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Special issue: *The relation of social pedagogy and social work*

Research article

## Social pedagogy and social work relations in Greece: autonomous trajectories

Iro Mylonakou-Keke,<sup>1,\*</sup> Theano Kallinikaki,<sup>2</sup> Anait Mertzaniidou<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Social Pedagogy, Department of Pedagogy and Primary Education, School of Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Social Work, Department of Social Work, Democritus University of Thrace, Greece

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer in Social Work, Department of Social Work, Democritus University of Thrace, Greece

\* Correspondence: [imylon@primedu.uoa.gr](mailto:imylon@primedu.uoa.gr)

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## Abstract

This article explores the relationship between social pedagogy and social work in Greece. The search begins with the identification of their philosophical roots, which, although they are common and start from the Ancient Greek philosophers, have led the course of each discipline in a different direction. What follows is the presentation of the most important defining elements of the development of the studies of social work and social pedagogy in Greece, which include features and historical landmarks. The different trajectories can be seen from the development of studies, where social work has a long tradition as an academic discipline, whereas the academic tradition of social pedagogy is much shorter. A similar differentiation is found in the professional frameworks of social work and social

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pedagogy in Greece, that is, in the institutionalisation of the profession of social worker and social pedagogue. Indicative data from the field of research of each discipline are then presented. Despite the differences and the autonomous trajectories, remarkable commonalities and similarities between social pedagogy and social work in Greece are identified, such as some basic principles, priorities, epistemological and methodological dimensions and some common areas of interest and action. Therefore, the autonomous trajectories of these disciplines do not separate them, but as potentially complementary, are able to make interdisciplinary connections between them, so that prevention and intervention programmes, especially in the fields of education and the community, can be developed.

**Keywords** social pedagogy; social work; social pedagogue; social worker; Greece

## Introduction

This article explores the relationship between social pedagogy and social work in Greece through the search for philosophical roots, the development of studies, professional frameworks and research activity within these two disciplines.

On the one hand, social pedagogy as an official discipline has a history in the international arena going back about two centuries (Mylonakou-Keke, 2021). Since its inception, it has been based on the belief that social conditions can be decisively influenced through education, and its main goal has been for society to improve and change the educational and social situation. It is a dynamic, problem-oriented discipline, contributing to reforming social and educational systems in Europe and the rest of the world. Social pedagogy is not limited exclusively to school life; it also encompasses informal and non-formal education, putting strong emphasis on each person's personal multifaceted development, education and their participation in the educational and cultural welfare as well as all individuals' progress, emotional and social well-being and the expansion and utilisation of their potential during their lifetime. Although social pedagogy addresses everyone, it shows particular sensitivity to those individuals and groups who experience disability and vulnerability (Buchkremer, 2009; Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009; Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2015a, 2021).

On the other hand, social work is an applied socio-humanitarian science that focuses on human action in a given social environment and its interaction with it (for example, motivations, goals and interaction processes). Its aim is to study, find ways and means to prevent, eliminate or, at least, minimise the institutional, structural and political factors that hinder the well-being of individuals and groups and, eventually, to help the smooth operation of society as a whole. The impetus for its development has been created by rapid social changes that create conditions of insecurity, alienation, abuse of power, discrimination, loss and trauma (Kaloutsi and Papaflessa, 2007).

## The philosophical roots of social pedagogy and social work

The philosophical roots of social pedagogy and social work in Greece and around the world are common and start from the Ancient Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Democritus. The values of these philosophers – such as the social role of education, the educational potential of society, the individual's virtue, prudence and well-being that derive from education, wisdom that transforms thought and emotion into action, the interactive/dialogic way of thinking, the person's value and dignity, social care and welfare, charity, the protection of the weak, the importance of education for the mentally weak, social criticism, social justice and the development of society through education – have inspired and defined the course of social pedagogy and social work to date (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2021).

Moreover, the roots of social work can be found in Humanism, concerning the ultimate goal of the unlimited development of human potential and respect for dignity and personality (Lalande, 1962, p. 958). Within the limited context of this work, it is not possible for us to present this issue in much detail. Nevertheless, we will refer to some indicative examples.

An illustrative example of Ancient Greek culture is the *theorika*, which could be characterised as a 'precursor' of social-pedagogical action because the Athenian democracy provided all citizens the opportunity to participate, without exception, in social, educational and cultural events (Mylonakou-Keke, 2015a). More specifically in ancient Athens, the state itself offered money from the public treasury to the needy Athenian citizens so they could pay for their entrance to the theatre and ensure their participation in major festivals and, generally, in public spectacles and events of the city.

In recent years, when the modern Greek state was founded in the nineteenth century, after the Greek War of Independence,<sup>1</sup> there were examples of early organised social-pedagogical actions that had been influenced by philosophers (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2021), such as Johann Amos Comenius (who advocates equal access to education for poor children and women), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (who sees the pedagogical relationship that leads the educated to the maximum development and utilisation of their potential), Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (who introduces the pedagogy of love and positive relationships) and Immanuel Kant (who discusses the 'categorical imperative' and moral autonomy).

These actions in Greece came from pedagogues (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003), who envisioned and acted with a high sense of responsibility and selfless offering in order to protect, support, care for and, most importantly, educate systematically, effectively and permanently children and young people who were educationally, financially and socially weak, family-deprived and were either in need or at risk.

Nowadays in Greece the common philosophical roots of social pedagogy and social work continue to nurture common goals, such as the obligation of society to take substantial and systematic responsibility for and action towards respect for human rights and offer assistance, support, education and opportunities to individuals and groups who are in need so they can develop and use their full potential.

In addition, social pedagogy and social work share a focus on social adaptation, socialisation, social change, emancipation and critique of social structures that cause inequality, favouring relevant interventions, especially, in structures of group coexistence (education of all levels) and living (institutions of various nature).

