
Special issue: *Social pedagogy and anti-extremism/anti-terrorism*

Editorial

Editorial: social pedagogy and anti-extremism/ anti-terrorism

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The idea for this special issue on *Social pedagogy and anti-extremism/anti-terrorism* developed through our mutual interest in the challenges facing social pedagogy as welfare institutions such as schools, early childhood centres and youth projects, become designated as central actors in the fight against terrorism. In our own research about crime preventive work that targets vulnerable youth (Brønsted, 2019, 2020, 2021) and children's unequal access to democratic experiences in Danish kindergartens (Prins, 2019, 2021; Prins and Kampmann, 2022), we find that social pedagogical ideals, ambitions and practices take new forms and meanings across a pedagogical field when questions about citizenship, state security, terrorism and radicalised views on politics and religion become part of preventive social pedagogical work.

Our interest must be understood in the context of the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in 2001, which led to increased global government efforts to address terrorism in forms of new or strengthened anti-terrorism legislation. The European Council formulated a European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2005, and the European Commission put forward a new Counter-Terrorism Agenda in 2020 to better anticipate, prevent and respond to terrorist threats. At the same time far-right extremism has grown over the last two decades, and countries have seen larger groups of young people at risk of radicalisation from xenophobic influencers and conspiracy theory beliefs, also related to global digital communities. National governments have also formulated preventive strategies that target a wide

range of sectors, such as education, health, faith, criminal justice, the internet and local communities, to prevent people from becoming terrorists. Further, the strategies identify schools, early childhood centres, non-governmental organisations and various communities as places that have an impact on children and young people who may be at risk of radicalisation. They also identify democratic values and citizenship education as examples of preventive measures. Considering this we wanted to revisit some of the fundamental ideas, ambitions and ideals in social pedagogy and explore how security governance plays out in different contexts across the world and in different historical times. We wondered what kind of effects we would find if we asked the following questions:

- What does it mean when welfare professionals, such as teachers, social workers and social pedagogues, are expected to report concerns about radicalisation to the school leadership or outside agencies while working to form trusting relationships with the children/young people?
- How can welfare professionals spot signs of radicalisation while meeting the child with openness?
- Does the child become a potentially dangerous individual in the eyes of the welfare professionals, and, if yes, what does that mean for the role and self-understanding of the welfare professional?
- How can educators support young people's political aspirations, hopes and ideals when they are asked to educate them to become reasonably passionate about ideals (Meere and Lensink, 2015)?
- What happens to social pedagogical traditions for working with children and young people's participation and democratic education when democratic values become a preventive measure?

One of the anti-radicalisation strategies within education and social pedagogy appears to be that citizenship education, as well as the transmission of democratic values and ideals to children and young people from an early age, can function as a bulwark towards extremism and terrorism. This mirrors the ambitions within education and social pedagogy in Europe and the United States after the Second World War to formulate and implement anti-authoritarian pedagogies, such as critical thinking and independence as seen in New Education Fellowship and UNESCO (Øland, 2012; Teige, 2016). This movement influenced to a large degree the social pedagogical ideals and practices in Western Europe; in the UK building on a strong tradition for citizenship education, and in Scandinavia and continental Europe building on ideas of *Bildung* and progressive pedagogical movements, as an integrated and implicit DNA and self-understanding of the core of social pedagogy. But how are ideas of transmitting certain democratic values and certain ways of critical thinking to children and young people balanced against values such as the celebration of difference (Dewey, 1916, 1939)? How does fear of radicalised youth and terrorism impact the interpretation and implementation of citizenship ideas and democratic values in social pedagogical work? What are the implications for professional practice as well as for young people themselves when particular individuals, places and institutions are named as less democratic and/or more dangerous than others? (Butler, 2010).

In this special issue, we bring together articles from Germany, Norway, Poland and Denmark to address these questions and explore both new and historical ways of working with youth at the margin of society. The articles present new dilemmas that social pedagogy must address amid securitisation, the safeguarding of democratic values, emancipatory ideals and social pedagogical practices, as well as bringing forth new ideas and methods. All four articles point towards the risk of further marginalisation and stigmatisation as a counter-productive consequence of preventive strategies and securitisation paradigms. In the three contemporary articles, the stigmatisation of Muslim youth is addressed more particularly. In the historical contribution from Poland, the case of poor and orphaned children in the wake the First World War is examined. The authors claim that this kind of identification of certain population groups is followed by inherent individualisation caused by a preventive strategy that wants to identify possibly dangerous or disturbing individuals in order to reform and resocialise them. In their article, Maria Jakob, Nadine Jukschat and Alexander Leistner (2023) point to how this kind of individualisation challenges the relationship building that is so fundamental to social pedagogy, as it is based on trust. Jens Christian Jacobsen and Üzeyir Tireli (2023) also highlight how a focus on individuals who are responsible for their own actions or who are considered vulnerable and therefore open to propaganda and bad influences overshadows young peoples' shared social and structural conditions and political engagements. Furthermore, all authors claim that mechanisms of securitisation prevention strategies put children and young people at potential risk of radicalisation, further isolating them from local communities and society. As an alternative, relationship work, community building and various approaches to real participation in democratic processes are suggested as more productive and fruitful

ways, if societies and welfare professionals have a real interest in preventing terrorism and radicalisation among children and young people.

