ (Proctor, Cooper, Sanders, & Malcolm, 2006) prevalent in most professional relationships.

Additionally, the client – social pedagogue relationship will rarely exist outside of some form of institutional dynamic. The social pedagogue will usually be part of a wider system of care in which the learner is engaged; this might be within a school or other care service or through adult service provision. Often these institutions are directly, wholly or partly, funded by or commissioned through the State. Hence, these institutions also convey and exert something of the power structures inherent in society. As a result of the structural mechanisms of power, the social pedagogue needs to create a relationship with a learner that is as free as possible from the role of being further a ‘transmitter of power over’; or is at the very least aware of how institutions themselves can transmit power to clients, through structural power relations, that often thwarts or limits human development. Instead of being a blind transmitter of power over people, a relationally informed social pedagogue can instead release an individual’s inherent personal power and support their process of learning and development in the direction they prefer it to be. In sum, the relationship between a learner

and social pedagogue is based on a principle of autonomy support for the individual, group, or community with which they are working.

Third, we turn to social pedagogy as an act of critical social theory. In this section we introduce briefly the case for social pedagogy as an act of critical social theory by referring to Habermas' critical theory and specifically looking to his notion of a critical-dialectical knowledge as a critical science and refer to the place of communicative action and social interactions. Scott (1978), in his discussion of Habermas, suggests that critical social theory 'aims to restore to men an awareness of their position as active, yet historically limited subjects. In so far as it discovers which forms of constraint on human freedom are necessary and which are historically specific, it generates a critique of society' (p.4). This statement relates to the three epistemologies highlighted by Habermas as the analytical-empirical that is most commonly associated with the natural sciences; historical-hermeneutic most commonly associated with the cultural sciences; and the critical-dialectical which combines the other two and is most commonly associated with the social sciences. In addition to Marxism, Habermas suggests that psychotherapy be considered a critical science, however he highlighted that psychoanalysis interprets through a too positivistic approach.

Habermas' social theory draws on the Hegelian notion that human development is a process and form of education. In terms of Habermas' theory, this process of educational development takes place through social media. Specifically, three forms of media that relate to language, labour, and interaction. In Habermas' theory these social media include two forms of action, first is instrumental action that includes social labour and the second which is communicative action which involves social interactions. Instrumental actions can be more self-serving forms of action based on strategies and calculations that tend towards a means-end approach to action. Communicative actions tend to be more mutual and reciprocal

relations between actors that are based on norms of rational agreement. An important feature of Habermas' theory is the requirement for public spaces that allow for free and equal communications to occur. There is a need for mutuality in communications and for shared understandings to be achieved. For Habermas, democracy can only exist when public spheres are conducive to reciprocal and mutual communicative action.

In an examination of Habermas' contribution to democratic education systems, Stevenson (2010) argued that education has been caught in a crisis of emphasizing training at the expense of more personal forms human development. This gets to the heart of Habermas' theory that addresses the self-awareness of an actor and their own needs for autonomous development and the restraints of society. Education in capitalist society meets the needs of a social system that predominantly favours markets, profits and consumerism. In doing so Stevenson (2010) points out that Young (1989) has argued that Habermas' communicative action, based on rationality, is central to a rethinking of the focus of current education where success equates to access to the job market, control of education is achieved through standardisation and increases in the financial implications of education. Instead, communicative action offers an ethical rebalancing of education through a critical-dialectical approach.

Positioning social pedagogy as a principled emancipatory education means Habermas' theory offers a useful lens through which to think about social pedagogy and its place in society. The issue of dominance is also central in Habermas' theory much as it is in social pedagogy. Dominance pedagogies assert ways or ideologies onto learners by determining how and what learning takes place. In contrast, social pedagogues need to be free of the role of transmitter of power over persons and they are also required to be authentic in their relations. Authentic being-in-relation between social pedagogue and learner is a primary

requirement for engagement in true dialogue. As dialogue is a major epistemology within the field of social pedagogy, individual and personal authenticity become critical aspects for social pedagogues to consider. As with Habermas' communicative action, social pedagogy is concerned with authentic, democratic dialogic processes that lead towards and are made possible through reciprocal and mutual relations between actors.

