

# COOPERATION OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN SOLVING PROBLEMS OF THE CONTEMPORARY FAMILY

## FORMULATION OF THE ISSUE

In having the task of guaranteeing not only the survival but also the development of the younger generation, the family today is a priority of family social politics in Ukraine. Any society, regardless of the country, is interested in having families who not only provide material needs for the child, but also cultivate the child's cultural-educational level of development. Thus, the family, as a fundamental social institution of the development and formation of a personality, is one of the objects of current social pedagogy work in Ukraine. Taking into account certain negative elements of the process of globalisation and considering the current politico-economical situation in the country, scholars and pedagogy practitioners observe a sharp decrease in social communication interactions among family members and a change in social and family values, which in turn cannot positively enable the development and formation of the new generation. Then there follows an analysis of the role of including in the preparation of social pedagogues the benefits of a collaboration between educational and social institutions and thus providing up-to-date information on the on-going search and development of new approaches to solving the rearing issues of the contemporary family.

## ANALYSIS OF LATEST RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Various aspects of collaboration between the family and social institutions have been researched by pedagogues, psychologists, and sociologists, among them: T. Aleksieienko, V. Kravets, I. Rybalchenko, V. Picha, Ye. Siavavko, P. Shcherban, and many others. Preparation of social-pedagogical professionals to resolve the issue of family upbringing has become the focal point of scholarly schools under the direction of O. Bezpalko, I. Zvierieva, A. Kapska, and others.

## FORMULATION OF THE GOALS OF THE ARTICLE

In considering the socio-cultural processes which inevitably influence the traditional understanding of the concept of the family, approaches of parents to the realisation of their upbringing functions that in turn create conflicts and problems – we will focus our attention on the appropriateness of the content of the professional preparation of social-pedagogues to enable them to provide assistance to families in crisis, the collaboration of educational and social institutions with the goal of foreseeing and overcoming the problems of the contemporary family – on the basis of the preparation of social pedagogues at Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU).

## SUMMARY OF BASIC RESEARCH

The preparation of professionals to undertake social pedagogical activities in Ukraine, having undergone a complicated road of formation, has reached the status of being recognised and acknowledged and is today developing as a healthy system: there is an active development of scholarly schools of social pedagogy (O. Bezpalko, I. Zvierieva, A. Kapska, H. Laktionova, L. Mishchyk, V. Polishchuk, S. Kharchenko, and others); conceptual principles of preparing professionals in Social Pedagogy have been developed; the scholarly direction and code of the specialty Social Pedagogy have been registered; the different levels of requirements to achieve degrees in the field: bachelor (4 yrs.), master (1.5 yrs.), and candidate of sciences (3 yrs.) have been realised. Numerous valuable monographs, scholarly publications, textbooks, guides, scholarly-methodological recommendations in the field of Social Pedagogy have been published.

The preparation of professionals in Social Pedagogy in Ukraine, especially at UCU, is a gradual process. For the teaching staff of the Department of General and Social Pedagogy, entrusted with the educational process, the following issues are always relevant. What kind of a graduate in Social Pedagogy are we aiming for? How do we combine academic learning with practical work in the social sphere so that the UCU graduate has the desired competencies for effective performance on individual, interactive, and social levels?

It is understandable that such questions are actualised with the awareness that social-pedagogy has its inherent characteristics of development. *First of all*, it is open, since any system that has to work hand in hand with another, has to be open. *Secondly*, it is in a state of perpetual development: constantly perfected and restructured, since its development takes place in its interac-

tion with the social environment of concrete societies; it is the subject of the social politics of the country, the scholarly schools of social pedagogy, community organisations, and other spheres of socio-pedagogical activity. Therefore, the process of mastery of the socio-pedagogical professional cannot passively reflect social development. It has to be filled with active searching for new ways of forming the personality of the professional, who will be able to analyse, compare, change, foresee, remove and foretell negative social-pedagogical problems in society and will be able to work with various categories of the population. The greatest attention has to be accorded the family since it stands on the front line of socialisation.

Within this context significant weight is given to the teaching of subjects, whose contents are mainly centred on forming in students competencies of a practical-methodological character suitable for working with families. One of the essential professional characteristics of a graduate of Social Pedagogy is the ability to work under circumstances of informal interaction, to make contact and ensure accessible and purposeful mediation between the child and the family on the one hand, and society, state, and community institutions, on the other.

Today, the modern family is the subject of research of many disciplines. In the content of the preparation of pedagogues, we use a complex of scholarly research from the fields of psychology, sociology, history, demography, anthropology, etc. It is precisely this multidisciplinary approach which permits a total examination and analysis of the historical walk of social, economic, education-cultural aspects of the development of the family as a social institution, analysing the different changes in its structure, researching alterations in the interactions among family members, basically tracing changes in the acknowledged function of the family and thereby, alterations in the family's lifestyle.

