Social Emotional Learning Through the Ethical Lens of Social Pedagogy

by
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Bachelor Education, University of Victoria, 1996

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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University of Victoria

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Social pedagogy has a longstanding tradition in many European countries but is lesser known in Canada. This capstone project introduces social pedagogy to readers by giving a brief overview of several historical foundational theorists. It explains the principles, philosophies, and common practices of social pedagogy, and demonstrates how they are reflected in more familiar educational theories in North America. This capstone project concludes by exploring the ways in which the principles, philosophies, and practices of social pedagogy can offer an ethical framework for teachers in British Columbia as they interpret and implement the positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility, and social responsibility draft core competencies in the transformed BC curriculum (2016).

*Keywords:* social pedagogy, social emotional learning (SEL), British Columbia core competencies, ethics, education, children, philosophy
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Dedication

This project is dedicated to the many people I have known in my life - adults and children - who have had the courage and trust to share their vulnerability and the willingness to allow me to do the same.

“Children don’t become human beings, they already are. Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today.”

(Janusz Korczak, Polish pedagogue and writer)

“It is not possible to teach. But it is possible to create situations, wherein it is impossible not to learn.”

(Author unknown)
1. Social Emotional Learning Through the Ethical Lens of Social Pedagogy

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

While working on my graduate degree in early childhood education (ECE), my attention was often drawn to literature pertaining to social and emotional learning (SEL), which I always found to be relevant to the coursework and to my own professional practice. At some point, I stumbled across intriguing references to social pedagogy. As I researched this little known (in Canada) (Cameron, 2011) theory, philosophy, and practice, I began to make powerful connections to my own professional practice in supporting students' development of the interrelated SEL competencies as outlined in the BC Ministry of Education's personal and social set of core competencies (see table 1, table 2, and table 3). Specifically, I became interested in exploring the ways in which the principles, philosophies, and practices of social pedagogy could offer an ethical framework for teachers in British Columbia as they interpret and implement the positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility, and social responsibility draft core competencies in the transformed BC curriculum.

Rationale

As a teacher of young children, I recognize the need for a fundamental paradigm shift in thinking about my role as a teacher and about the professional relationships I have with my students, their parents, and my colleagues. I often struggle to break free from what Keating (2009) describes as “status-quo stories: world views and belief systems that normalize existing conditions so entirely that they deny the possibility of change” (p. 211). It is always my underlying intention to foster a healthy and positive classroom environment that supports both the individual child and the larger group. I recognize, however, the counterproductive influence of the hegemonic beliefs and practices that I have unwittingly inherited from the society in which I was raised and from the educational system in which I have developed as a teacher: the prevailing deficit-based image of the child, the traditional hierarchical
nature of the teacher-student relationship, the use of punishment and rewards to modify behaviour, and the unquestioning enforcement of a plethora of illogical and potentially harmful rules designed to control children. I am self-conscious about my attempts to relinquish power and control in favour of the more vulnerable and messy business of building authentic relationships with my students and colleagues. I feel discouraged when I catch myself judging the quality of my classroom environment based on the level of student compliance and orderliness or lack thereof. Although I recognize the paralyzing effects of these beliefs and practices on my professional growth and the growth of my students, I do at times experience an inner resistance to do the unsettling work necessary to envision alternate possibilities. This is understandable, as Keating (2009) points out that “status-quo stories push us to remain the same” and “teach us to resist change” (p.211).

Despite these challenges, I remain committed to shifting the paradigm in my classroom toward practices that will support my students to nurture healthy, diverse relationships, to gain self awareness, to be empowered, to learn to regulate their emotions and manage stress, to solve problems responsibly, and to contribute to their community – in short, to supporting their social emotional learning. Over the years, I have remarked to colleagues that my attempts to do this have sometimes felt akin to being a fish swimming upstream. When the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2016a) introduced the draft for the SEL core competencies, however, I was heartened to see my efforts validated and supported by this document, bringing a legitimacy to the importance of SEL.

During my graduate coursework, I was introduced to the writings of several educational theorists - Paulo Friere, Nel Nodding, Loris Malaguzzi, for example - who shared my discomfort with hegemonic thinking and supported my efforts to critically challenge my own educational status-quo stories, most of which were centred around social justice and the rights of children. As I explored literature that interested me, I stumbled upon works of several contemporary social pedagogical theorists and became inspired by the potential for an conceptual framework based on social pedagogy
that could help me to interpret and implement the SEL core competencies as described in the transformed curriculum.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

**Post-foundationalism and Social Constructionism**

As I will explain in more depth in the next chapter, it is difficult to place social pedagogical thought under the umbrella of any one theoretical framework and it is certainly beyond the scope of this capstone project to attempt to do so. However, the more I read about the theories, practices and philosophy behind social pedagogy, the more I experienced a resonance with the generally expressed undertones of post-foundational values such as “complexity and context, uncertainly and provisionality, subjectivity and interpretation” (Moss, 2014, p. 93). British professor and researcher Peter Moss (2014) broadly defines post-foundationalism as “a paradigm that encompasses a variety of theoretical perspectives including post-modernisms, post-structuralisms [sic] and post-colonialisms” (p. 93). This paradigm adopts what Moss describes as a social constructionist approach in which “the world and our knowledge of it are socially constructed, a process in which all of us, as human beings, are active participants in relationship with others” (2014, p. 93) and in which there can be no one objectively right answer in a world of multiple perspectives, local practices, and knowledge. He describes a paradigm in which different people can make their own meaning of evidence in different ways and arrive at different views, offering “the possibility to open up for movement and experimentation in subjectivity and learning, no longer constrained by prescribed outcomes and norms that are justified by absolute truth claims” (Moss, 2014, p. 95). He is careful, however, to explain that looking through the post-foundational lens does not mean an inability to judge and evaluate, to make ethical, moral, and aesthetic choices. To the contrary, Moss reminds us that we must take personal and professional responsibility for our choices rather than to take the easy way out and abdicate our authority to “some allegedly objective expert, claiming universal knowledge and truth” (2014, p. 94).

Moss (2014) relates his description of post-foundational thought to early childhood education in
three ways. First, he suggests that this paradigmatic position helps us to think critically, to remember that even the most benign motives may have unintended effects, and to be aware of the omnipresence of power relations that are always at play in educational settings. Second, with a focus away from predictable outcomes and certainties, it offers a prospect of “an early childhood education of events and lines of flight, of surprise and wonder”, which is “at ease with not knowing, whilst excited at the potentiality of this condition” (p. 95). Third, the post-foundational paradigm supports the image of the rich and agentic child as it “provides hope for responding to the diversity and complexity of the world in ways that are welcoming and respectful, and do not seek to reduce it to a unified whole by trying to make the Other into the Same” (p. 96). These three ideas that connect post-foundational thought to early childhood education also connect the principles, practices, and philosophical tenets of social pedagogy, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter.

**Significance**

In 2016 the British Columbia Ministry of Education unveiled a new, transformed curriculum. At the centre of this curriculum redesign, along with literacy and numeracy and essential content and concepts, are the core competencies, which are in draft form at the time of this writing. Through provincial consultation three sets of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies were identified: Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social (BC Ministry of Education, 2016a). This capstone project will focus on the three interconnected and overlapping competencies that relate to the broad area of SEL in the Personal and Social set of competencies, which include: positive personal and cultural identity (PPCI); personal awareness and responsibility; and social responsibility.

In the spring of 2016 I participated in a series of school district-wide events designed to introduce the British Columbia Ministry of Education's (pre-implementation) new transformed curriculum to teachers in School District 79 (Cowichan Valley). As a facilitator of a large group discussion about the SEL core competencies, I heard several of my teaching colleagues voice their concerns. There were many questions and comments, such as (paraphrased): “Are these competencies
not the responsibility of parents?” “I do not feel qualified to teach the core competencies”, “I am already overwhelmed teaching the academic curriculum and now I have to worry about their social emotional needs as well?!” “How do I teach the core competencies? Is there a program with resources to guide my teaching?” At the time, I was ill equipped to answer my colleagues concerns with little other than my own personal experience and gut feelings.