However, although social pedagogy and social work in Greece share several common goals, they follow different routes as academic disciplines and professions, as will be elaborated later in this article.

## Social work and social pedagogy in the Greek educational system

### The development of social work studies in Greece

Social work studies in Greece have an 85-year history to date (1937–2022), and have been known by two names: *social welfare*, initially, and *social work*, later. They emerged in the context of serious historical, political and social circumstances, targeting the preparation of 'welfare executives', who would be able to cover acute survival needs (1937–9) and provide charity and humanitarian assistance to postwar Greece (Ioakimidis, 2011; Mertzanidou, 2017).

From the very beginning, social work studies were independent, situated within three distinct periods, as shown in Table 1. The first period was in private higher schools named 'Schools of Social Welfare' (1937–73) under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare; the second was in three 'Departments of Social Work' of Higher Technological Education (1973–2018); and the third one in university departments (the first being established in 1996, and since 2019 exclusively in Departments of Social Work at four universities as a whole).

The establishment of the first schools of 'Social Welfare' served the predetermined goal of their founding bodies, a fact that formed a peculiar landscape of fragmentation, classifying population groups in need of social protection, and determined their orientation as action-/method- as well problem-/needs-oriented.

The Social Welfare School of the American College–Pierce College for Girls (1945–75) was part of the humanitarian assistance of international charities such as the United Nations Rescue and Rehabilitation Administration (UNNRA) and the Congregational Christian Service Committee (CCSC) of the American Board Mission (Mertzanidou, 2017), with the main aim to staff their services and consolidate education in social work in the country (Exarchou, 2015).

**Table 1. Construction of social work education in Greece (Source: Authors, 2022)**

<b>Studies' elaboration</b>		<b>Main aim</b>
<b>1st period: Private 'Schools of Social Welfare' in Athens under the Ministry of Social Affairs</b>		
1937–9	Free School of Social Welfare, an initiative of academics of the diaspora	Indicating the 'social face' of the newly formed dictatorship (August 1936–January 1941)
1945–75	School of Social Welfare of the American College–Pierce College for Girls	Staffing international – US charities – humanitarian provisions to postwar Greece
1948–78 1979–84	School of Social Welfare of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Renamed as: Institute of Development of Social Work (IAKE in Greek)	Staffing the newly established state institutions for orphans, and first mental health services for children and families
1956–63	School of Social Welfare of the Royal National Institution (state)	Staffing the philanthropic services of the Queen and the social services of the state nationwide hospitals
1957–84	School of Social Welfare of the Apostolic Draconian of the Church of Greece	Staffing the church institutions for elderly, poor, disabled, homeless
1960–84	School of Social Welfare of the Athens Society of the Protection of Minors	Staffing the Juvenile Bailiffs of the Courts and in the juvenile detention centres, with delinquent juveniles
<b>2nd period: Integration of the 'Schools of Social Work' in the Tertiary Technological Education (TEI) under the Ministry of Education</b>		
1973	Integration of the Schools of Social Work (now Departments) in higher technological education The establishment of the Departments of Social Work in TEI of Heraklion (Crete) and TEI of Patras (Peloponnese)	Milestone year for social work studies and the profession of the social worker Europeanisation process
1984–2018	Merging of the three social work departments into the 'Department of Social Work' – TEI of Athens Continuity of the Departments at the TEI of Crete and Patras	1981 – Socialist government: significant reforms in welfare state, health/mental health sector, elderly, etc.
<b>3rd period: University studies</b>		
1996–	At the Democritus University of Thrace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● First four-year postgraduate studies</li> <li>● First master's programme (2009–)</li> <li>● First PhD programme (2002–)</li> <li>● First inter-university MSc (2009–)</li> <li>● First postdoctoral programme (2015–)</li> </ul>	Second milestone year for social work studies and the profession of the social worker
2019	Complete integration of Technological Education Departments into university education Social Work Department at the University of West Attica (Athens) Social Work Department at the Hellenic Mediterranean University (Crete) Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work at the University of Patras	Social work studies universal upgrade  Since 2020, all departments have been running autonomous and inter-university/interdepartmental MA, MSc and PhD, postdoctoral studies, and developed research institutes and laboratories

Along with it, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA, Xristianiki Enosis Neanidon/XEN in Greek) founded the School of Social Welfare of YWCA (1948–84) in a two-way connection with the rural areas of the country from which the majority of female students came, targeting the provision of staff for

its own services for women and children, as well as the 'Child's Homes' of Royal Welfare there until 1964 (Kaloutsis, 2015).

Similarly, the School of Social Welfare of the Royal National Institution (RNI, BEI in Greek; 1954–63) admitted men and women graduates of university schools and, by way of derogation, graduates of the Pedagogical Academy, aiming to prepare front-line social workers who were able to staff state welfare services and teach in the school itself, as well as at other schools (Mertzaniidou, 2017).

The School of Social Welfare of the Apostolic Diakonia of the Church of Greece (1957–63) introduced the model of the ecclesiastical social ministry of Germany, aiming to staff the social services and institutions of the metropolises, parishes and monasteries.

Meanwhile, the School of Social Welfare, founded by the Athens Society for the Protection of Minors (1960–84), attracted students with an interest in working, as Juvenile Bailiffs of the Courts.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned *fragmentation* was reflected in the deficit, mainly allowance, which was based on the 'family welfare' social policy of the country (Petmesidou, 2006).

### ***The integration into IASSW and the adoption of global standards for social work education***

The early adoption of the syllabus that prevailed in the United States initially, and later in Europe, yielded the recognition of the first three schools in 1959 as members of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (Kallinikaki, 2011). This fact strengthened the independence of the subject of the social work studies, and established its coexistence with international trends, the adoption of Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work profession and their updates, and, most recently, that of 2019 (IASSW and IFSW, 2019).