In the structure of the educational professional programmes we accord great significance to subjects that form the foundations for understanding the concept of the family, family values, family upbringing, and parenthood. The students are first introduced to the concept of the family and family upbringing in theoretical courses, such as Pedagogy, Ethno-Pedagogy, and Sociology.

A deepening and broadening of the theoretical knowledge of the noted concepts take place within the framework of the key essential professional topic – Social Pedagogy. In the structure of this discipline there is the module “Family as the object of social-pedagogical activity” which in its turn captures the relation of three sub-headings. Further, we offer the contents of each of these sub-headings, taking into account the obvious theoretical practical experience of the research of specialists in Social Pedagogy (Bezpalko 2006;

Bezpalco 2009; Bezpalco, Zvierieva, Kyianytsia, Kuzminskyi 2007; Kapska 2005; Zvierieva 2007).

**Sub-Heading 1: Place and role of the family in the socialisation process of the individual. Analysis of the functions and parameters of the family.**

*Family* – a small dynamic group of people who live together and are connected by family relations (marriage, blood relationship, adoption, care) as well as by the commonality of the formation and satisfaction of socio-economic and other needs, and by a common moral responsibility.

*Fundamental socialising functions of the family:* providing for the physical and mental development and the development of abilities and potential possibilities; providing the child with a sense of security; formulating value orientations of an individual; mastering by the child of basic social norms.

*Functions of the family as a social institution:* homemaking–economic; reproductive; communicative, upraising, recreational, psychotherapeutic.

*Basic parameters of the family:* socio-cultural, socio-economical, hygienic, demographic.

*Typology of families:* according to general composition – (nuclear family, complex family, i.e., family of many generations), incomplete family, maternal family; according to the number of children – childless, few children, many children; according to unrelated children – caregiving, foster; according to family duration – young, middle, marriage age, mature; according to style of family – democratic, authoritarian; according to national composition – one nation, multi-national, with citizens from different countries, of people with various religious denominations; according to residence – urban, village, distant; according to material status – indigent, well-to-do, elite; according to the professional occupation of a couple – working, farmer; according to social status – social homology (same family), socially heterogeneous (not related); according to peculiar conditions of family life – student, distant, outside of marriage; according to quality of family interaction – fortunate families, unfortunate families, (families with lasting conflicts in the relationship of a couple, parents and children, families with alcohol or drug dependent members; families with a low moral-cultural level of parents; families with violence towards family members; families with imprisoned or sentenced members; families in which there are serious mistakes and gaps in the raising of children).

*Parental characteristics:* a couple's value orientations, parental rules and expectations, parental emotions, parental positions, parental responsibilities, style of family upbringing.

*Types of family upbringing:* secular, religious, elite, marginal and other.

*Relationship with children:* dictatorial, caring, peaceful co-existence, cooperation.

*Typical problems and mistakes of parents in raising children are examined through two groups – incorrect expectations and actions of parents which are connected with influencing children with the whole set-up of the life of the family, their personal examples; incorrect anticipations and actions of parents which are related to their direct impact on the formation of the personality of the child.*

*Methods of raising the upbringing potentials of the family.*

### **Sub-Heading 2: Contents of the socio-pedagogical work with the family.**

The content and forms of socio-pedagogical work with a family are dependent on the grouping of the following elements: type of family, problems which exist in the family, the type of social institution which works with the family, and the direction of the professional preparation of the specialist who is serving the family.

*Basic content* of the social-pedagogical work with a family concerns the provision for the family of various forms of social services (social assistance and social services), rehabilitative or prophylactic work, social accompaniment of selected categories of families and a social assessment of troubled families. They are realised in the practical activities of the social pedagogues through the use of assessment methods and various forms of socio-pedagogical intervention, the selection of which is done on the basis of the above enumerated elements.

**Sub-Heading 3. Forms of social-pedagogical work with families:** *individual* – conversation, counseling, information sharing; counseling on a hotline telephone, letters; *group* – training, seminars, lectures, courses, consultations, family club, school for young parents, video-lectures, meetings with specialists, press conference, evening of questions and answers, etc. Massive – theme of the day (e.g., Mother's Day, Sport Family Day), a thematic week filled with cultural activities and events in local centres, etc.