For social pedagogy to be an act of critical social theory within education the links between theory and practice need to be made satisfactorily. There is some evidence emerging that supports the importance of developing the quality of the relationship between learners and social pedagogues. For example, relational factors were considered to be important in the UK government funded pilot trial for social pedagogues carried out over a two-year period. Berridge et al (2011) reported that the characteristic of *openness* of social pedagogues and *equality* in relationships was experienced positively by young people. However, there were also reports from social pedagogues that they were fearful, such that Berridge et al (2011) commented that 'public expectation (p.256) might work against the formation of such positive non-hierarchical relationships'. The reporting of fear seems to be a consequence of the potential for State involvement in how the role ought to be enacted and fulfilled. Professional workers that engage in mutual, reciprocally respectful relationships with clients sounds appealing to both policy makers and commissioners of services; however, workers felt they had to place themselves at risk and were often vulnerable when working in a relational way with clients. This can leave workers susceptible to criticism as their methods seem to contradict what is considered a requirement in modern education systems. This can lead workers to feel affected by how they are construed by the public (Authors, 2011), and are often fearful of repercussions from those charged with regulating professions, in the name of public protection.

It is understandable that some professions seek greater status although the outcome is not always desirable. Economic reward is tied to a rise in professional status and a range of working roles have probably suffered because of not being recognised as a profession (e.g. youth work or counselling); this might be due to being considered 'low status' (because of resistance over professionalization). Notwithstanding any apparent professional low status, young people reported positively on the quality of relationships between them and social pedagogues (Berridge et al., 2011). If relationship is valued by learners, but social pedagogues are feeling fearful they are therefore likely to retreat into inauthentic ways of relating in order to protect themselves leaving real communicative action unachievable; a strong rationale for ensuring distance between the State and the social pedagogue emerges, especially when the pedagogic task is creating relationships for human growth and development.

In sum, at present the main field of professional practice concerned with social pedagogy is social work, but as we will argue below those professions such as social work that serve the functions of the state are necessarily compromised in their ability to create educational relationships that are genuinely in pursuit of human growth and development (Authors). With the emphasis in social pedagogy on the development of individuals, groups and communities, through learning community actions and the significant role of relational approaches, we suggest this is also indicative of a significant overlap with the field of counselling and psychotherapy. Within the field of counselling and psychotherapy, there currently exists an approach known as person-centred experiential therapy, which shares many of the same underlying philosophical and ideological roots found in existing literature that informs social pedagogy.

Key Concepts in Person-Centred Experiential Theory

The person-centred approach was first introduced by the American psychologist Carl Rogers (1942). Rogers worked with and was influenced greatly by the social workers Jesse Taft and Fredrick Allen under the guidance of Otto Rank. During this time Taft along with Rank was developing the idea of a relational therapeutic approach to social work. At this point Rogers was frustrated with the directive and diagnostic approaches practiced in the field of psychoanalysis, and therefore his aim was to present a newer more relational form of helping that explicitly valued the client's own expertise. Rogers presented his first sincere attempt at articulating his approach in the 1942 book *Counseling and Psychotherapy*.

Despite these early joint foundations for their development, social work and person-centred experiential therapy have today an uncomfortable association. The current role of social work in *normalisation* of medicalised conceptions of distress and dysfunction, the limiting impact it has on people's lives through the exertion of control, renders it a far and distant relative to the person-centred experiential approach as envisaged by Carl Rogers. However, social work continues to claim to be person-centred and relationship based – a point that has been contested to present an incompatibility between statutory social work and the person-centred experiential approach (Authors, 2013). The reason for a link between the person-centred experiential approach and social work is because the person-centred experiential approach is based on the premise that social forces are at the root of peoples' difficulties and it is through the empowerment of people as self-determining actors in their own lives that both social and personal change can be brought about (Proctor et al., 2006; Sanders, 2017).

In contrast to social work, and as we will describe below, the person-centred experiential approach has maintained its radical, process-oriented educational approach to human development and learning. It is based on an image of the person that holds the nature

of the human person, as described by Rogers (1957a: 201), as basically trustworthy and that persons possess some basic characteristics and potentials, such as being;

towards development, differentiation, cooperative relationships; whose life tends to move from dependence to independence; whose impulses tend naturally to harmonize into a complex and changing pattern of self-regulation; whose total character is such as to tend to preserve himself and his species, and perhaps to move towards its further evolution.