Since their very beginning, social work studies programmes have had an interdisciplinary structure, with courses in philosophy, sociology, law, economics, human development, criminology, psychology and psychiatry, which have been maintained in the core of general knowledge. Social policy and cultural issues, power relations and dynamics, social work perspectives, theories, methods, techniques and ethics of practice and evaluation comprise specialised knowledge without ever having included social pedagogy.

This might have been determined by the origins of social work studies programmes, since they were customised according to the educational and vocational model developed in the United States, where interventions to protect and educate orphans, the poor and those with deviant behaviour were actions of social welfare, and were assigned to general and school social workers.

It was in the early 1990s that Professor Andreas Zografou (1992), who had studied social work and social pedagogy successively at the University of Frankfurt, introduced the interconnectedness of the two subjects in his courses on social work with community at the Department of Social Work of the Technological Education Institute of Patras, and in his book, *Social Work with Community*.

As for teaching methods, the experiential method prevailed both in the classrooms and in the fields of the supervised placement (200 days undertaken in the third and final year of studies), which has been mandatory ever since.

However, the strong intersection of the social work studies with the profession within the context of the social policy is obvious over time. A part of the curricula at bachelor's and master's levels remains fluid, open to modification when new social needs or crises appear, and part of the mission to enhance students' knowledge and ability to manage informed consent and ethical interventions in specific emergency settings. Thus, the socio-economic crisis (2010), the refugee influx (2015), and the Covid-19 pandemic (2020) and their aftermaths caused the introduction of new courses and expansion of relevant ones, as well as the broadening of the placement in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and in new community social services (Kallinikaki, 2019).

### ***Gender dimension***

Women have played a dominant role in both social work education and the profession, with pioneers from the middle and upper classes and the affirmation of the mainstream notion that care is a female occupation, arguing against male academics of hegemonic sciences (such as the sciences and natural sciences) who refused to include the applied science of social work in the university community (Mertzaniidou, 2017). As in many other countries, middle- and upper-class women occupied themselves in the field of charity, where the roots of social work are located. Social work was introduced by the

charitable work of Queen Olga, who concerned herself with, inter alia, the education of women in need and the establishment of nursing education. 'Ladies of good society', supported by important powerful female personalities of the time, systematically cultivated the need for vocational training of charitable women in social welfare. A class dimension among the student body was inevitable; only young girls of 'good' Athenian society could choose to study in English at the American College School and afford the cost of the continuing postgraduate studies in the United States. Similarly, wealthy philanthropic women supported the founding of the School of Social Welfare of YWCA through donations for buildings for the school and student residence (Mertzanidou, 2017).

### ***The integration into higher technological education (1973)***

In the 1980s, when the university education was developing in the country, social work studies were transferred to higher technological education, despite the strong objections of the schools and the Association of Social Workers. Transferring social work studies to higher technological education gave them a technical character, strengthened the professional instead of the scientific dimension and kept them out of Greek academia, thus depriving them of research and postgraduate education, which was affiliated to those who held a university degree. At the time, social workers who were interested in continuing their studies in Greece resorted to a second degree, most often in sociology or pedagogy, or a postgraduate programme abroad, predominantly in the UK (Papadaki and Papadaki, 2005; Kallinikaki, 2015b).

### ***University undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies in Greece***

The social work studies were introduced to a Greek university in 1996 as a division of social work combined with another division in social policy at the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) under the name the 'Department of Social Administration', in which a doctoral programme in social work has been operating since 2002, postgraduate studies (MSc) have been running since 2009 and a postdoctoral programme has been operating since 2015.

The reform of the tertiary education system in 2018 brought multiple favourable benefits. Since the academic year 2019–20, following the complete abolition of technological education and its reconstruction at the university level, the three departments of social work of the former technological educational institution were transferred to the University of West Attica in Athens, the Hellenic Mediterranean University on Crete and to the University of Patras. Meanwhile social work studies at the DUTH became autonomous as the 'Department of Social Work'.

The first postgraduate degree was 'Social work with children and families' (2009–13), then 'School social work' (2013–20). Since 2020, it has been specialising in 'Social work in education–inclusion of diversities'.

Two other postgraduate studies programmes in 'social work' with two orientations: 'Clinical social work with children, adolescents and families' and 'Community social work' (2014); and in 'Cross-method social interventions in crisis situations' (2018) operated in the Departments of Social Work in the former Technological Educational Institution of Athens, which has since become the University of West Attica, and of the former Technological Educational Institution of Crete, now the Hellenic Mediterranean University.

The Department of Social Work at DUTH is the co-founder of an inter-university master's in 'Counseling' in cooperation with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA, EKPA in Greek) and University of Crete (2009–), in 'Administration of Health and Social Protection Services' in cooperation with the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki (2020–), and one other joint master's programme: 'Teaching of Sciences and Modern Technologies' with the International University of Greece (2020–).

### **The studies of social pedagogy in Greece**

In Greece, social pedagogy, as an academic discipline, does not share the long tradition of social work. More specifically, the studies in social pedagogy in Greece have developed as follows.

### **Undergraduate studies programmes in social pedagogy in Greece**

Unfortunately, there is still no autonomous department or school of social pedagogy. As an academic module, social pedagogy is connected with the studies of primary education and teachers throughout the country. It has been taught mainly in pedagogical departments of primary or preschool education at various Greek universities, which are of four years of study and which have as graduates primary school teachers or kindergarten teachers, respectively. In these departments, social pedagogy has been taught as a compulsory subject since 1984.<sup>2</sup>

The module seeks to make students (future teachers) know experientially as well as to understand and implement theoretical, epistemological, methodological dimensions and practices of the versatile interdisciplinary field of social pedagogy in schools, so that the quality of education and quality of life of the school and that of the wider community can be enhanced.