I have long held a personal and professional interest in SEL and I have witnessed in my own practice its importance to a child's overall development - personally, socially and academically. There is a large body of research to support the positive impacts of SEL interventions on aspects of children's learning, mental health, reduction in bullying behaviour, attitudes towards school, and SEL skills and competencies (Weare, 2010; Weare & Nind, 2011; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009) that goes beyond the scope of this capstone project. I would, however, like to briefly address the concerns of my colleagues as described above.

Some teachers expressed that they were already overwhelmed by the demands of teaching the academic curriculum and resented that they were now being asked to teach what they felt was the responsibility of parents. One could argue that, as Cefai and Cavioni (2014) suggest, we may need to rethink the objectives of education and consider the role of schools as primary settings for health promotion because in light of the current social and economic changes taking place in family structures, the weakening of communities, and the disintegration of neighbourhoods and extended families, many children are without the networks of social support and connectedness once provided by the family and community.

Other teaching colleagues expressed that they didn't feel qualified to teach the core competencies and wondered if there would be professional support. Weare and Nind's (2011) analysis of research supports the need for clinically trained professionals to at least initiate SEL interventions but also shows that for these to be sustainable and embedded in the life of the school, it is important
that teachers carry on the daily work of supporting SEL.

Some teachers shared with me their belief that academic curriculum should take precedence over SEL in the classroom. However, Cefai and Cavioni (2014) cite a variety of research that shows a focus on social and emotional competencies in education does not weaken or detract from academic achievement. On the contrary, healthy social emotional skills can provide a foundation upon which effective learning and success can be built.

Finally, some of the teachers I spoke with wanted to know if a program would be provided, complete with resource literature to guide their teaching of the SEL competencies. There are literally thousands of school mental health interventions in operation across the world, some of which have been evaluated and some of which have not (Weare, 2010).

In this capstone project, it is my intention to show how the foundational principles and practices of social pedagogy, which are “highly respected in mainland Europe, being based on the accumulated wisdom of centuries of practice and the development of benevolent philosophies” (Carter, Cook, Sutton-Boulton, Ward, & Clarke, 2016, p.76), can serve as a valuable contribution to education in British Columbia, particularly in respect to the SEL core competencies of the transformed curriculum. I am not suggesting that the principles and practices of social pedagogy replace what many teachers are already doing to support their students' social and emotional growth. On the contrary, as Holthoff and Eichstetter (2011) explain:

offering insights into social pedagogy is not meant to be about providing solutions but about inspiring readers to ask themselves profound questions — about what we believe children are, how we want to relate to them, what we want them to experience in their childhood, and what role we want them to play within society (p. 173).

Lorenz (2008) agrees and points out that social pedagogy is a largely untapped resource for the English-speaking world and “can serve not as a new 'import' in the plethora of methods contesting or
replacing social work [that is, work in the social realm], but as a mirror in which the social work
tradition can become aware of its own rich but also contested diversity that already contains many of
the same elements as the social pedagogy tradition” (p. 641).

**Project Overview**

In this chapter I described, from a professional perspective, my rationale for choosing this topic. I briefly outlined a broad post-foundational theoretical framework from which I am drawing inspiration for making connections to social pedagogy and SEL proficiencies. I discussed the broader significance of my investigation to the wider educational community, by suggesting that social pedagogy can offer an ethical framework for teachers in British Columbia as they interpret and implement the positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility, and social responsibility draft core competencies in the transformed BC curriculum.

In Chapter Two, I will introduce the concept of social pedagogy by outlining its historical background and introducing four early educators who are most commonly credited as the foundational theorists behind its development: Karl Mager, Friedrich Distersweg, Paul Natorp, and Herman Nohl. I will then explore how the multi-national development of social pedagogy has created diverse perceptions that are beginning to form universal coherence, primarily guided by the research of a group of staff at the Thomas Coram Research Unit in London (Petrie et al., 2006), who identify several consistent core principles of social pedagogy that “hold good across different types of pedagogic settings” (Cameron & Moss, 2011, p. 9). Supported by a review of literature, I will link these core principles to several historical and contemporary key educational thinkers and their theories. I will begin by exploring the theoretical connections between social pedagogy and the ideas of Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Ukrainian educator Anton Makarenko, and Scottish educational philosopher John Macmurray. I will then explore how the principles of social pedagogy (Petrie et al., 2006) are reflected in the work of social constructivists John
Dewey and Lev Vygotsky, Brazilian educator and critical theorist Paulo Freire, educator Loris Malaguzzi from the Reggio Emilia Municipal Early Childhood Centres in Italy and finally, Nel Nodding and her focus on the ethics of care.

In Chapter Three I will introduce two metaphorical devices, the social pedagogy tree and the diamond model of social pedagogy, that were created to help conceptualize the complexity of social pedagogy in practice. I will also explain several key concepts and principles used in the practice of social pedagogy. In conclusion, I will explore how these principles, practices and philosophies can provide an ethical framework to guide educators in British Columbia as they endeavor to support students' development of the SEL core competencies as described in the transformed curriculum.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I will provide recommendations by discussing the responsibility of teachers, schools, and school districts. In conclusion, I will consider areas for future research, describe limitations and, finally, explore applications to current and future practice.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

**Social Pedagogy**

**The term, pedagogy**

The term, *pedagogy* is often vaguely equated with teaching, instruction, or curriculum or attached to the names of philosophical movements, such as critical pedagogy or deconstructionist pedagogy. Van Manen, a professor at the University of Alberta, explores the idea of pedagogy:

> *Pedagogy* is not just a word. By naming that which directs us and draws us caringly to children, the word *pedagogy* brings something into being. Pedagogy is found not in observational categories, but… in concrete, real-life situations. It is here and here and here, where an adult does something right in the personal development of a child. Regardless of what we think parents or teachers do precisely, pedagogy is cemented deep in the nature of the relationship between adults and children. In this sense, pedagogy is defined not only as a certain relationship or a way of doing, but also pedagogy lets an encounter, a relationship, a situation, or an activity be pedagogical (1991, p. 41)

It is this definition of pedagogy, especially as it applies to social pedagogy, that is most appropriate.

**What is social pedagogy?**

A consistent, tidy definition of social pedagogy is elusive. Karl Mager, the German theorist who first coined the term, is frequently quoted in literature pertaining to social pedagogy as defining it as the “theory of all the personal, social, and moral education in a given society, including the description of what has happened in practice” (Petrie et al., 2006, p. 21). Paul Natorp, who is widely considered the founding father of social pedagogy (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013; Eriksson, 2010) is quoted as describing it as a practical philosophy which enables inclusion in the community through social education (Storø, 2013) and as “a form of education in which the intrinsic social nature of the human being is fully acknowledged and prioritised” (Petrie, 2011, p. 75).
Contemporary trans-national theorists offer a diverse commentary on the definition of social pedagogy (Sanderman & Neumann, 2014; Hämaläinen, 2015; Janer & Úcar, 2016). British professors and researchers at the Institute of Education, University of London, UK, Michael Fielding and Peter Moss (2011) suggest that social pedagogy might be understood in English as 'education-in-its-broadest sense' because it fosters and supports the general well-being and development of children which encompasses the social, aesthetic, ethical, cultural, emotional and physical domains. This contrasts with 'education-in-the-narrowest-sense', which focuses mainly on cognitive capacities and compartmentalized subjects. Their colleagues that make up an interdisciplinary team at the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TRU), University of London, explain their understanding of the distinctive character of the social pedagogic approach as “a focus on the whole child and support for the child's overall development and the engagement of the practitioner [educator] as a person, in relationship with the child, and bringing emotional, reflective and practical dimensions to the work” (Petrie et al., 2006, p. 35). Another group of British researchers who have studied the Continental tradition of social pedagogy and how it can be currently applied in services for adults and children describe it as “an approach to work with people in which learning, care, health, general well-being and development are viewed as totally inseparable, a holistic idea summed up in the pedagogical term 'upbringing’” (Boddy, Cameron, Mooney, Moss, Petrie, & Statham, 2005, p. 3). American educators and researchers from the University of Arizona, Daniel Schugurensky and Michael Silver, (2013) suggest that social pedagogy “is concerned with the educational dimension of social issues and the social dimensions of educational issues” (p. 1). Echoing this idea, Professor Walter Lorenz (2008), from the Free University of Bozen in Italy, explains that as a disciplinary field, social pedagogy explores “the linked tasks of preparing individuals for communal and societal life and, at the same time, bringing society as a community to orient its culture and social life towards the personal developmental and social needs of individuals” (p. 634). Gabriel Eichsteller is the Director of ThemPra Social Pedagogy Community Interest Company, a
British social enterprise supporting professionals and organisations in exploring social pedagogy and relating its principles, philosophy and theories to their practice. He suggests that social pedagogy is “characterised by a perspective that recognises the intrinsic dignity of each human being and highlights their competence and potential” (Eichsteller, n.d., para. 1). Juha Hämaläinen (2012), a professor of social pedagogy and Head of the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Finland, asserts that despite the inherent diversity in social pedagogy, a common thread in most views on social pedagogy is to “achieve a balance between individual emancipation and social integration” (p. 5) and to focus on, in theory and practice, “the processes of human growth, which produce social integration, participation and well-being in members of society” (p.2).