Therefore, as we can see from the above quoted information, the educational course Social Pedagogy in the contents of the preparation of social pedagogues at UCU sets the theoretical-methodological foundations for the study of the family. Further study of the family happens in a practical-technological context. This is enabled by the following educational disciplines: prophylactics of family violence, innovative models of providing social services, the techniques of socio-pedagogical work with different types of families and family counseling. A common characteristic of the given educational processes is that the subjects are taught not only by specialists who possess theoretical-practical work experience, but also by invited staff members of social institutions with practical experience in working

with families. It is exactly this joint characteristic that makes the learning process a kind of cooperation between the educational institution and the social institutions of the city with the goal of formulating the readiness of young specialists to work on problems which the contemporary family encounters.

Problems encountered by modern families can be categorised according to the following conditions (Bulenko 2001):

- violation of the family's mechanism of adaptation to dynamic processes in socio-political and economic spheres;
- weakening of defense mechanisms (both material as well as psychological);
- a structural-functionary transformation of the family due to ambivalence or
- conflict in family roles;
- decline of the meaning of the family in the system of life values of the personality with further re-orientation of a significant number of youth towards extra-marital relationships and repeated marriages;
- degeneration of children-parents interaction, due to the inappropriateness and dogmatism of the parental roles;
- orientation of the couple on a small family;
- heightening of misunderstandings among partners in the orientation of the family towards democratic (from the side of the female) or patriarchal (from the side of the male) development;
- dysfunctional development of the family evidenced by: tendency towards dominance,
- a struggle for authority between both partners, disagreement on the roles of behaviour,
- intolerance to adaptation of established norms, manipulations by partner or children, ignorance of the needs and emotions of the members of the family;
- complications in family adaptation of a young marriage due to inadequate pre-wedding expectations, heightened expectations of the partner;
- instability of life plans due to conditions of economic instability.

The work of the urban institutions is essentially oriented on families who are undergoing the above-noted problems. Families placed under care are underprivileged or troubled ones: those with many children, families of migrants and refugees, those who are raising children with special needs, indigent families, and families of single or teenage mothers. It is obvious that exactly that person who is providing assistance to the family can best present the nature of such work to students – future social pedagogues. UCU's scholarly-pedagogical staff greatly values this collaboration.

Let us look at the variety of services which are presented to students by the staff members of social institutions, and who also eventually engage the students themselves into their activities.

## SOCIAL SERVICES TO FAMILIES

In the process of presentation and learning of this type of social pedagogical activity, the students gain skills in giving quality and valid information to families on:

- the variety of subsidies, guaranteed by the state according to existing law;
- all sorts of possible material support (clothes, medicine, food, health care for members of the family, etc.) guaranteed by the state;
- psychological assistance for the family in difficult life situations;
- counseling services.

Special significance is attributed to the mechanism of explaining benefits which are given to young families, single or underage mothers. A separate branch of social services focuses on work with youth who are planning to get married.

Preparation of youth for family life foresees a program of efforts which are directed at forming the skills for a healthy lifestyle, family planning, preservation of reproductive health, the birth of healthy babies, the development of family traditions.

It is important to provide on-going updates of the basic information on the existing network of social agencies in a city, which provide cultural-educational and physical health promoting services to members of a family, simultaneously exposing and providing them with styles of meaningful recreation.

***Socio-rehabilitative work with the family.*** In presenting socio-rehabilitative work with a family, the main focus of social service staff is oriented on the analysis of the characteristics of providing counseling and holding psychotherapeutic conversations with the parents, a couple, and children; training activities, which can be carried out with the married couples, as well as separately with men and women, joint training with parents and children, seminars, video-lectures, meetings with specialists, self-help groups, etc.

Special attention is paid to completing assessments and developing a treatment plan, especially when the family is older in age than the counselor; aspects worthwhile for the counselor to consider when providing assistance to parents in resolving issues of family upbringing. In analysing the

meetings with young parents who are just awaiting the birth of a child, problematic issues are examined which eventually emerge, such as – socio-psychological, psycho-pedagogical assistance to parents in upbringing children of various age groups with consideration of the individual-psychological characteristics of each child, preparation of the child for school, application of various forms and methods of family upbringing, the resolution of difficult problems in the mutual interaction of parents and children, the decisions of legal issues of such mutual relations.

**Socio-prophylactic work with a family.** The given form of work is broadly represented by the work of social services in a city, and therefore students have the opportunity to learn about current information and its realistic functioning. This form of activity is orientated towards the strengthening of the institution of family by forming in the population an understanding of the family as a basic value in the life of a person:

- preparation of youth for family life, a responsible parenthood;
- propagation of a healthy lifestyle among family members;
- psycho-pedagogical education of couples on issues of building constructive interactions and family upbringing;
- forewarning of typical reasons for separation.