The social pedagogy module, utilising the unity of theory and practice, is implemented through experiential and innovative learning strategies, emphasises the effective management of current cutting-edge issues of social pedagogy and strengthens the multiple social-pedagogical role of the teacher and the school. More specifically, for the student to successfully complete the module of social pedagogy, apart from participating in interactive lectures, they must participate in compulsory experiential workshops as well as in mandatory practicums (which are done in schools and in social-pedagogical institutions).

Moreover, social pedagogy is partially taught in departments whose graduates will be teaching in secondary education. An example is the Pedagogical Department of the Faculty of Philosophy and Pedagogy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, whose modules such as 'Critical Pedagogy' and 'Pedagogy of Peace' are taught, and an out-of-school additional voluntary practicum is also in operation, during which students are involved in social-pedagogical projects in the community.

### **Postgraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies programmes in social pedagogy in Greece**

Before 2015, there was no master's programme in Greece which was directly related to social pedagogy. However, there were graduate programmes that featured a subject related to social pedagogy. An example is a two-year master's programme, 'Social Education and Animation', which operated between 2003 and 2010 with the collaboration of the Department of Education Sciences in Pre-school Age of DUTH, the Department of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology of the NKUA and the Department of Education of the University of the Aegean and funded by the European Union.

Since 2015, there has been a two-year MSc programme at NKUA specialising in social pedagogy, which awards the title of social pedagogue. More specifically, the NKUA offers the MSc entitled: 'Social Neuroscience, Social Pedagogy, and Education', which has been utilising strong interdisciplinary interconnections between social pedagogy and social neuroscience<sup>3</sup> in order to strengthen the role and effectiveness of the former.

In 2019, this two-year MSc programme was re-established as interdepartmental, formalising the cooperation of the Pedagogical Department of Primary Education, the School of Medicine and the Department of Biology of the NKUA.

This programme provides high-level postgraduate education to its students in the multifaceted and interdisciplinary social pedagogy; this is done via the study and utilisation of interdisciplinary research results from the field of social neuroscience. It aims that its graduates, as social pedagogues (according to international standards<sup>4</sup>) – utilising such important scientific data from social neuroscience (which has experienced explosive growth in recent years) – will be able to design, organise and develop programmes and interventions in social pedagogy in the fields of formal, non-formal and informal education, across the lifespan of human beings, so that they can effectively meet the multifactorial, complex requirements and needs of education and social systems, which arise from the constant changes in modern society.

More specifically, this two-year interdepartmental MSc programme focuses, on the one hand, on developing the social-pedagogical skills of future social pedagogues, especially on issues that concern the school community, education and society itself. Some of these skills focus on how to expand and strengthen cognitive, emotional and social skills as well as how to activate creativity and groundbreaking thinking of people regardless of age. Furthermore, they learn how to value and respect each individual's individuality and uniqueness; how to nurture effective school, family and community communication;

how to practise democratic education and human rights education, avoiding prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination, marginalisation, social exclusion (of children and adults); how to deal with school bullying and any form of anti-social behaviour; how to interact with and teach disabled people with learning, educational and social difficulties; how to address the lack of intercultural communication; how to provide opportunities to vulnerable individuals and groups; how to motivate children to find their motivations and goals; and how to fight against 'digital illiteracy', internet addiction and so on.

On the other hand, the students of this MSc programme participate in a large number of practicums (of 500 hours) and experiential workshops in different fields of application of social pedagogy, as well as attending seminars on various topics. One of these seminars is offered by a professor of social work and focuses on common issues of interest between social work and social pedagogy.

At this point, it should be noted that the postgraduates of the MSc in Social Pedagogy acquire the speciality of social pedagogue (according to international standards), in terms of academic rights, but their professional rights have yet to be institutionalised, as discussed in the section 'The professional framework of the social pedagogue' below.

The strong interdisciplinarity of social pedagogy and social neuroscience enriches and strengthens the social-pedagogical work in any type of education and enables it to respond to the multidimensionality and diversity of educational, pedagogical, emotional, communicative and other modern needs.

Furthermore, this MSc provides its graduates with pedagogical and teaching competence. It has so far been favourably evaluated, is in great demand and its students have been producing remarkable research and published work. Its participants (a large percentage of whom have another master's degree, while some have a PhD) have various scientific and professional backgrounds; some are teachers or social workers, while some are from psychology or biology backgrounds.

As mentioned earlier, there are master's programmes at various universities of the country, which are related to certain areas examined by social pedagogy, such as issues of human rights education, intercultural education and integration, vulnerable or disadvantaged social groups, diversity and education, and so on.

In Greece, at present, there are no other MSc programmes with the specific subject of social pedagogy. This is despite the fact that social pedagogy, as a module, is taught in several master's programmes with orientations such as education sciences, administration of educational units, school counseling and guidance and so on, and while issues such as human rights education, intercultural education and integration, vulnerable social groups, diversity and education are examined, there is no MSc in social pedagogy on offer. It is only NKUA that offers an MSc programme in social pedagogy.

At a postgraduate level, there are also doctoral and postdoctoral studies programmes in social pedagogy at the NKUA, as well as at other universities in the country. What is significant is that doctoral and postdoctoral studies programmes in social pedagogy in Greece preceded the master's programme in social pedagogy.