Jan Storø (2013), a Norwegian Professor at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, asks an interesting question in relation to the pursuit of an unambiguous definition. Rather than asking the more static questions of what it is and what it is not, he asks: What could social pedagogy be and what could it do? He suggests that such questions reflect the need for social pedagogy to be directed towards the change process, reflecting the ever dynamic and fluid changes in society.

**The historical development of social pedagogy**

The roots of social pedagogy can be traced back to 19th century Europe, initially in Germany, when pre-modern society began to dramatically change with the advent of industrialization, modernization and political revolutions (Lorenz, 2008; Hämaläinen, 2012). Capitalism created the opportunities for unprecedented wealth and extreme poverty and exploitation. Where social relationships were once accepted as given, modern society demanded that social bonds be created, maintained and legitimated (Lorenz, 2008), which was liberating and emancipating but also could create a disorienting social vulnerability. Feudalism was replaced with political systems based on more
democratic approaches that assumed the role of having to organize a transforming social order rather than simply represent it (Lorenz, 2008).

This polarization between individual freedom and the overall stability of society was the fundamental impetus in the early development of social pedagogy, by “exploring the linked tasks of preparing individuals for communal and societal life and, at the same time, bringing society and community to orient its culture and social life towards the personal developmental and social needs of individuals” (Lorenz, 2008, p. 634).

**Early Theorists**

Several seminal theorists of the mid-19th and early-20th centuries directly contributed to the development of social pedagogy, however the following four are most commonly credited as the foundational theorists.

**Karl Mager (1810-1858) and Friedrich Distersweg (1790-1866)**

German educator and school politician Karl Mager and his older contemporary, Prussian educational philosopher Fiedrich Distersweg are widely credited with first using the term, social pedagogy (Sozialpädagogik) in 1844 (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013), to emphasize the societal aspects of educational processes which were under-conceptualized in earlier pedagogical frameworks such as those of Rousseau and Pestalozzi (see below) (Lorenz, 2008). It was their shared belief that education should reach beyond the focus of the individual acquisition of knowledge toward education as a social mission that strives to help disadvantaged individuals by fighting against poverty and social misery, and for democracy and social equality (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013; Hämäläinen, 2012).

**Paul Natorp (1854-1924)**

As a field, social pedagogy didn't emerge until the early 20th century when German philosopher and educator Paul Natorp, published the book, *Sozialpädagogik: Theorie der Willensbildung auf der Grundlage der Gemeinschaft (Social Pedagogy: The theory of educating the human will into a*
community asset), in 1899. It is in his social philosophical thinking that we find the basis for regarding social pedagogy as a theory on fostering community (Eriksson, 2010). With a firm belief that all pedagogy should be social, he contends that educators should always consider the interaction between the social aspects of education and the educational aspects of social life (Natorp 1904:94 as translated and cited in Schugerenksy & Silver, 2013). Concerning this prerequisite relationship between the individual and the community, he argues that the individual cannot be regarded as a human being without his community (Natorp, 1904, as translated and cited in Eriksson, 2010). He suggests that “any enrichment of individualism is an enrichment of the community, and a genuine community will be able to provide space for individualism” (Matheisen, 1999, p. 55, as translated and cited by Storø, 2013).

Herman Nohl (1879-1960)

Another seminal theorist in social pedagogy was the German philosopher and educator Herman Nohl, who played a key role in developing the foundation for social pedagogy as a discipline and as a movement through the lens of hermeneutic epistemology and methodology. Nohl argues that the main purpose of social pedagogy is to foster the overall wellbeing of participants by focusing on social help, which he envisions as a holistic educational process based on love, awareness, and human dignity (Schugerenksy & Silver, 2013; Hämaläinen, 2003). Of central importance to Nohl is the assertion that the relationship between the teacher and the child forms the basis of education (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a). He identifies three characteristics in an effort to capture the nature of the pedagogic relationship: a strong emotional regard towards the child, the teacher as being more mature in her development compared to the child, and a focus on the child as a whole person (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a).
Multi-national perceptions

Although social pedagogy had begun to take root in some Continental European countries outside of Germany, the end of the Second World War saw its geographical and ideological boundaries expand even more, eventually reaching small pockets of North and South America, the UK, and Australia. It is important to understand that social pedagogy has developed very differently in different countries, where it stands amid diverse country-specific systems of education and practice, traditions, philosophical views, and political interests (Hämaläinen, 2003). Hämaläinen (2012) explains that because social pedagogy deals with fundamental social questions and human development, it is easily influenced by many different philosophies and ideologies. Compounding these limitations to multi-national coherence, many European sources that might contribute to social pedagogical thought outside of English-speaking North America and the UK continue to be limited because many are not yet translated and published in English. Thus, as Hämaläinen (2012, 2015) points out, this lack of consistency has challenged the development of coherent theory building, research, education, and practice across countries and that despite several efforts from many theorists over the years to formulate a theoretical self-conception of social pedagogy, it largely remains an incoherent and semantic mess. British educators and researchers Cameron and Moss agree and state that this diversity makes social pedagogy difficult to grasp (2011). In 2003, Hämäläinen reports that “in general, there is not much comparative scholarship and very little international interaction in social pedagogy. There has been no synchronic analysis” (p. 74). Twelve years later, however, he claims that while “there is [still] no unanimity on the nature of social pedagogy, no universal definition” and that “from the very beginning, diversity of thought has been a visible characteristic” (2015, p. 1028), he offers hope that a growing tendency toward international collaboration, with the intention of forming a deeper understanding of social pedagogical theory and practice, may lead to identifying more common denominators in the midst of diverse traditions. One such unifying endeavour is a recent qualitative
research project conducted by social pedagogue and researcher Àngela Janer and Professor of Social Pedagogy Xavier Úcar (2016) from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain, which met the objective to “develop a set of internationally comparable indicators to help establish a definition for the theoretical, cross-disciplinary and international core of social pedagogy” (p. 2). Employing the Delphi method, 18 academic experts in social pedagogy from 12 different countries participated. Although space precludes going into specific detail about the results, it is encouraging to note that in the last phase of the study full agreement is found among the experts. As a result of this consensus, the researchers defined and characterized social pedagogy according to the eight dimensions analyzed: contextual, historical, epistemological, functional, professional, methodological, normative, and ethical-political (Janer & Úcar, 2016).