This is a broadly socially constructive view of human nature. However, it is important to recognise that Rogers' (1959) theory also notes that in circumstances where the child is exposed to hostile interpersonal environments, is presented with destructive conditional reinforcement of their worth as human being, or are living in a culture that determines their action toward a direction that results in harmful behaviours the person will develop and grow in a way consistent with such hostile environmental conditions. Thus, it is clear that a person's growth and development are based not only on the individual's available resources but also an effect of the social environment in which they exist. This is an important but often misunderstood aspect to person-centred experiential theory. Some researchers and scholars have argued that Rogers' theory is 'too individualistic' yet this is a superficial critique and misses the point that Rogers made regarding the effects of the environment, culture and society within which a person exists.

Building on this concept and the image of the person is Rogers' (1961, 1963) notion of the actualising tendency. Actualising tendency, the theoretical foundation stone of the person-centred experiential approach, is the idea of human potentiality. The actualising tendency is a universal human motivation, which, given the right social–environmental

conditions, results in growth, development and autonomy of the individual (Rogers, 1961, 1963).

However, because intrinsic motivation is moderated by the environmental and social conditions, human learning, growth and development is not a given and is only a tendency towards actualizing these potentials. Rogers (1951) proposed that human behaviour is goal directed and is based on the needs as they are perceived. Hence, person-centred experiential theory suggests that behaviour is most likely to be consistent with the environment, institutions, communities, families and relationships in which people live, work and learn and the messages these institutions convey.

Whilst most people do not experience an 'ideal' social and relational environment when they are growing up it is understandable that people experience some degree of distress and are thwarted in reaching their potential in life. In person-centred experiential therapy, an environment that is more conducive to growth is created.

A central aspect to the person-centred approach to therapy is the importance of six necessary and sufficient relationship conditions (Rogers, 1957). The six necessary and sufficient conditions for personality and behaviour change were defined as follows:

1. Two persons are in psychological contact.
2. The first, termed the client, is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable or anxious.
3. The second person, termed the therapist, is congruent or integrated in the relationship.
4. The therapist experiences unconditional positive regard for the client.
5. The therapist experiences an empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference and endeavors to communicate this experience to the client.

6. The communication to the client of the therapist's empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard is, to a minimal degree, achieved.

These relationship conditions were proposed as an integrative statement that suggests they would be common to all well-functioning helping relationships and were proposed as both necessary and sufficient to activate the process of change. When present, they are the pre-cursor to change, they do not describe or claim to be the actual experience or process of change itself. The relationship created is the stimulus for the change processes to be activated.

The idea of an actualising tendency as a source of motivation, the image of a person as being basically trustworthy and the relationship conditions as a pre-cursor to change set the scene for the introduction of the concept of being *non-directive*. Non-directivity is a complicated concept and is often misunderstood as meaning, non-involvement, laissez faire, distant, non-engaged, neutral, or non-caring. However, the concept of non-directivity is best thought about not in terms of these behaviours but rather as an attitude. Raskin (2005) suggested that non-directivity was not a “matter of acquiring technique, but of gradually embracing the conviction that people do not have to be guided into adjustment, but can do it for themselves when accepted” (p. 346). As a learning process non-directivity can also be understood as self-directed learning, Levitt (2005) suggested that, “at its most basic, non-directivity implies being responsive to the client's direction. It implies that individuals have the capacity and right to direct their own therapy and lives” (p. i).

A helpful contribution to understanding the concept of non-directivity was proposed by Grant (1990) in two forms: instrumental and principled. The authors (2013: 708) have described the distinction in a previous paper as this:

...principled non-directivity refers to the therapist's ethical values of non-interference and respect for the self-determination of the other and is itself the goal of the therapist, instrumental non-directivity refers to a set of behaviours applied by the therapist to achieve a particular goal, such as building rapport or frustrating the client.

These are some of the basic concepts within the person-centred experiential approach. As a form of therapy it remains widely practiced today and well supported by empirical evidence (Murphy & Joseph, 2016).

The person-centred experiential approach started out as a form of psychotherapy (Rogers, 1942, 1951, 1957, 1959). However, it was soon noted that the basic principles that worked in therapy could also be a basis for other realms of society and life. For example, Rogers (1951) presented the approaches' suitability in the areas of play therapy, group-centred therapy, leadership and administration and for student-centred education. Each of these areas has relevance for social pedagogy although we will concern ourselves with only the concept of education as this seems more relevant to our discussion.

