Conceptual critique

German social pedagogy and social work: the academic discourses mapping a changing historical relationship

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Abstract

The term 'social pedagogy' was coined in Germany, a country which also provided fertile ground for the early development of social work. This article reconstructs the evolution of the two disciplines, which existed alongside one another for much of the twentieth century. It starts with their identities at the time of their early emergence, and then focuses on two formative periods: the early twentieth century, when both disciplines were in the nascent stages of independent development; and the late twentieth century, when they appeared to be in a state of amalgamation. In the course of this examination, Hämäläinen's recent suggestion that social pedagogy can be regarded as a science, as a profession and in terms of its education is investigated. So too is Lorenz's framework for considering a nation's social professions in terms of social policy, civil society and academic discourse elements. Those academic discourses tied to the identity of the two professions offer an opportunity to pin down the slippery German concept of social pedagogy, demarcate it from social work and consider the path dependencies of each profession. This is carried out with particular reference to the early figures who shaped the disciplines, specifically Paul Natorp, Herman Nohl and Alice Salomon. The case of Germany reveals not only

few uncontested definitions of the two professions, but also a clear formal separation for much of the twentieth century, which is best understood by considering historical, not contemporary arrangements.

Introduction: tracing the development of the social professions in their academic discourses

Hämäläinen's (2015, 2019) proposal to understand social pedagogy by considering it as a science, as a profession and from the perspective of its training is powerful when applied to Germany. German academic discourses have intensively focused on the first two of these dimensions (Niemeyer, 2003), and the third has been a primary, if superficial, distinguishing feature separating German social pedagogy from social work. This article uses academic discourses to trace historical understandings of *Sozialpädagogik* with reference to its sister discipline of *Sozialarbeit* in three parts. The first part examines the genesis and early usages of the two terms. Following this, professionalisation discourses during the period of rapid development in training, occupational identity and theory building in the early twentieth century will be considered. This led to a situation whereby not one, but two distinct, competing social occupations emerged – social pedagogy and social work. For reasons of space, the development of the social professions in the Third Reich and in the German Democratic Republic is omitted. This is, however, documented in English elsewhere (see Sünker and Otto, 1997; Miethe, 2009 respectively), and these phases represent complex discontinuities in the evolution of the German social professions (Lorenz, 1994). This article concludes with the period of realignment and growth following training reforms in both social pedagogy and social work in the latter part of the twentieth century, a period when discourses were dominated by the question of the social professions' status as a single science and unified profession.

The term 'social pedagogy' is coined: an overarching concept for pedagogy

Although the word 'social' has been used in the English language since the Middle Ages (Lexico, n.d.), the term entered the German language much later, in the early nineteenth century. The import came from France, slowly replacing German equivalents such as *gesellschaftlich*, meaning societal (Duden, 2014). Reyer (2002a) has noted how the arrival of the word *sozial* seemed to mark a wave of emancipation, secularisation and individualisation. Parallel to this, industrialisation arrived in Germany, around a generation later than in the UK. It created new social vulnerabilities and led to social unrest. Both of these developments – the new freedoms as well as the new risks for the population – may be understood as two sides of the same coin: the 'social question'. It could be argued that social pedagogy and social work had the same origin, but both developed along contrasting lines in direct response to it.

Most of what is known about the origins of the term 'social pedagogy' is down to the diligent research of Heinrich Kronen (1980). Kronen's studies revealed that it was Karl Mager who coined the term in 1844, not his contemporary Adolph Diesterweg, as had been previously thought. At the time of Kronen's research, social pedagogy had become seen in Germany as a narrow subdiscipline of pedagogy. Kronen (1980) turned this understanding on its head by examining Mager's choice and first use of the then-new term. In a discussion of pedagogic approaches in antiquity, Mager had noted how the Hellenistic city-state citizens had a *Staatspädagogik*, that is, a 'state pedagogy'. The argument here is that life in such a society was life for the state: the two could not be separated, as the person was a citizen of the state. In contrast, the European Enlightenment had seen an *Individualpädagogik*, an individual pedagogy, shaped by the primacy and freedom of the individual in a Christian model of humankind. Mager placed this *Individualpädagogik* opposite what he calls a *Collectivpädagogik*, which would complement it. Interestingly though, for Mager, this collective pedagogy was not a synonym with