Similarly, both Cameron and Moss (2011) and Petrie et al. (2006) identify several common components that can give social pedagogy some coherence (see Table 1). Cameron and Moss (2011) break down the term social pedagogy by identifying three important features which focus on the social aspect of pedagogy itself, a term they describe as relating to a broad, holistic understanding of the role of education. Petrie et al. (2006) draw on extensive qualitative and quantitative research conducted by a group of staff at the Thomas Coram Research Unit in London to reveal “remarkably consistent principles” of social pedagogy (p.22), that “hold good across different types of pedagogic settings” (Cameron & Moss, 2011, p. 9). The number of references to these principles in current relevant literature (see Milligan, 2009; Carter et al., 2016) implies that they are being widely held as a standard in social pedagogical practice and theory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social features of social pedagogy (Cameron &amp; Moss, 2010)</th>
<th>Principles of social pedagogy (Petrie et al., 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes the interrelationships of the</td>
<td>• A focus on the child as a whole person, and support for the child's overall development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• concern for the individual</td>
<td>• Children's lives in groups are seen as an important resource; workers should foster and make use of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• concern for the group</td>
<td>• There is an emphasis on team work and on valuing the contribution of others in 'bringing' up children: other professionals, members of the community and, especially, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• concern for the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• concern for society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to inclusiveness, confronting social problems</td>
<td>• Whilst they are together, children and staff are seen as inhabiting the same lifespace; not as existing in separate hierarchical domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and social justice; showing solidarity with members of</td>
<td>• As professionals, pedagogues are encouraged constantly to reflect on their practice and to apply both theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to the sometimes challenging demands with which they are confronted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marginalised groups</td>
<td>• Pedagogy builds on an understanding of children's rights that is not limited to procedural matters or legislated requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the centrality of relationships in working with</td>
<td>• The practitioner sees herself as a person, in relationship with the child or young person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children or any other people</td>
<td>• Pedagogues are also practical, so their training prepares them to share in many aspects of the children's daily lives and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The centrality of relationship and, allied to this, the importance of listening and communicating</td>
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Placing Social Pedagogy in Education

Social pedagogy does not belong to any one specific field of application and is very broad in scope. A review of the literature suggests that it draws from, but is not limited to, several disciplines including sociology, psychology, education, and philosophy and theology (Cameron & Moss, 2011). It is important to clarify that while social pedagogy draws from and contributes to these fields, it does not solely reside in any. For example, Storø (2012), reasons that social pedagogy can not be described as either sociology or psychology and suggests instead that social pedagogy builds a bridge between the two by using perspectives on the individual and society from both. Although it is important to understand that social pedagogical thought is currently applied in several different fields, this capstone project focuses on how social pedagogy and social pedagogical thought relate to educational theory and practice. Indeed, Hämaläinen (2015) contends that "originally, the concept [of social pedagogy] was about understanding education through its social nature, not about social professions" (p. 1034). Many of the pedagogical ideas generated in the polarized social climate of the 19th century left a lasting legacy in educational thinking that advocated lifelong community-oriented and politically conscious learning approaches which retain their actuality and appeal today (Lorenz, 2008). In fact, Fielding (2006) agrees that "many progressive and socially oriented approaches to education in its broadest sense share an overlapping heritage" and further suggests that "social pedagogy may have the potential for stimulating interest and remaking connections with important educational traditions and practices that have been overlooked and neglected in the current neoliberal climate with its focus on education in its narrowest sense" (p. 177). The literature pertaining to the origins of social pedagogy often acknowledges the influence and contribution of many great educationists and pedagogic movements who do not explicitly address social pedagogy in their work but whose work is premised on the common assumption that education can make an important contribution to changing social circumstances (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013; Hämaläinen, 2003; 2015). As Hämaläinen (2015) points
out, "any common grouping of the schools of thought found in the philosophy of education is also suitable for analyzing the schools of thought of social pedagogy" (p. 1030). In the following section I will examine how the principles of social pedagogy connect to several historical and contemporary key educational thinkers and their theories.

**Educational Influences and Contributions**

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)**

Looking as far back as the enlightenment, it is possible to recognize some of the ideas of several 18th Century enlightenment philosophers and visionaries. Swiss-French philosopher Rousseau laid the foundations for social pedagogy by arguing that learning needs to start in the present – where the child is currently in their development, rather than as adults-to-be, which was the prevalent thought in his time. This image of the child is a fundamental feature of contemporary social pedagogy in both theory and practice (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a) and reflects the first of Petrie et al.'s (2006) principles of social pedagogy – that “there is a focus on the child as a whole person, and support for the child’s overall development” (p. 22).

**Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827)**

Rousseau's theories, in turn, influenced the Swiss educator Pestalozzi, who contributed two main educational principles that would prove influential in the development of social pedagogy. The first contribution was his holistic approach to education that sought to find balance between the head-intellectual and cognitive capacities, the heart - emotional and moral capacities, and the hands - the act of doing (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013). Pestalozzi believed that children are formed as an indivisible whole with many capacities, each of which is developed through and by the others (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a). Pestalozzi's second main contribution was his interest in finding a balance between the individual and social goals of education by developing educational principles and practices that support the self-realization of learners while also fostering the growth of responsible and engaged
citizens who were concerned about the greater social good (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013). This has much in common with one of Petrie et al.'s (2006) principles of social pedagogy – that “children's lives in groups are seen as an important resource; workers should foster and make use of the group” (p. 22).

**Anton Makarenko (1888-1939)**

Extending this same principle, Ukrainian educator Anton Makarenko's insights and accomplishments working with youth group dynamics also made a significant contribution to the development of social pedagogy (Schugerenksy & Silver, 2013; Eriksson & Markström, 2003). Central to Makarenko's work is the concept of the collective, which he believes is a link between the individual and society and is the best place for personal growth. According to Makarenko, within the well-functioning collective each person is seen and understood as an individual with their own specific needs. Further, his work strongly emphasizes the importance of an accepting, supportive, and caring environment for a child's personal and social development (Halvorson, 2012).

**John Macmurray (1891-1976)**

The work of twentieth century Scottish educational philosopher, John Macmurray, reflects several of Petrie et al.'s (2006) principles of social pedagogy, especially in relation to the focus on supporting the child's overall development as a whole person, the centrality of listening and communicating in relationship, and the importance of community. In his article, “Education as if people matter: John Macmurray, community and the struggle for democracy”, Fielding (2012) introduces Macmurray as a progressive philosopher who argued that we should educate the emotions, place relationships and care at the heart of teaching and learning, and locate all we do as educators within the wider, deeper context of how we learn to live good lives together despite profound and persistent societal change. A central tenet of Macmurray's life's work is his belief that human beings are by nature relational and that communal knowledge is best developed in the context of an inclusive, caring community. In his 1958 public lecture, “Learning to be human”, Macmurray (2012) suggests
that learning to live in personal relation to other people is “the first priority in education – if by education we mean learning to be human” (p. 670). He justifies his claim by explaining that failing to do so is a “fundamental failure, which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity” (p. 670). His words are as relevant today as they were when he made this speech. He explains to his audience that teachers can no longer take for granted that the world will be the same when their students reach adulthood and suggests that it is futile to guess what kind of education will best serve them in the future. He suggests that “the fixed points, by which we can steer our course as teachers, have become those human qualities and aptitudes which remain unaffected by social transformations; qualities and aptitudes which belong to all men everywhere because they are involved in the structure of human nature itself” (Macmurray, 2012, p. 667).

**Social Constructivist Theory: John Dewey (1859-1952) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)**

Several principles of social pedagogy can be found in the work of both Dewey and Vygotsky, who are considered to be among the most influential educational thinkers of the 20th century. Dewey believed in the importance of social learning by participating in a community and in the role of education to foster democratic ideals and social change (Schugurensky & Silver, 2013). His contention that “it is truly educative in its effect in the degree in which an individual shares or participates in some conjoint activity” (Dewey, 1916, p.16) resonates very clearly with Petrie et al.'s (2006) principle that “children's lives in groups are seen as an important resource; workers should foster and make use of the group” (p. 22). Dewey (1916) was very interested in the connections between democracy and education, believing that decisions should be made by a shared process of inquiry. Soviet psychologist Vygotsky's concept of a Zone of Proximal Development (1978) depicts learning as a socially mediated process that takes place first between people and then within a person, highlighting the importance of forming valuing relationships that enhance growth (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a). This clearly
resonates with Petrie et al.'s (2006) principles that “the practitioner sees herself as a person, in relationship with the child or young person” and speaks to the “centrality of relationship and, allied to this, the importance of listening and communicating” (p. 22). Certain tenets of social constructivism are also evident in social pedagogy in the shared belief that knowledge and understanding is socially constructed (Storø, 2013).