### ***Other levels of education (primary and secondary education)***

Social pedagogy is made known through social-pedagogical projects implemented in schools, and these projects are usually developed in collaboration with universities and various institutions (lasting from one semester to three years) with different subjects. These projects<sup>5</sup> are primarily preventive in nature and sometimes interventionist; they apply social-pedagogical approaches to various issues, emphasising those issues that arise in the classroom, the school and, more generally, in the community. This includes bullying and violence in school, anti-social behaviour in the community, vulnerable social groups dealing with otherness, prejudices, stereotypes, strengthening emotional, communicational and social skills, and cooperation between the school, family and community. What is significant is that in these projects is that participants are not only those who are directly involved but also those who are indirectly involved in the school and the wider community; and they get involved collaboratively and creatively. More specifically, the stakeholders are students, parents, other family members and students' 'significant others', teachers, school principals, non-teaching school staff, people from the local community and individuals responsible for educational policy and scientists.



## The professional frameworks of social work and social pedagogy in Greece

### The professional framework of the social worker

The social work profession was instituted in 1937, and since then the completion of social work studies has led graduates to become licensed social workers, who can practise their profession as a distinct one (Law 4018/11/11/1959).

In 1955, the establishment of the Association of Social Workers of Greece (SKLE, in Greek) was intended to contribute to establishing the profession and the development of social work studies by supporting the request for their inclusion in tertiary education. At the present time it has 5,500 members.

Social work has been introduced as a front-line profession and has been evolving in all the main areas of social protection and prevention. Its establishment in the field of child protection was a consequence of the first social workers' contribution to founding organisations such as the MThera Care Centre for Infants (1953), which was the first to introduce the protection of unprotected (unmarried) pregnant women and formalised the procedures of adoption, even transnationally. In 1954, social workers were hired as juvenile caretakers; staffed the first mental health centres for children and the social services of Greece's state (1956), the Institute of Child Health (1965), the special education units nationwide (1981) and innovative social services in municipalities, regions (such as Home Assistance, Creative Child Learning Centres [KDAP, in Greek]) and services that operated within the context of Europeanisation for vulnerable groups (for example, units dealing domestic violence, detox, therapeutic communities, social support and training centres for people with disabilities [KEKYKAMEA, in Greek]). There have also been social workers who staffed counselling services for students in higher education, in lifelong learning programmes for adults and in second-chance schools.

Since early 1980s, social workers have been at the forefront of psychiatric and penitentiary reform, staffing of mental health centres and semi-autonomous living units, detention centres for offenders, and since 2015 staffing of protection and education programmes (formal and informal) for asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors.

In most of the aforementioned fields, the position of the social worker has been established as a member of interdisciplinary teams consisting of a large number of professionals, which, however, do not include social pedagogues (due to the fact that social pedagogue has yet to be institutionalised as a separate profession: see below), even in the case of practising school social work in mainstream, multicultural, minority or special schools of all different levels that is conducted in a purely pedagogical environment.

### The professional framework of the social pedagogue

The role of social pedagogue has not been institutionalised as a separate profession in Greece until today. As mentioned above, the graduates of the interdepartmental MSc programme Social Neuroscience, Social Pedagogy, and Education acquire institutionally the speciality of social pedagogue (according to the international standards of continental Europe) as far as their academic rights/credentials are concerned, but so far, their professional rights have yet to be institutionalised.

The weakness may come from the fact that the two-year MSc in social pedagogy in Greece has only been in operation for the last six years. It is also due to the lack of an autonomous department of social pedagogy at an undergraduate level, as it is the case in most European countries, where professional social pedagogues usually have a degree (from undergraduate courses lasting three or four years) or have graduated from a specialised two-year master's programme (in both cases, it is in combination with continuing professional training in the field of social pedagogy, Moss and Petrie, 2019).

Nevertheless, significant social-pedagogical work (with noteworthy results in the field of action) is carried out by teachers or other professionals who had been taught social pedagogy in their curriculum (and have done practicums). The gap that is generated by this non-institutionalisation of the social pedagogue as a separate profession in Greece gives the opportunity for social workers to work in schools (school social work) and have to deal – among other issues – with social-pedagogical problems, too. However, the role of the social pedagogue and the social worker in schools could have been complementary.

Some very small steps towards the recognition of the importance of social-pedagogical work by the Greek State seem to have been taken with the recent institutionalisation of the position of 'school life counsellor' for secondary schools in Greece,<sup>6</sup> which are occupied exclusively by permanent teachers. The relevant legislative text, however, essentially describes the work of the social pedagogue.

Indicatively, we should mention that a MSc or a PhD in social pedagogy, in pedagogy or in the sciences of education is required as a qualification for the appointment. Moreover, in defining the role of the counsellor and their duties and responsibilities, the legal document constantly mentions the counsellor's good knowledge of and experience in the theory and practical application of social pedagogy issues. For example, it is stated that the school life counsellor must address issues: 'Through organized social and pedagogical approaches', they must be able to address and combat many 'social and pedagogical problems' that arise in the classroom, in school life and in the wider community and influence students' lives. They will be able to support 'through social-pedagogical projects, methods and practices', the creative interconnection of school, family and community and their cooperation as well as to support students through preventive but also counseling 'social-pedagogical actions', so that students can acquire self-confidence and self-esteem to participate actively and effectively in school life (Hellenic Government Gazette Issue FEK/3790/14.10.2019/B; Mylonakou-Keke, 2021).

## Social work and social pedagogy research in Greece

### Social work research in Greece

During the first period of the development of social work in Greece, research focused on its main fields of application. The establishment of the Social Work Training Council in 1956 created a strong core of training by sector of social work, published conference proceedings and basic books and, in 1963, it published the journal entitled *Selection of Social Welfare Issues* (1963–95). It was the first Greek-language journal for social work and one of the first in Greece in the fields of social welfare, social policy and the social sciences in general. The first articles were focused on practice in the fields of child protection, disability, health and mental health working methods and on international developments in the profession. Since 1986, the publication of social work practice research and developments has been supported by the Hellenic Association of Social Workers, through its own today digital journal, *Social Work* (which publishes four volumes per year).