**On-going work with the family.** This form of socio-pedagogical work needs quite a few psycho-pedagogical competencies. The staff of social services orients the students to:

- methods of assessing concrete situations in a family, an analysis of the situation, evaluation and determination whether it is unacceptable or dangerous;
- assessment of direct intrusion into the situation;
- developing and agreeing on a plan of compatible action by the social pedagogue and the family;
- direct support of clients during the time of on-going work;
- completion of work and its evaluation.

**Social services to the family.** The given form of social-pedagogical activities of social institutions also foresees a series of special methods and mechanisms with which the expert familiarises the students. Among these are the following:

- disclosure of a needy family;
- introduction to the family, collection of information – an assessment, formulation of a positive motivation for working with a social pedagogue;
- overcoming the resistance of separate members of the family regarding joint work with the social pedagogue by explaining its possibilities and addressing the positive potential of the family;



- reaching an agreement with the family for joint socio-pedagogical work, the drafting and signing of an agreement between the social pedagogue and the family;
- overcoming the effects of the family's misfortune, removal of its sources, the stabilisation and correction of interrelations, the establishment of ties of the family with micro- and macro-environments;
- prophylactics of the residuals of the misfortune, directing the family towards independent resolution of problems;
- exit of the social pedagogue from the family, completion of the term of the activity of the contract;
- analysis of the results of the socio-pedagogue's services;
- providing the family with proposals on a variety of ways of overcoming possible problems.

***Assessment of the home environment by the social pedagogue foresees:***

- establishment of a violation of human rights;
- the establishment of interaction of the social pedagogue with family members with the goal of encouraging them to overcome misfortune in the family;
- averting the residuals of a human rights violation in the family;
- informing the proper authorities about evidence of a human rights violation in the family;
- survey and examination of the everyday living situation of the family, an evaluation of the completion by members of the family of recommendations of the social pedagogue as to prevention of human rights violations in the family;
- concern about the deprivation of parental rights of the parents, separation of the child from the family; directing the victims of family violence to crisis centres, shelters for women and underage children;
- recruit appropriate medical personnel, psychologists, lawyers and other professionals to help resolve problems in the family;
- contribute to a public campaign on raising awareness in Ukrainian society about the signs and existence of family violence.

Thus, as we see, social services involve a variety of forms of activities which in most cases are ahead of the development of the theoretical part of social pedagogy. To compensate this vacuum we have the possibility of close cooperation with the staff of various social services in the city of Lviv, especially the Lviv Educational Foundation, the Lviv Social Service Centre for Families, Children and Youth, and many others.

In the process of providing educational activities, concrete tasks of a practical nature are delegated to the student, as for example: the creation of a curriculum for providing pedagogical knowledge to young parents; the selection of psycho-pedagogical materials to provide counseling to on the

issue of social upbringing; the development and presentation of motivational information to parents with the goal of engaging them in socio-upbringing processes in pre-school and general educational institutions.

Practical activities from professional courses in educational programmes for preparing social pedagogy specialists, have both a practical as well as a personal direction. Lecturers, in an understanding with the invited staff of social services, diversify them with new experience in resolving typical as well as issues born in our times, such as distant relations, in cases where parents and children live in distant places and communicate with each other on Skype.

We believe that such an approach – having a part of classes in collaboration with social services – enables our students to form their own individual style of professional behaviour, to gain a complex of current methods for working with families, to understand the mechanisms of performing this or that task, and for social services to prepare for themselves worthy professionals who are familiar with contemporary approaches in working with a personality, a family, or a group. Working in such a style, and having as a consultant a staff member of social services or another social institution, our students will be ready to perform a critical analysis of the problems which emerge in the process of upbringing as well as be able to professionally provide: (a) assistance to parents in resolving the mutual interaction with children of various ages; (b) provide necessary information as to the solution of complicated issues which emerge in the process of the socialisation of an individual.

## CONCLUSION

In summation, one can come to the conclusion that the system of the professional preparation of social pedagogues in the area of preparing them for working with families at UCU is open to working collaboratively with social institutions of the city and the region. Such collaboration enables a diversity of the educational program of the preparation of students by new approaches, module methods which address current needs both of the families as well as the social sphere of society, which in turn enhances the development of professional thinking in students and the perfection of their socio-pedagogical competencies.

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### Summary

In the article the author presents an analysis of the theoretical and practical experience of resolving problems in a family by the specialists of the socio-pedagogical sphere of Ukraine from the time of independence. The family and family upbringing is examined from the angle of interdisciplinary research. A module of a professional program of the preparation of specialists for the area of social services which is oriented towards a detailed study of the family as an object of social-pedagogical work. Current issues of the institution of the family are examined. Through concrete forms of socio-pedagogical activities, the possibilities of resolving current problems of family through the collaboration of educational and social institutions are examined.

**Key words:** family, professional preparation of social pedagogues for work with families, aspects of collaboration with educational and social institutions