**Critical Theory: Paulo Freire (1921-1997)**

The Brazilian educator and critical theorist Paulo Freire's emancipatory rather than oppressive values (1998, 2006) are mirrored in the values of social pedagogy, as described by Pat Petrie (2011). For example, she professes that these values seek to empower people via social participation based on relationship building and interpersonal communication, rather than “keeping them 'in their place’” (p. 76). Freire (1998) concurs that “respect for the autonomy and dignity of every person is an ethical imperative and not a favor that we may or may not concede to each other” (p. 59). Like Freire, social pedagogues aim to position themselves within the group, rather than as supervisors outside of their students' experiences and in a separate hierarchical domain (Freire, 1998, 2006). Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994) reasons that it is imperative to include both the teachers' and students' voices in the learning process and dismisses the traditional paradigm in which the student is the passive recipient of the teacher's knowledge. He writes that “the teachers thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them” (Freire, 2006, p. 77). Freire describes a delicate balancing act in which teachers are actively engaged in helping learners get involved in their own education while never allowing their role as teacher to overshadow the presence of the learner, nor allowing the role of the learner to overshadow the presence of the teacher (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Freire saw this mutual exchange as an opportunity for both parties to learn and grow together, where “the teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being
taught also teach” (2006, p. 80). He theorizes that the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible if it is true that thought only has meaning when generated by action upon the world (Freire, 2006). These tenets share ideals with two of Petrie et al.'s (2006) principles of social pedagogy – that “children and staff are seen as inhabiting the same *lifespace*; not as existing in separate hierarchical domains” and that teachers “focus on the child as a whole person and support for the child’s overall development” (p. 22). Another of Freire's (1998) beliefs is the importance of professional reflection. He explains that to improve one's practice, critical reflection on the relationship between theory and practice, especially from today and yesterday, is essential. Without it, “theory becomes simply 'blah, blah, blah' and practice, pure activism” (p. 30). His words are echoed in the principle of social pedagogy recommending that teachers “practice and apply both theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to the sometimes challenging demands with which they are confronted” (Petrie et al., 2006, p. 22).

**Reggio Emilia Municipal Early Childhood Centres: Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994)**

The educational theories and practices advocated by Loris Malaguzzi, one of the founders of municipal early childhood centres in Reggio Emilia, Italy, reflect many of the principles of social pedagogy as outlined by Petrie et al (2006). His image of children and human beings as rich in potential, strong, and powerful (Malaguzzi & Gandini, 1993; Rinaldi, 2006; Peter Moss, 2011), for example, resonates with the social pedagogical principle that “there is a focus on the child as a whole person, and support for the child's overall development” (Petrie et al., 2006, p. 22). Malaguzzi understands that in its broadest sense, education assists “with the psychological growth and maturing of human beings, making possible the growth of a rich, original, socially and individually normal personality” (Cagliari, Castegnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016, p. 41). Petrie et al.'s principle concerning “the centrality of relationship and, allied to this, the importance of listening and communicating” (2006, p. 22) is supported by Malaguzzi's commitment to construct “a pedagogy of
relations, listening and liberation. This is a pedagogy of children and adults working together to
construct knowledge (and values and identities) – meaning-making through processes of building,
sharing, testing and revising theories, always in dialogic relationship with others” (Moss, 2016, p. 173).
Malaguzzi holds a vision of educational settings as places of shared lives and relationships among
many adults and very many children (Malaguzzi & Gandini, 1993; Rinaldi, 2006; Peter Moss, 2011),
supporting Petrie et al.’s (2006) principles of social pedagogy that “the practitioner sees herself as a
person, in relationship with the child or young person” and that “children and staff are seen as
inhabiting the same life-space; not as existing in separate hierarchical domains” (2006, p. 22). Working
with values of cooperation and equality, Malaguzzi’s philosophy and practice replaces hierarchy with
equality of status and holds teachers to high ideals, calling forth a rich image of a co-constructor of
knowledge who is “a new type of intellectual, a producer of knowledge connected with the demands of
society” (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 210). Malaguzzi’s philosophy supports teacher growth and
development by creating time and space for teacher collaboration emphasizes the importance of
teachers working together and participating in regular professional development (Rinaldi, 2006; Moss,
2016), mirroring Petrie et al.’s (2006) principle of social pedagogy which states that “as professionals,
pedagogues [educators] are encouraged constantly to reflect on their practice and to apply both
theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to the sometimes challenging demands with which they
are confronted”. But, as Cagliari et al. (2016) explain, schools were not just places for children and
teachers:

They were public spaces, without boundaries, open to their neighbourhoods, welcoming
parents and other citizens, while reaching out into their surrounding neighbourhoods: schools
that are living centres of open and democratic culture, enriched and informed by social
encounters that let them go beyond their ambiguous and false autonomy and centuries-old
detachment, and which let them abandon the prejudice of ideological imprinting and authoritarian indoctrination. (p. 172)

Petrie et al.'s (2006) principle that “there is an emphasis on team work and on valuing the contributions of others in 'bringing' up children: other professionals, members of the local community and especially parents” echoes the paragraph above. Finally, the value of the group in social pedagogy, as described in the principle “children’s associative life is seen as an important resource: workers should foster and make use of the group” has much in common with Malaguzzi's philosophy of group work. Carla Rinaldi, former director of the municipal early childhood centres in Reggio Emilia, and Malaguzzi's successor explains that the teaching-learning relationship is overturned in the context of multiple listening involving the teachers and the group of children, all of whom can listen to others and listen to themselves. As everyone is learning together, “the group becomes conscious of itself as a 'teaching place', where the many languages are enriched, multiplied, refined, and generated” (2006, p. 51).

**Ethics of Care: Nel Noddings (1929- )**

The emphasis on the social pedagogical principles of care, relationships, and responsibility is reflected in the notion of the ethics of care, a care-focused branch of feminist thought. Nel Noddings (2012a), a professor at Stanford University and a seminal theorist in this field, explains that care ethics begins with our relationships with others – where both the carer and the cared-for play an integral role in the formation and maintenance of relationships that can range from brief encounters to long-term associations. She describes the responsive nature of the carer toward the cared-for and emphasizes that the foundational strength of the caring relation is rooted in mutual recognition, reciprocity, and appreciation of response (2012a). For Noddings, the student-teacher relationship is based on the kinds of conversation in which the genuinely concerned and compassionate teacher can talk with the student in a way that is fully engaged and not condescending. In a real conversation, she says, we are aware that our partners in conversation are more important than the topic in conversation (Noddings, 1994).
These tenets are especially reflected in Petrie et al.'s (2006) principles that “the practitioner sees herself as a person, in relationship with the child or young person” and that central to this relationship is the “importance of listening and communicating” (p. 22).

Parallels can be drawn between Pacini-Ketchabaw, Mxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, and Sanchez’s (2015) discussion about the ethics of care and several other important principles of social pedagogy. They explain that an ethics of care “invokes actions rather than a list of rules” (p. 179), which resonates with Petrie et al.'s (2006) stated principle that “[social] pedagogy builds on an understanding of children's rights that it not limited to procedural matters of legislated requirements” (p. 22). In respect to the focus on teamwork and relationship building, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) explain that an ethics of care is a collaborative action by early childhood educators, children, families, community members, and others, who share the responsibility of developing relationships, care, responsibility, leadership, and activism. A strong connection can be made between these values and many of those described by Petrie et al. (2006) in their list of the fundamental principles of social pedagogy (p. 22).

**Summary**

Despite the lack of a singular and concise definition of social pedagogy, common threads can be found across the centuries and across countries. Encouraging efforts are being made to increase cohesion by identifying common and consistent principles and practices that hold true in a variety of contexts. Although not explicitly addressed, aspects of social pedagogical principles can be found in the work of several important and well respected educational thinkers.
Chapter 3

Connections to Practice

It is important to understand that social pedagogy is an approach that is best represented by describing its underlying principles (Ruch, Winter, Cree, Hallett, Morrison, & Hadfield, 2016). It cannot be contained in a neat and tidy step-by-step program. As Hämäläinen (2003) reminds us, “social pedagogy is not a method, nor even a set of methods. An action is not social pedagogical because certain methods are used therein, but because some methods are chosen and used as a consequence of social pedagogical thought” (p. 77). He further explains that it is important to see social pedagogy as both a practice and a philosophical approach with a humanistic and democratic theoretical orientation. Eichsteller and Halthoff (2012) concur:

what characterizes social pedagogy in practice depends not on what is done but on how it is done and with what purpose – how an action enhances well-being, creates learning opportunities, improves relationships, increases agency and makes for a meaningful positive experience. In this respect social pedagogy is both a science and an art form – it’s not just a skill to learn but needs to be brought to life through the social pedagogue’s Haltung [attitude, stance; see p.37] (2012, p. 5).