The first doctoral dissertation on social work at a Greek university, entitled 'A contribution to the understanding of adoption problems: Identity disorder in adoption' (Kaloutsis, 1970), was followed by the publication of books and conference proceedings on family and child issues, the impact of growing up in institutions, forms of abuse and incest, social planning, foster care, adoption and community work.

The fact that social work studies was delayed in entering in university education had a deterrent effect on the development of research, especially until the early 1980s. Since then, social work academics and PhD candidates conduct transnational, inter-university research projects, funded by the European Social Fund, and participate in transnational mobility projects and ERASMUS exchange programmes. In 1998, social work acquired a series in a publishing house, which publishes not only textbooks of theory and practice but also research on social work and translations of most widely read books (Kallinikaki and Petmesidou, 2016; Kallinikaki and Zaimakis, 2004).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, research on social work has been constantly enriched by the research being conducted within the doctoral programme at DUTH, covering a range of topics related to models of intervention and evidence-based practice. These have included crisis situations, use of art and drama, specialisations such as clinical, school and community social work, and areas of intervention, such as addiction, migration, minorities, domestic violence, child protection and old age. At the time of writing this article, 16 social workers have received their PhD in social work and there are 26 candidates at the DUTH.

Contemporary social work research follows not only the flow of critical social policy rearrangements but also developments in social policy that concern its applications; for example, decentralisation and community development (Karagkounis, 2009), the development of social work counselling (Kandylaki, 2008), the deepening of poverty and the effects of economic crisis and austerity measures (Kallinikaki, 2015a; Karagkounis, 2017; Kokaliari, 2018; Pentaraki, 2016), the applications of social work with refugees (Buchanan and Kallinikaki, 2018; Kandylaki and Nagopoulos, 2021; Katsama and Bakirtzi, 2020), and during the COVID-19 pandemic (Barn, Di Rosa and Kallinikaki, 2021; Teloni, 2020).

In terms of methods, qualitative participatory research dominates, focusing on participants' voices and using biographies and audiovisual methods (photo-voice, vignettes).

## Research examples of social pedagogy in Greece

A fundamental goal of social pedagogy is the development of scientific theories, methodology, strategic research models and projects, through a holistic, interdisciplinary approach.

Research in social pedagogy in Greece has a wide range of research orientations and applications. We mention, indicatively and briefly, some of the social-pedagogical research projects and researches that have been carried out in the country.

### Regarding the object/purpose of the research programmes and projects

- The creative and functional connection of the school, the family and the community,<sup>7</sup> to solve problems, through syneducation activities of students and adults, utilising the Transdisciplinary Programme SYNTHESIS (Kekes and Mylonakou, 2006).
- Social-pedagogical tackling of diversity through teaching approaches in primary schools (Mylonakou-Keke, 2009).
- Enhancing pupils' emotional, communication and social skills through social-pedagogical practices (Mylonakou-Keke, 2012).
- Values of education and social pedagogy in school to prevent phenomena of corruption (Kyridis, Christodoulou, Vamvakidou and Pavlis-Korres, 2015).
- Social-pedagogical tackling of extreme anti-social behaviours in the Multicultural School of Athens (Kalagiakos, 2015).
- The operation of the all-day school in Greece during the crisis period (Thoidis and Chaniotakis, 2015).
- The prevention of bullying in schools, through the positive perception of the participating children and adults about diversity, and by strengthening the social-pedagogical culture of the school community (Mylonakou-Keke, 2013, 2015b).
- Systematic social-pedagogical volunteerism to effectively support hospitalised children (Kontogiannis, 2015).
- A human rights education programme for vulnerable refugee groups. The implementation of the Spim4Rest social-pedagogical intervention model with students and future teachers represented an intervention that aims to support and educate unaccompanied refugee children and families (with school-age children) (Mylonakou-Keke, 2018).
- The contribution of social pedagogy and religious education to the management of modern-day conditions of population movement, the refugee crisis and multiculturalism (postdoctoral research, Koukounaras-Liagkis, 2020).

Research in social pedagogy is constantly expanding, and a significant number of research projects are being conducted within the framework of the postgraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies programmes, mainly at the NKUA.

### Regarding the methodology of research projects

Almost all social-pedagogical research projects utilised the methodology of qualitative research (mainly action research, case studies, theatre in education). Some utilised Systems Science, the Human Activity System Methodology or Learning Organization, or they combined Knowledge Management, Collaborative Action Research and the Syneducation (Synergy + education) model.

It is noteworthy that social-pedagogical epistemological models (Kekes and Mylonakou, 2006; Mylonakou-Keke, 2015c, 2018) were generated from the conduct of some social-pedagogical research programmes in Greece.

This is what these research programmes and projects have demonstrated so far:

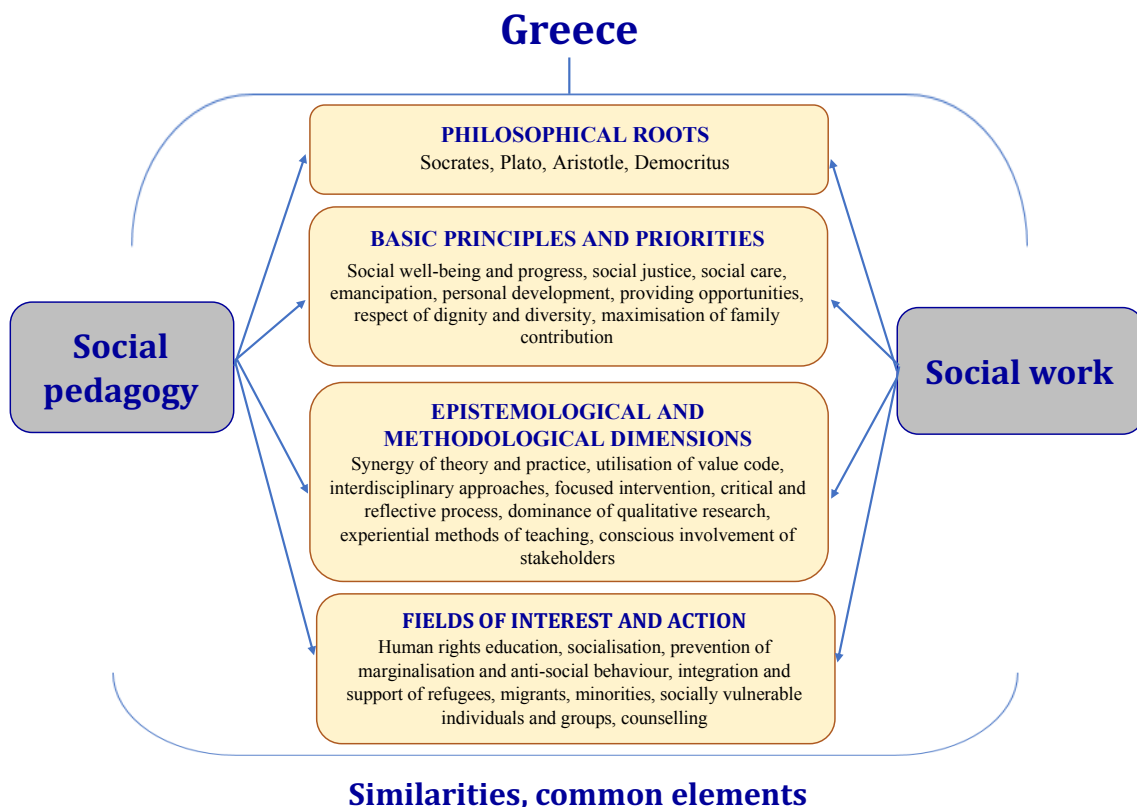
- It is possible for social-pedagogical approaches that have been researched to succeed in establishing, consolidating, enhancing and utilising a 'social-pedagogical ethos',<sup>8</sup> which may eventually lead to a systemic transformation of the culture (ethos, values, vision, collaborative action)

- of the school, the family, the wider school environment of the community or the team, where the project is implemented.
- It is feasible for the vision of social pedagogy to be fulfilled. This vision is about educating individuals and groups without any elements of discrimination or exclusion; enabling them to take meaningful individual as well as collective responsibilities and actions. In that way, they could constantly seek to hone their skills to the maximum degree, leading to lives filled with independence, strong values, a sense of duty, worthiness and strong interpersonal relationships. They would show support and solidarity to others, and at the same time they would strive to achieve fruitful cooperation, social progress and prosperity; and they would do their utmost to change and improve existing conditions through substantial and methodologically sound social pedagogical action.

## Social pedagogy and social work in Greece: do they have any common elements?

Social pedagogy and social work in Greece seem to have followed autonomous trajectories. From the aforementioned data, more differences than similarities emerge. Figure 1 attempts to highlight briefly the commonalities between the two disciplines.

Figure 1. Similarities and common elements of social pedagogy and social work in Greece (Source: Mylonakou-Keke, 2021, p. 314)



Over time, the number of studies (the present article among them) that support the clear distinction between social pedagogy and social work has increased.

However, Figure 1 illustrates the similarities and the commonalities between the two disciplines, which are: (a) born from philosophical roots; (b) inspired and driven by basic and fundamental principles and priorities; (c) reinforced by epistemological and methodological dimensions; and (d) utilised in certain important fields of interest and action.

These similarities and commonalities facilitate interdisciplinary connections between social pedagogy and social work and enable each to respond more effectively to contemporary, demanding and changing social conditions and needs.

## Concluding remarks

There is a great and long-standing debate about the relationship between Social Pedagogy and Social Work in many countries around the world. (Mylonakou-Keke, 2015a, pp. 18–19)

As discussed in the previous section, the two disciplines started from a common point, that is, the institutionalisation of the obligation of society as a whole to be active in providing assistance to the poor and the socially vulnerable. Since then, the two disciplines seem to have taken different courses<sup>9</sup> and, over time, they have become increasingly distinct and divergent.

This is in line with recent studies asserting the clear distinction between social pedagogy and social work. It is argued that viewing social pedagogy as closely linked to social work, and in some way influenced by or subordinate to it, may hinder the development of social pedagogy as an independent discipline with a distinct philosophy, content, priorities, potential and practices (Hämäläinen, 2003).

The phrase underlying all the major work edited by Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen (2011, p. 3) is: 'we understand Social Pedagogy as being necessarily different from Social Work'. Arguing in favour of this view, Peter Lüssi states that the question of whether or not there is a difference between social pedagogy and social work is, in fact, confined within a purely academic debate. Practitioners, states Lüssi (2008), know very well that there is a real difference. In fact, he argues that there is a need to focus our attention on the centre – on the general philosophy that underlies and guides these two disciplines – and not on the periphery, that is, on the details of the practice and the actions of people or organisations that implement this philosophy.

On the one hand, social pedagogy deals with the whole life of people (all, with special emphasis on those who experience any disadvantage and vulnerability), on the other it seeks, mainly through education, to influence them, so that they can evolve personally and socially, thus constantly expanding and utilising their cognitive, emotional, collaborative and social skills at an individual and collective level. The social pedagogue's role is linked to education when it comes to children and young people and to lifelong learning with regards to adults (Eichsteller and Holthoff, 2011; Lüssi, 2008; Mylonakou-Keke, 2015a, 2021; Petrie, 2011).