Recontextualizing the Person-Centred Experiential Approach as Social Pedagogy

Our intention now is to show how the theory of person-centred experiential therapy is consistent with social pedagogy and hence why social pedagogy at this stage of its development in the UK as a form of professional practice, educational method, and critical social theory can benefit from a fuller appreciation of the underlying theory of the person-centred experiential approach. Both share the same fundamental aims. From a person-centred experiential perspective people are intrinsically motivated towards becoming more

autonomous *and* socially integrated. Achieving these are also key aims for the social pedagogue (Hallstedt & Hoegstroem, 2005).

Rogers (1951) defined his approach to student-centred education as a form of democratic education like that proposed by Hutchins (1949). He also said that the approach was informed by other early education reformers and philosophers such as Dewey and Kilpatrick. Rogers (1951) proposed that student-centred learning required the teacher to adopt the six necessary and sufficient conditions and when this is achieved learning could take place that enabled additional information and knowledge to be assimilated and also enabled a change in the self-structure. The goal of education for Rogers (1951: 387-388) was to assist students to become persons:

Who are able to take self-initiated action and to be responsible for those actions;

Who are capable of intelligent choice and self-direction;

Who are critical learners, able to evaluate the contributions made by others;

Who have acquired knowledge relevant to the solution of problems;

Who, even more importantly, are able to adapt flexibly and intelligently to new problem situations;

Who have internalized an adaptive mode of approach to problems, utilizing all pertinent experience freely and creatively;

Who are able to cooperate effectively with others in these various activities;

Who work, not for the approval of others, but in terms of their own socialized purposes;

Student-centred learning has been extensively researched and a review of literature showed that it is a highly effective approach (Cornelius-White, 2007). Since its original

presentation the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 1997) adopted many of the principles and developed learner-centred education (McCombs, 2012). In student-centred learning the emphasis remains centrally focused on the learner and not so much on the pre-determined content of the subject being learned.

This approach to student-learning is not only democratic but also, importantly, is based on an underlying idea of the human organism as possessing the intrinsic motivation to learn and to develop their potential. In addition, by placing the relationship between learner and teacher at the centre of the approach the role of power inherent to the pedagogical process becomes explicit. It also acknowledges the relationship as a major pedagogical device (Bernstein, 1990). According to Bernstein (1990) re-contextualising of discourse happens when a discourse is taken from its origin and applied in another setting. Person-centred experiential theory provides a unifying theoretical foundation that can inform the development of social pedagogy, i.e., that people are intrinsically motivated towards becoming more autonomous *and* socially integrated.

Within a person-centred experiential social pedagogy the relations between learners and pedagogues would be considered central to the development of a social environment that enables communicative action as described by Habermas. The issue of dominance is addressed through the established place of reciprocity and mutuality within the theory of person-centred experiential approach (Murphy, Cramer & Joseph, 2012). The person-centred experiential approach is also consistent with Habermas' theory that for free communication and a genuine dialogue to be reached there must be no dominance of one side over the other. Whilst Habermas himself used psychoanalysis as an example for how a neutral observer might highlight that two parties are engaged in miscommunication, we suggest that psychoanalysis itself *is* a dominance ideology in that only the analyst is thought to be able to have the

knowledge to identify the miscommunications or pseudo-consensus between actors. In a person-centred experiential approach the actors each have the capacity to know for themselves their own experiences, their own evaluations of these are equally valid; however, this is made possible only by the person-centred experiential pedagogue adopting a stance towards their learner that has an unconditional regard for them, and strives to reach toward a genuine empathic understanding.

The application of Rogers's theory to education means that it may be readily (re)contextualised as a social pedagogy, but more controversial is contextualising therapy as a social pedagogy. Contemporarily, the field of counselling and psychotherapy is most often viewed as consisting of forms of helping aligned with medical approaches to understanding psychological distress. There are a range of therapeutic approaches that are considered as forms of counselling and psychotherapy in contemporary society (Author, 2010). Many approaches are derived from the psychoanalytical approach which has its origins in the theory of Freud.

Contemporarily, the dominant discourse in the field of counselling and psychotherapy is premised on the notion of mental illnesses and of specific therapeutic treatments for specific mental disorders. The dominant 'medical model' as it is known emphasises individualised conceptions of distress, often believed to have a biological aetiology, whereas person-centred experiential therapy identifies that it is socio-cultural factors that leads to and maintains distress, inhibits human learning and thwarts development.