Research conducted by Petrie et al. (2006) revealed that “a central tenet of the pedagogic approaches studied was to reject universal solutions and accept a multiplicity of possible perspectives, depending on personal circumstances, particular dynamics, events and sources of support” (p. 29). They concluded that “working in a pedagogic way is, therefore, not tied to technical procedures, but requires both an intuitive and a systemic synthesis of information, emotions and, critically, knowledge gained from study [reflection]” (Petrie et al, 2006, p. 29).

Insights into social pedagogy are meant to inspire profound questions about our image of children, how we relate to them, and how we can support them to play a role within society. As social
pedagogy aims to cause change and have a positive impact on individuals and society, it is inherently value-based and it is important that these values are constantly and critically reflected upon, especially because values are so specific to culture and time (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a). Vandenbroeck, Coussée, Bradt, and Roose (2011) agree that

from a social pedagogical perspective, the issue at stake is not merely to find the best solutions to a given social problem, but rather – before thinking about solutions – to continually re-examine in participatory ways what the problem might be and whether our pedagogical practices question or confirm prevailing understandings of the problem (p. 54).

In this way, it is the philosophy behind the principles of social pedagogy that acts as a guidepost for teachers as they examine unique ways to support student's development in the SEL core competencies, rather than a set of prescribed methods. Social pedagogy is, as Petrie et al. remind us, about “educating children to act on the basis of principles, rather than reproducing set patterns of behaviour” (2006, p.34).

A detailed analysis of research pertaining to mental health promotion and prevention in schools conducted by Weare and Nind (2011) supports the effectiveness of approaches which are less dogmatic and more process-oriented rather than mechanical and procedural. They found that while there are many behavioural and information-based SEL interventions designed for use in schools, these are often didactic methodologies that are not nearly as effective as the use of educative and empowering theories and interactive pedagogical methods which also emphasize changes in attitudes, beliefs and values.

**Key Concepts of Social Pedagogy in Practice**

**The Social Pedagogy Tree**

To understand the complex nature of social pedagogy in practice, it may be helpful to refer to a metaphorical illustration of a tree (see figure 3.1), which provides a visual overview of many of the core elements of social pedagogy as conceived by Eichsteller & Holthoff (2009).
Social pedagogy finds its roots in the works of contemporary and historical key thinkers in education, philosophy, sociology, and psychology. These roots help to stabilize a fertile soil (society), where core values and *Haltung* (how social pedagogues bring their own values into practice in a congruent manner) provide the nourishment for the tree (the child) to grow into well-being. Supporting this growth, the gardener (the care giver) observes and reflects, forming a solid trunk (the relationship), from which other branches may grow. The gardener uses many tools, such as communication, group work, creativity, risk competence, and holistic learning to create positive experiences for the tree. The tree flourishes and participates in the development of its own life world and life space, where it is

This figure visualizes how the many aspects of social pedagogy fit together, depend on, and are reinforced by each other.

empowered by an environment in which its rights are respected and it is seen as a capable and rich individual.

**The Diamond Model**

Another helpful metaphor developed by Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011a) is the Diamond Model (see Figure 3.2) of social pedagogy, which provides a visual framework to “outline the conceptual foundations of social pedagogy, their relevance and interconnectness” (p. 38). The image of the diamond symbolizes the idea that there is a diamond within all of us, that we are all precious and have a rich variety of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012).

![The Diamond Model of social pedagogy](http://www.thempra.org.uk/social-pedagogy/key-concepts-in-social-pedagogy/thempras-diamond-model/)

*Figure 3.2. The Diamond Model of social pedagogy*

This figure illustrates the overarching aims of social pedagogy and the belief in intrinsic human potential.

The model suggests “four cardinal points serving like a compass in navigating through the 'garden': well being, learning, relationships, and empowerment. At its core lies the social pedagogic
aspiration to provide people with experiences that have a long-term positive impact on their lives” (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a, p.38).

**Well-being and Happiness**

At the top of the diamond, as in the tree of social pedagogy, rests the overall goal of well-being and happiness, which emphasizes that “social pedagogy is essentially concerned with enhancing individual and collective well-being and human dignity” (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a, p. 39). This requires a focus both on an individual’s sense of happiness within the present moment and on their long-lasting sense of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being (Eichsteller, n.d.).

**Holistic Learning**

The diamond balances on opportunities for creating life-long learning experiences which reflect the aim of well-being and happiness. Ideally, these experiences are holistic in that they involve the head (intellect and cognition), the heart (emotions and morals), and the hands (doing) (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012). Eichsteller suggests that “effective learning is a holistic, immersive and active process” (n.d., para. 11) and that creating these opportunities is “a process that is always unique and cannot be achieved by applying technical methods in an unreflected way” (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011b, p.179).

In the image of the diamond, the delicate balance of the sharp point of holistic learning speaks to the key challenge of creating learning opportunities within the opposing poles of being person-centred and being community-centred. Holistic learning opportunities support, as the diamond model implies, the building of relationships which are reflected in social pedagogy’s understanding that children are seen as part of a group, and also as individuals (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a).

**Relationships**

Opportunities for holistic learning support the development of positive, supportive, trusting, authentic relationships, which are seen in social pedagogy as ends in themselves, not merely as means
to an end. Through relationships with people who care about them, children develop social skills that enable them to live with others in constructive ways that build on equal value and richness and uphold the rights and dignity of themselves and others. It is in these relationships that children are empowered to develop their independence as well as interdependence (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a).

**Empowerment**

Through holistic learning experiences that support the development of healthy relationships, children develop a sense of control over their lives, experience a sense of identity and belonging, and feel involved in decisions affecting them. This empowerment allows them to take ownership and responsibility for their own well-being and happiness, as well as their relationships in the community. As Eichsteller & Holthoff explain,

> the role for empowerment in the social pedagogic relationship is, therefore, to ensure that it is a relationship amongst equal human beings where power is used not as a form of control but as responsibility, a relationship that leads to less dependence on the social pedagogue and facilitates a person's increasing ability to access resources themselves (2011a, p. 44).

**Positive Experiences**

At the centre of the Diamond Model, positive experiences tie all the other parts together. The aims of well-being and happiness, holistic learning, relationships, and a sense of empowerment are “brought to life through positive experiences” (Eichsteller, n.d., para. 8). These positive experiences are often everyday, ordinary moments that become significant because they represent a culmination of achievements, newly acquired skills and rewarding relationships that raise self-confidence and feelings of self-worth which, in turn, reinforce a sense of well-being and happiness (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012).
**Lifeworld Orientation**

The concept of the *lifeworld orientation* was established in the 1970s through the work of Hans Thiersch, emeritus professor of social work and social pedagogy at Tübingen University in Germany and describes an individual’s “direct experience, their living contexts, their life skills and the strength of their self-responsibility” (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009, p. 132). Eichsteller (n.d.) suggests that the concept of the lifeworld offers an ethical framework for professional practice that emphasises and respects “that every person’s reality [that is, their lifeworld orientation] is shaped by their subjective experiences and is therefore unique” (para. 2). Petrie et al. (2006) agree that “recognition of the child's 'multiverse' (as opposed to universe) requires that the staff do not try to impose one meaning on a situation, but think about the different meanings that differing perspectives and contexts might bring to a child's life and his or her difficulties” (p.30). Being mindful of another person’s lifeworld orientation requires a respectful, non-judgemental, and tactful attitude that makes us “sensitive and reflective of what values foundational beliefs we bring to our practice” (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011b, p. 184).