In Greece, social pedagogy (which has a history of nearly two centuries internationally) has broadened its theoretical, epistemological, methodological (including the creation of its own models) and practical dimensions. This has been achieved mainly through developing several research programmes and projects aimed at addressing or preventing different social pedagogical problems spanning various parts of education and society (Mylonakou-Keke, 2013, 2015c). To date, as an academic discipline, social pedagogy: (a) at the undergraduate level, is part of the education of teachers and kindergarten teachers, without, however, the availability of an autonomous degree of social pedagogue to be awarded; and (b) at the postgraduate level, either through a two-year master's programme, or through doctoral and postdoctoral studies, it offers its graduates the speciality of social pedagogue, in terms of academic rights, according to international standards (SPPA).

Social work, in contrast, has been established in Greece as an autonomous applied social-humanities discipline, with independent bachelor, MSc, PhD and postdoctoral studies followed by the relevant global standards (IASSW and IFSW, 2019). It has a broad theoretical and evidence-based research methodology and early, short-term and long-term intervention to prevent, treat and rehabilitate any form of trauma, crisis or vulnerability. The development of the social worker as a 'human rights profession' (Ife, 2012) has had a special effect, and it is intended to support and mediate for those who suffer from the effects of social inequalities, poverty, discrimination, economic and other crises and failures of implemented health, education, social protection and justice policies.

This article has shown that in Greece social pedagogy and social work are clearly differentiated, having created *autonomous trajectories*. This differentiation is clear-cut and may initially be indicated by the distinction that exists between the words 'pedagogy' and 'work', in both their conceptual and semiotic content (Mylonakou-Keke, 2015a, 2021). This distinction is also evident in their orientations, in certain goals and priorities, their epistemological identity, their methodological approaches to time, field,

the way they intervene and their potential. This distinction is reflected in different university programmes and the professional opportunities offered by each discipline.

However, we should note that *autonomous trajectories do not signify isolation* from each other. We have seen in Figure 1 that in Greece social pedagogy and social work have some remarkable commonalities, such as their philosophical roots, some basic principles, priorities, epistemological and methodological dimensions and some common fields of interest and action.

Social pedagogy in Greece is related to the pedagogy and education of children and adults, throughout their lives in environments of formal, non-formal and informal education which are meeting points and coexistence with certain applications of the specialisation of school social work.

Given that both disciplines seek to solve problems and improve conditions, we believe that it is possible for social pedagogy and social work to complement each other, utilising the potential of an interdisciplinary connection, so that prevention and intervention projects in various fields can be developed.

Given the current unfavourable conditions – mainly due to many and varied effects of the pandemic, which Greece is experiencing – the development of such an interdisciplinary collaboration is even more crucial than ever.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire began in 1821. The Greeks were subjugated by the Ottoman Turks for almost 400 years (from the Fall of Constantinople [1453] until the Greek War of Independence broke out [1821]).

<sup>2</sup>In Greece, teachers' education until 1984 and that of kindergarten teachers until 1987 were provided in the pedagogical academies and the kindergarten schools, respectively, which were higher schools of two years of study; 1984 and 1987 were milestone years for the studies of teachers and kindergarten teachers, respectively. At the time, the pedagogical departments of primary or preschool education were institutionalised as university departments, which have been four-year studies ever since.

<sup>3</sup>Social neuroscience is an interdisciplinary academic field focusing on studying and understanding the ways in which biological systems express behaviours, emotions, perceptions, relationships, interactions, and develop social processes and structures, as well as the ways in which these systems, perceptions, relationships, interactions, social processes and structures affect the brain (neuroplasticity of the 'social brain'), in the nervous system and in biological mechanisms in general. Social neuroscience aims to bridge the gap between different levels of interpretation of social behaviour (Decety and Cacioppo, 2011; Ward, 2016).

<sup>4</sup>Social Pedagogy Professional Association (SPPA: [www.sppa-uk.org](http://www.sppa-uk.org); Mylonakou-Keke, 2021).

<sup>5</sup>Other than these, there is a large number of NGOs in Greece, doing significant and multifaceted social-pedagogical work (for example, Hadi, 2018; Yannopoulos, Alevizos and Kavallieraki, 2015).

<sup>6</sup>One other step was the establishment of the MSc in Social Pedagogy. In Greece, the establishment of undergraduate and postgraduate university departments requires final approval by the Ministry of Education.

<sup>7</sup>Nowadays, family and community school communication is an integrated scientific field, directly related to social pedagogy, and has redefined the role and work of the modern school and teacher, creating and strengthening a social-pedagogical culture (Buchkremer, 2009; Mylonakou-Keke, 2019). This relationship between the family and community school communication and social pedagogy was recognised many years ago (Bäumer, 1981; Buchkremer, 2009; Kanavakis, 2002).

<sup>8</sup>The social-pedagogical ethos through inspiring values and actions teaches people to continue to envision, strive, become aware of, activate and constantly enrich the possibilities and skills they have, individually and collectively, to trust each other, to cooperate, to strive for the enhancement and change of the difficult situations they encounter (Mylonakou-Keke, 2015a, 2015b, 2021).

<sup>9</sup>On this issue there is a very important study by Mühlum (1981), which is a self-published work that gathers in detail, through a systematic literature review of German literature, views on the interrelation between social pedagogy and social work until early 1980. Mühlum studies the general views on the association or otherwise of the two disciplines that dominated international literature up to that moment, especially in terms of the conceptual content of the two terms. Based on this rationale, he records the mainstream opinions on the relationship between social pedagogy and social work (Kanavakis, 2002). At

the one end of the spectrum, these views claim that the two disciplines are identical and, at the other, there is the perspective that social pedagogy and social work are two distinct disciplines. Between these two extremes, there are: the view of belonging to each other (as the case may be); the view of substitution; the view of alternation; the view of convergence; and the view of joint integration into a wider scientific field.

## Declarations and conflicts of interest

### Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

### Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

### Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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