The person-centred experiential approach is to some extent alienated from the dominant discourse in counselling and psychotherapy. It does not distinguish between the terms counselling and psychotherapy, which are often considered hierarchically with the latter group being trained to work with more severe mental illness. In the person-centred

experiential approach, counselling and psychotherapy are essentially the same activities, in this case of providing support for the development of people's autonomy, agency, and citizenship. It therefore challenges the dominant discourse within counselling and psychotherapy that is premised on the notions of mental illnesses and on what is thought to be a fallacy of specific therapeutic treatments for specific mental disorders (Bozarth, 2000). This specificity hypothesis is an expression of the dominant 'medical model' which emphasises individualised conceptions of distress (Sanders, 2017) whereas person-centred experiential therapy identifies that it is cultural conditioning that leads to and maintains distress, inhibits human learning, and thwarts personal and social development. As such, treating people in distress as if they are suffering from an illness that requires diagnosis to prescribe a specific treatment is a fallacy, when what is required is help for the person to regain their sense of autonomy, agency, and citizenship.

As such, the person-centred experiential approach to counselling and psychotherapy has managed to maintain a radical, process-oriented approach to human development and learning that is an opportunity to define a branch of social pedagogy that is a philosophically, theoretically, and practically congruent. Rogers' (1951) discourse of psychological therapy is then re-contextualised when situated in a pedagogical discourse and thereby involves a process of transformation. So, whereas within a person-centred experiential therapy there is a relied upon communication of understanding and acceptance of the client that can create the opportunity for personality change, this relational stance now refers to a process of understanding and acceptance of the human-learner and their innate tendencies towards development and growth. A central aspect to the person-centred experiential approach to therapy or social pedagogy is the emphasis placed on the importance of the six necessary and sufficient relationship conditions (Rogers, 1957). Social Pedagogues working in a person-centred experiential approach will have as their primary goal not specific learning outcomes

but instead the goal to adopt the attitudinal conditions of genuineness, empathy, and unconditional regard that create space for the human-learner to grow and develop.

With the emphasis in social pedagogy on the development of individuals, groups and communities, through learning community actions and the significant role of relational approaches, we suggest this indicates a significant overlap with the field of person-centred experiential therapy. As we have shown, person-centred experiential therapy shares many of the same underlying philosophical and ideological roots found in the existing literature on social pedagogy. Most notably, the person-centred experiential approach is founded on a developmental theory of the person in which their problems in living are the result of thwarted actualization as a result of oppressive social and cultural forces that restrict and usurp developmental potentiality. Therapy involves a process of ‘self-righting’ (Tallman & Bohart, 1999) within the client that arises because of their relationship with the therapist. As such, it may be helpful to regard the person-centred experiential approach as a philosophy which social pedagogy can benefit from to underpin and inform a theory for practice. We suggest that the person-centred experiential approach makes a strong case for the development of both social pedagogy and more importantly for re-contextualizing the role of person-centred experiential therapist as a social pedagogue. As such, a person-centred experiential approach to pedagogy can span those professionals that work with children, young people, and adults, working within formal or informal educational contexts.

Conclusion

There seems to be little literature pointing to a clear theoretical basis for the practice of social pedagogy or which professions outside of social workers that could fulfil the role of a social pedagogue. Despite a lack of a clear coherent theoretical underpinning, the idea of

community is a central construct in the practice of social pedagogy. However, social pedagogy is more than social care simply stepping into an educational *care void*. Social pedagogy is a form of education but one that carries the notion of community at its core. It seems that there is a significant overlap between the field of social pedagogy and person-centred experiential therapy because each is also a form of practice that promotes learning in a way that addresses the potential effects of power and inequality on people, groups and communities. The person-centred experiential approach is opposed to a therapeutic practice associated with the medical model and the current dominant mental health system.

Consequently, we argue that because person-centred experiential practice can also be viewed as a form of educational practice it significantly overlaps with social pedagogy. Moreover, we argue that person-centred experiential theory provides a foundation that can inform the development of social pedagogy practice and supports the relationship based approach, the intention to emancipate people from the effects of the structural forces of power in society and to work with individuals, groups and communities. Finally, we suggest as scholarship in the field of social pedagogy continues it will benefit from exploring further the theory and philosophy of the person-centred experiential approach. In turn, person-centred experiential practitioners can consider their work as an educational process, opening up new space for professional practice that does not have to be aligned with a medically defined health profession.

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