**Haltung**

Roughly translated, the German term *Haltung*, means stance, ethos, or mindset and “refers to the extent to which a person guides their actions by their ethical orientation and lives their values in the everyday” (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011b, p. 179). Regarding teachers, Van Manen (1991) suggests that certain characteristics and ethical orientations [Haltung] are essential:

- a sense of vocation, love and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child’s subjectivity [life world orientation], an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child’s needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fibre to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and not the least,
humor and vitality (p. 8).

Through their Haltung, teachers express their fundamental beliefs and values in their interactions with their students, parents, and colleagues. This is especially significant when considering how a teacher’s image of the child is reflected in their daily interactions with them. In social pedagogy, the intention is that one’s Haltung will express an empathetic understanding through emotional connectedness to other people and will demonstrate a profound respect for their human dignity (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a; 2011b).

A supportive and empathetic Haltung is closely allied to the concept of lifeworld orientation. We best support others when we have a detailed insight into their experiences of the world around them and take a genuine interest in their lifeworld orientation. As Eichsteller & Holthoff (2011b) suggest, this can be as challenging as it is significant. It demands ongoing self-reflection to remain aware of the impact our Haltung has on interactions with others and requires “an ethical orientation that resonates within us both at a personal and professional level” (p. 179).

**The Three Ps: The professional, personal, and private self**

The concept of the *Three Ps* offers a way of understanding the role of the professional and how to maintain clear boundaries when building relationships with children. Central to the principles of social pedagogy is a willingness, on the part of the professional, to share a part of themselves with the people they work with, to develop trust and affection. As bell hooks (1994) asserts in her notion of engaged pedagogy, we must be whole as humans in the classrooms if we are to allow others to be wholehearted as well. This is especially important when working with children, as they want to know who we are as a person, not just what we do as a professional.

From a social pedagogical perspective, we cannot be professional without being personal, so we must be both, bringing potential challenges for maintaining a healthy balance. The concept of the
Three Ps can help us be mindful as we reflect on how our work impacts on our professional, personal and private self.

The professional Self

First and foremost, the professional self is purposeful. It is based on professional knowledge that informs our practice and is supported by relevant policies, research, and theory connected to our field.

The personal self

The personal self is about how we genuinely engage with others in ways that reveal who we are to develop healthy and supportive relationships with them. By allowing ourselves to be vulnerable enough to show our flaws, we encourage others to be who they are, to build trust, and to not feel inferior to us. In this way, as Ruch et al. (2016) remind us, “social pedagogy invites all involved to attend to the intimacies of inter-personal connections” (p.8). This personal self is also purposeful because we must remain mindful of what we are trying to achieve through the relationship. It requires ongoing reflection to ensure that we have the best interests of the child at heart, that what we are sharing will be of some benefit.

The private self

The private self draws a boundary around matters that are private and are inappropriate to be brought into a relationship with a child. The private self is reserved for those relationships outside of our professional lives - our family and closest friends. Of course, determining the boundary between personal and private is different for all of us and can change from situation to situation and from relationship to relationship. It is also important to remember that, as human beings, we cannot fully disconnect from our private self and it can influence our interactions with others. (Bengtsson, Chamberlain, Crimmens, & Stanley, 2008; Boddy, 2011; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a; Milligan, 2009; Petrie et al., 2006; Ruch et al., 2016).
Remaining purposeful and engaging in ongoing reflection of our behaviour and choices will help us to stay true to our intention of benefiting the child. As Storø (2013) reminds us, we need wonderment as a constant companion, and we must dare to submit our work to questioning: 'Does it work well?', 'For whom?', 'Are we achieving what we want?', 'What is the outcome of our efforts?', 'Have the lives of the people we worked with improved?', and 'Did we act in an ethically responsible way?' (p.9).

**SEL core competencies through the lens of social pedagogy**

**Personal and Social core competencies**

In 2016, the British Columbia Ministry of Education unveiled a redesigned curriculum. At the centre of this curricula redesign, along with literacy and numeracy and essential content and concepts, are the core competencies, which are in draft form at the time of this writing. Through provincial consultation with teams of developers and teachers, three sets of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional core competencies or proficiencies were identified: Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social. Core competencies are relevant to and embedded in every aspect of learning and are especially evident when students are engaged in doing. Ultimately, it is the goal for learners to use their gained proficiencies in these core competencies in all aspects of their lives (BC Ministry of Education, 2016a). This capstone project focuses on the interrelated competencies that are related to the broad area of SEL and include: Positive Personal and Cultural Identity (see table 2), Personal Awareness and Responsibility (see table 3), and Social Responsibility (see table 4).
Table 2. Positive Personal and Cultural Identity (PPCI) Core Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships and cultural contexts</th>
<th>Personal values and choices</th>
<th>Personal strengths and abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students define themselves in terms of their relationship to others and their relationship to the world (people and place) around them.</td>
<td>Students understand how their identified values have been influenced by their life experiences and how they shape their choices in all contexts of their lives.</td>
<td>Students acknowledge and use their unique strengths and abilities in the context of their families, relationships, and communities.</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 3. Personal Awareness and Responsibility Core Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self determination</th>
<th>Self regulation</th>
<th>Well-being</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are self advocates because they value themselves, their ideas, and their accomplishments.</td>
<td>Students take responsibility for their own choices and actions. They set goals, monitor progress, and persevere in difficult situations. They understand and regulate their emotions.</td>
<td>Students take increasing responsibility for developing strategies to support their mental, physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual wellness.</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 4. Social Responsibility Core Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing to community and caring for the environment</th>
<th>Solving problems in peaceful ways</th>
<th>Valuing diversity</th>
<th>Building relationships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students develop awareness and take responsibility for their social, physical, and natural environments by working independently and collaboratively for the benefit of others, communities, and the environment.</td>
<td>Students identify and appreciate different perspectives on issues; they generate, use, and evaluate strategies to resolve problems.</td>
<td>Students value diversity, defend human rights, advocate for others, and have ethical interactions with others.</td>
<td>Students develop and maintain diverse, positive peer and intergenerational relationships in a variety of contexts</td>
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The principles and practices of social pedagogy, as outlined in this capstone project, provide an
ethical conceptual framework for teachers in BC as they interpret and implement the SEL core competencies in their classrooms. As demonstrated in this paper, social pedagogy is primarily concerned with supporting the individual - more specifically children – as they strive to achieve personal growth and a sense of overall well-being in the larger community and society. The SEL core competencies share this common goal by emphasizing a focus on the interrelationships of the concern for the individual, the group, the community, and for society as a whole.

The importance of building and developing diverse, positive peer and intergenerational relationships is highlighted in the PPCI and social responsibility competencies and is at the centre of the principles and practices of social pedagogy. As part of building relationships children must be seen as part of a group, not just as individuals, which is crucial as it defines social pedagogic practice as essentially relationship-centred and social pedagogic settings as providing opportunities for children to practise building relationships (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011a). This supports the PPCI core competency that states “students define themselves in terms of their relationship to others and their relationship to the world (people and place) around them” (BC Ministry of Education, 2016c).

Learning to live in a world with others – in society – means learning how to solve problems in peaceful ways, a core competency in social responsibility. Conflict resolution also plays a key role in social pedagogy and it is important to understand that “constructive conflict on the basis of working communication is of great importance for the individual's disposition to grow” (Kleipoedszus, 2011, p. 138). The principles of social pedagogy reflect a commitment to inclusiveness, solidarity, and confronting social problems that mirror the social responsibility core competencies which value diversity and advocacy for others. As Eichsteller & Holthoff remind us,

in our social pedagogic understanding of the concept, empowerment highlights children's human rights, their active involvement in decisions that affect them, and the emancipation of human beings at an individual and collective level. The relevance of empowerment as
complementary to relationships suggests that two key elements are dialectically connected in social pedagogy: independence and interdependence (2011a, p. 44)

By adhering to the principles of the 3Ps, teachers nurture relationships with their students that model ethical interactions that provide examples of mental, emotional, social, and spiritual wellness. They “bring themselves as persons to their work and see young people as fellow human beings, individuals with qualities and strengths, with whom to share many aspects of everyday life” (Petrie et al. 2006, p. 154). Most of all, however, by allowing themselves to share a part of who they are as people, teachers model trust. As Eichsteller & Holthoff explain,

central to social pedagogic relationships is the development of trust between the social pedagogue and the child. As trust can only be nurtured gradually and carefully, building strong relationships takes time and is a joint process, requiring both parties to trust the other person and to be trusted by him or her. Placing trust in children, in their competence and responsibility, can be an empowering experience for them, not only strengthening the relationship but also their self-confidence” (2011a, p. 43).