In 'Citizenship to (counter-)terrorism: the need to de-securitise the Norwegian education system and create space for democratic resilience', Christian Engen Skotnes and Martin Meggele Sjøen (2023) investigate security governance in educational domains in Norway as they discuss how implications of a precautionary counter-terrorism logic can cause harmful and exclusionary pedagogical practices. As an alternative they suggest a relational pedagogical practice that works to create democratic resilience to counter conflict, extremism and violence. Based on a design-based research project, they present and discuss findings from educational interventions designed by teachers, students and researchers at an upper-secondary school. The interventions were centred on emphatic narratives in times of hostilities and conflict transformation through community building. They discuss these findings in the light of how relationality and active citizenship may contribute towards democratic resilience, while also having a desecuritising effect on pedagogical practice.

In 'Racism and radicalisation in Denmark: outline for a social pedagogical prevention model' Jens Christian Jacobsen and Üzeyir Tireli (2023) propose a social pedagogical model to support teachers and social pedagogues in their work to counter the radicalisation of young people from ethnic minority communities. Their model is based on a community-oriented approach that values young people's experiences and involvement, their critical reflections and structural analyses and their transformative learning processes towards critical insights and actions. A supporting argument is that social pedagogical preventive work that addresses radicalisation must focus on young people's shared social position and social conditions rather than explaining radicalisation with individual circumstances. This is based on the insight that social pedagogical work with young people at risk of radicalisation often overlooks the structural and political conditions that largely underlie the (re)production of tendencies towards radicalisation.

In 'Our home: a revolutionary case study in social pedagogy', Basia Vucic (2023) takes us back in time, recounting the story of Polish social pedagogy in the light of post-First World War context of poverty and orphaned children as well as teachers and social workers having been engaged in political activism as part of the fight against oppression. As such, Vucic describes how social pedagogy in Poland was born through participation in illegal social and educational activities. The article is based on a study of applied history using the case of Januszc Korczaks experimental orphanages as a critical case study of possibilities in the current context of conflict and anti-terrorist agendas. Vucic argues that the experiments of self-governance, participation and democratic courts – where poor and orphaned children were treated as citizens, rather than as promises for the future and yet-to-be citizens – successfully turned criminals and rebellious children into law-abiding citizens. Vucic claims that treating children and young people as citizens and exposing them to an adult world of conflicts and dilemmas, for example, can be a helpful measure in today's social pedagogical work with resocialisation.

In 'The paradoxes of social work in a securitised setting: the example of prevention and radicalisation in German prisons', Maria Jakob, Nadine Jukschat and Alexander Leistner (2023) discuss what they characterise as paradoxical tensions within social pedagogy and how those tensions are intensified in an era of securitisation. The authors examine how the classical paradoxical tension between distance and closeness in relationships between professionals and young people, and fundamental values of openness, trust and voluntary participation are being challenged by forced participation as part of interventions as well as the suspicion and surveillance that come with the preventive regime. Based on interviews and observations in a secure unit for young people, the authors analyse how the logic of prevention and prison challenges social pedagogical principles and practices of building social relationships and creates a double role for social professionals. Finally, it also becomes clear that pedagogical professionalism in this field likewise depends on handling one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of clients, in a self-reflexive manner.

The suggested responses to anti-radicalisation and anti-extremism strategies in the four articles flesh out what could be considered a kind of common value of modern social pedagogy as an orientation towards viewing children and young people in various social pedagogical settings as unique rights-holding subjects in need of participating in communities and relationships in order for them to flourish.

At the same time these responses in a way echo the securitisation and prevention strategies in European policies that point towards democracy as a bulwark against threats of extremism and radicalisation. This implies that social pedagogical practices are being placed in a tension between

a vision of supporting the subject, with the right to speaking their own mind and a vision of supporting society by helping potentially dangerous individuals to become democratic citizens.

This tension raises the following concerns for social pedagogical practice:

- The importance for social pedagogues of not losing sight of the vision of the rights-holding subject positioned in specific social contexts and conditions when working in contexts where democracy is part of a strategy of either prevention or treatment.
- The importance of encouraging a tackling of difference within social pedagogical contexts. To what degree can disagreement, differing world views, conflict and resistance be seen as participating in democratic dialogues?

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