

MONOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS IN SOCIAL PEDAGOGY

The objective of Social Pedagogy is very broad, addressing socio-educational actions with individuals, groups and communities with very different ages, characteristics and needs, and with different purposes. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that it is difficult to establish borders within this scientific discipline and its pedagogical praxis (Caride, 2018, 13-16). Although the origins of the discipline are located in the 18th century (Serrano, 2002), Social Pedagogy has had an uneven development in the world (Hämäläinen and Úcar, 2016). Nevertheless, in recent decades it has acquired greater visibility and prestige, becoming an interdisciplinary matrix that integrates a variety of different approaches, disciplines, methodologies, and techniques (Úcar, 2018b) and with which many researchers, academics and professionals can identify with.

In practice, professionals of Social Pedagogy are experts in planning projects aimed at improving the development and well-being of the community and its members. They always take into consideration the characteristics of the people with whom they intervene with, and negotiate with them which techniques, procedures and actions are to be developed within the framework of the socio-educational relationship. As social pedagogy professionals, they also look for sources of finance for areas that are underfunded in public budgets and solve the constant difficulties and unforeseen events that occur within the framework

of any socio-educational intervention. This diversity of necessary tasks in the contexts in which they intervene may cause them to not pay enough attention to the choice of the socio-educational evaluation instruments necessary to start any intervention process. Furthermore, as Planella and Jiménez-Jiménez (2018) pointed out, they may not consider the validity of diagnostic reports made by other specialists or they might develop and apply evaluation instruments without the guarantee of their reliability; and that, in short, they could pay little attention to their research competence.

We agree with Úcar (2018a) that when Social Pedagogy professionals act with an individual, group or community, they should do so based on grounded knowledge, and this knowledge can be acquired through a systematic evaluation. Therefore, it is essential to enhance the research competences of these professionals and move forward into an evaluative culture that allows them to apply not only intervention methods and techniques, but also research. This double profile (acting as a practitioner-researcher) would allow Social Pedagogy professionals to apply validated instruments and undertake evaluation and research processes in order to generate evidence that contributes to critical reflection in and from practice. It would also aid the decision-making process aimed at improving the development and quality of life of the people with whom they intervene. This research practice carried out by Social

Pedagogy professionals is essential to understanding, transforming and developing in conjunction with individuals and communities a complex and changing reality. In the field of Social Pedagogy, there are few free and reliable psychoeducational evaluation instruments, which can lead to interventions being based on intuition or individual experience, and in some cases, opting for the application of unreliable instruments of doubtful validity. This may imply that not only are some socio-educational interventions not well founded, but that it may lead to some programs having not been verified through scientific evidence, which are applied on a recurring basis without knowing their real impact. When the economic resources available for social intervention are limited in such a way and the needs are so relevant, it is necessary to evaluate in order to establish which programs can be more effective, and in which areas the intervention can most effectively lead to the desired objectives. This is difficult to achieve without the necessary psychoeducational and evaluation instruments. On top of this, the lack of instruments can hinder progress in research, and may affect their professional authority to be seen as a producer of knowledge from practice (Planellas and Jiménez-Jiménez, 2018).

Research is a key process to generate pedagogical knowledge and to base the socio-educational practice on evidence. In a study carried out within the framework of the IARS research group (Sala-Roca, et al. 2009), it was found that for young people in care, the skills of emotional regulation, the ability to accept rules, to persevere, to negotiate and to be assertive and autonomous were of more influence to socio-labor insertion, than academic training. This data pointed out the need to promote, from a residential care context, the socio-emotional and employability competences of youth in care in order for them to have a more autonomous and satisfactory transition into adulthood. In fact, later studies found that many young people in care may have lower socio-emotional skills than young people who were not in care (Oriol et al., 2014, Zárata & Sala, 2019), and this could lead to difficulties in establishing the necessary functional support networks (Sala-Roca et al., 2012).

Integrating this identified need in educational practice would facilitate the work of social educators; who could better guide their socio-educational intervention with young people in care and help them in the development of their socio-emotional and employability competences from an early age (Arnau-Sabatés et al., 2014). However, when professionals were asked about how these competences were carried out in residential

centers, many raised the issue of a lack of tools to develop psychoeducational evaluations that would help facilitate the design of effective interventions (Marzo-Arpon, et al. 2016). This is why the IARS research group designed two copyright instruments aimed at aiding professionals of Social Pedagogy to initiate and improve youth's competence development: the Situational Test of Development of Basic Employability Competences (DCBE) and the Situational Test of Socio-emotional Competences (DCSE), both of which are validated and reliable.

The monograph that is presented is based on the necessity to provide Social Pedagogy professionals with free and valid instruments, such as the two examples already mentioned, that allow the effectiveness of interventions to be improved and to accompany people in their personal and social development processes.

The first article of this monograph presents a study that analyzes the assessment made by workers from four professional sectors of the need for the basic employability competences of the IARS group model to find and keep a job as well as gaining promotion. The test presented in the second article is based on this model.

The second article presents the process of creating the Situational Test for the Development of Basic Employability Competences (DCBE) for adolescents aged 12 to 18 years. This free copyright instrument can be used in the diagnostic evaluation to detect the level of development of these competences and to design socio-educational interventions tailored to meet the needs of the adolescent. Likewise, it can constitute an educational resource because the situations of the test can be used in workshops, tutorials and other vocational guidance activities. The article details the test construction process, content validation, analysis of the internal structure and its reliability.

With the same objective of creating free and open access instruments, the IARS group has created the Socio-Emotional Competences Development Situational Test (DCSE). This test has been developed in a similar way to the previous one, and evidence of its content validity, internal structure and reliability were provided. The third article presents a study that analyses the criterion validity of the DCSE instrument from the peer evaluation.

In the fourth article, the Scale of Parental Emotional and Social Competences for Mothers (ESPES-M) is presented. It is a useful instrument in the field of family intervention since it allows the development and evaluation of family guidance programs from a preventative perspective.

The fifth article includes a situational questionnaire of strategies and goals for the resolution of conflicts within schools. It is suitable for evaluating how both students and teachers manage conflicts (since it incorporates both versions), as well as providing key elements for a contextualized intervention.

The sixth and final article provides a scale to evaluate active aging, that is effective to know what factors influence this aging. At the same time its results can constitute the basis on which to plan the intervention for the improvement of the well-being of the elderly and their social integration.

The articles included in this monograph are a relevant contribution given the scarcity of validated instruments to assess basic employability, socio-emotional, parental competences and strategies, goals for resolving school conflicts and active aging. All the instruments included in this monograph have been validated and are reliable. They may also be of interest as an educational resource for professionals of Social Pedagogy, who often do not have evaluation tools that are easy to access and offer sufficiently reliable data.

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