By respecting and being mindful of a child’s lifeworld orientation, teachers model the PPCI core competency of recognizing the impact that life experiences have on our perceptions of ourselves and others. This supports students as they begin to understand how their values shape their choices in all contexts of their lives. Thus, children will gain self-respect and learn to advocate for themselves, their ideas, and their accomplishments. The importance of this sense of empowerment is reflected in the personal awareness and responsibility core competency that focuses on setting goals, persevering in difficult situations, and taking responsibility for one’s own choices and actions. Eichsteller & Holthoff explain the importance of this in relation to social pedagogy:

Empowerment relies on people's active engagement, for which social pedagogues [teachers] can provide opportunities that enable people [students] to empower themselves. This requires a
perspective that goes beyond a focus on meeting their needs by exploring how they can be supported in ways that strengthen their resilience and enable them to cope with life situations, thus being resourceful in meeting their own needs. (2011a, p. 45)

**Summary**

The metaphorical illustrations of the Social Pedagogy Tree and the Diamond Model provide accessible references that summarize the essence of social pedagogy in practice. Lifeworld Orientation, Haltung, and the 3Ps are key concepts in the practice of social pedagogy that support teachers as they interpret and implement the SEL core competencies as outlined in the BC Ministry of Education’s (2016) transformed curriculum.
Chapter 4: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

The Responsibility of Teachers

The questions and comments posed to me by my colleagues all those months ago, are not simply answered: ‘Are these competencies not the responsibility of parents?’ ‘I do not feel qualified to teach the core competencies’, ‘I am already overwhelmed teaching the academic curriculum and now I have to worry about their social emotional needs as well?!’ ‘How do I teach the core competencies? Is there a program with resources to guide my teaching?’

Today, informed by what I have learned about social pedagogy, I would argue that our students’ development of the core competencies is very much our responsibility as teachers. I would argue that as human beings who reflect on our practice and are willing to develop relationships with our students, we are indeed qualified to teach the core competencies. I would argue that we can not separate the academic curriculum from social emotional learning, that they are interrelated and interdependent. Finally, I would argue that no program or method is required, only the mindful consideration of the principles that social pedagogy provides.

These principles offer a paradigm shift that may be difficult to embrace without deep personal and professional consideration and ongoing reflection. They are based on a rich, agentic image of the child and a holistic philosophical approach which encompasses learning, care, health, and general well-being and development – an idea summed up in the pedagogical term, upbringing (Boddy et al, 2005). The hegemonic beliefs which many of us have inherited from the society in which we were raised and trained as teachers may present personal and professional challenges that could possibly take years to overcome, even with an openness and desire to do so. Embracing the philosophies and practices of social pedagogy is very much a personal journey of discovery – of ourselves as human beings, of children as human beings, and of society – which means that we are all on very different points along the path. This presents an interesting challenge from a professional development point of view. Some
teachers may experience an immediate resonance with this conceptual framework while others may experience a very unsettling discomfort as they become aware of their own personal set of hegemonic beliefs. Some may welcome, with excitement and enthusiasm, the possibilities that this paradigm shift can offer. Others may be offended or feel defensive as they protect the status-quo philosophies and practices in which they find comfort and safety.

**The Responsibility of Schools and School Districts**

The prominent inclusion of the SEL core competencies in the BC Ministry of Education’s (2016) transformed curriculum sends a clear message that education is about more than academic success. The focus on “intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need to develop in order to engage in deep learning and life-long learning” (BC Ministry of Education, 2016a) legitimizes the use of the principles and practices of social pedagogy in the context of BC schools. It is the responsibility of school administration and the upper management of school districts in the province to support teacher’s efforts to interpret and implement the core competencies. Supported by school district upper management, administrators can be instrumental in cultivating a school environment that embraces the SEL proficiencies by providing opportunities for school staff to develop school goals, codes of conduct, mission statements, and discipline practices that reflect the goals of the core competencies.

**The Responsibility of Post-Secondary Institutions**

Considering the emphasis placed on SEL in BC’s transformed curriculum (2016a), it is imperative that pre-service teachers are educated about its significance to human development. They need to be given opportunities to explore how their own “status-quo stories” (Keating, 2009) impact their image of the child. This, in turn, will support the healthy development of self-reflection skills necessary for effective teaching (see Jennings, 2015).
Areas for Further Research

There is a paucity of research, certainly in North America, that investigates the effectiveness of employing the principles and practices of social pedagogy in the early childhood classroom. Most research from English-speaking countries has been carried out in residential care (see Petrie et al., 2006), although some research is beginning to emerge in other fields and places. For example, Carter, Cameron, Houghton, & Walton (2012) used social pedagogical principles to run a group involving young people with learning disabilities. The research found that social pedagogy was a good way to improve involvement, as it helped to build trusting and equal relationships between young people with learning disabilities and the adults who worked with them. Similarly, Carter, Cook, et al. (2016) conducted research in the form of a service evaluation survey which analyzed the perspectives of 39 children taking part in a group of peers who have siblings with an intellectual disability. The results found that “the hard-won social pedagogy principles of being child-centred, non-hierarchical, group-focused and emphasizing non-instrumental creative play provided a safe and supportive experience for the siblings” (p. 79). Nearly 90% of the young participants felt that the adults listened to them, which indicates the relative lack of hierarchy and inhabiting the same life space. These results are promising and beg for more research to be conducted, especially in the context of schools. As a focus on SEL increases in BC and other areas of North America, more opportunities will become available for further research to assess the effectiveness of certain SEL practices and interventions, including some of those described in this paper, in the context of our local socio-cultural diversities.

Limitations

A distinct limitation encountered while researching social pedagogy is the number of possible resources that have not yet been translated into English or are not available in Canada. It can be assumed that there is a wealth of information available originating from non-English speaking countries that have a rich theoretical and practical history in social pedagogical tradition. I have
sometimes had to rely on other author’s translations and interpretations of the writings of key thinkers in social pedagogy, such as Mager, Distersweg, Natorp, and Nohl.

**Applications to Current and Future Practice**

I feel empowered by my recently gained knowledge and insight into social pedagogy and how its principles and practices can be applied to support the social emotional learning of my students. Social pedagogy brings a legitimacy and purpose to something that I realize now I have been intuitively attempting to accomplish for some years - to form respectful, non-hierarchical relationships with my students. This has not always been easy for me and has, at times, been met with resistance from well-meaning administrators and colleagues who have cautioned me to remain guarded in my interactions with children. The practice of the 3Ps – to be mindful of the distinctions between the professional, personal, and private self – is very helpful and one that I am sure to reflect on regularly as I move forward with a renewed intention to connect with my students.

A key learning for me has been Natorp’s concept of the prerequisite relationship between the individual and the community (Natorp, 1904, as translated and cited by Erikkson, 2010), where the individual supports the growth of the group and the group supports the growth of the individual. The articulation of this idea through the principles and philosophies of social pedagogy was, for me, particularly illuminating and has inspired me to continue to find ways to support SEL by “foster[ing] and mak[ing] use of the group” (Petrie et al., 2006) in everyday classroom situations.

The inclusion of the core competencies in BC’s transformed curriculum (2016a) justifies the time and effort involved to employ the holistic approach of social pedagogy in bringing up children in the classroom. This *permission* to focus on the overall development and well-being of our students has the potential for profound impact on our practice as teachers.

**Conclusion**

In short, social pedagogy brings the personal into the professional. This is its greatest strength
and its greatest challenge. Teaching in this paradigm is often the opposite of neat and tidy, safe and predictable. It involves risks and vulnerability for all involved. The strength of this approach comes in the rewards found in the intimacy of sincere connection with other human beings, with personal growth, and with witnessing the growth of others. I would argue that these are the rewards of living life itself.
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