his social pedagogy (as German readers might expect), but rather only part of it. Mager saw social pedagogy as a synthesis of the necessarily one-sided and incomplete areas of *Individualpädagogik* and *Collectivpädagogik*. For him the term social pedagogy had not its narrow modern sense; instead it was an umbrella framework for pedagogy and education, an overarching discipline tying together *Individualpädagogik* and *Collectivpädagogik* in the context of the society and historical period in which it was being considered. This locating of social pedagogy in a time, place and culture explains the oft-noted diversity of social pedagogies in Europe (see, for instance, Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009; Lorenz, 1994): each culture and each society, but also each historical period, must, by definition, have its own distinct social pedagogy.

Social pedagogy in its broadest sense: Natorp's conceptualising education and social life

The scholar Mager was a school administrator rather than a university professor, and the academic use of his new term was initially gradual. Later, from the last decade of the nineteenth century up to the outbreak of the First World War, the term social pedagogy established itself more rapidly in academic discourses (Winkler, 2010). A key theoretical working of the concept came from the neo-Kantian philosopher Paul Natorp. Natorp's (1894/1908) earliest use of the term was to appeal for a 'higher' pedagogy that described not the education of the individual located in an unalterable social order, but rather located in something else entirely: a society that could be changed and developed. Not just helping the individual in their development, but also helping the society in its development, was thus the task of social pedagogy:

> [Social pedagogy] has, as theory, to research the social conditions of education and the educational conditions of social life, indeed under the amended presupposition that the societal form is changeable, that it is subject to development; [social pedagogy has] as practice, to find the means and the path, in order to bring about and shape such conditions as these, in accordance with that idea, which designates the objective of the [societal] development intended. (Natorp, 1894/1908, pp. 62–3)[1]

Natorp was stressing how social pedagogy could act as a change agent, shaping a malleable rather than rigidly seen societal form. Identifying it here separately in theory and practice, he subsequently developed the former component, the theoretical, by producing a weighty philosophical treatise on it at the cusp of the twentieth century (Natorp, 1899/1974). His was a broad view of social pedagogy, similar to Mager's original usage. He saw social pedagogy as an overarching concept, encompassing the whole of pedagogy. In other words, if this early German conceptualisation of social pedagogy does describe a (proto-)science, it is that of the whole discipline of education, rather than just a specialised part of it.

Natorp's idea of social pedagogy illustrates Hämäläinen's (2019) suggestion that early social pedagogy may be regarded as educational philosophy. Natorp's usage was far from the term's modern sense; however, in the course of the decades to follow, understandings of social pedagogy were to become narrower, and more institutionally concrete, as the article examines next. But first, let us consider the context for the brisk development of the social professions.

The early twentieth century: new social policy, social movements and academic discourses

Various motors can be assigned to contextualise the rapid development of the German social professions in the early twentieth century. It is helpful here to utilise Lorenz's (2006) suggestion to understand their evolution by considering the interrelated influence of social policy, civil society elements and academic discourses.

In terms of social policy developments, the new century saw a shift in the nature of welfare, away from the non-statutory charity-based model of the nineteenth century. The new model was characterised by the state actively coordinating welfare, and sometimes even providing it. At the core of this mixed economy of welfare were Bismarck's compulsory social insurances of the 1880s. Strictly speaking, these were designed to placate the workers rather than comprehensively protect the population. Nonetheless,

they laid a foundation for organised welfare which was complemented by various statutory agencies across the *Kaiserreich*. These statutory agencies had a sectoral responsibility for coordinating local welfare services in particular fields. Prussia, for instance, had statutory district doctors, forerunners of the later local authority public health offices from the start of the century, and housing offices from the end of the First World War. Children's departments had already been established in Germany's larger cities by the early 1900s.

A changing civil society accompanied this welfare state growth. Lorenz (2006) draws attention to the role of social movements, and in the case of turn-of-the-century Germany, various movements can be identified. First, like elsewhere in Europe, new views of childhood were visible, with the German-language version of the 'new education' movement, 'reform pedagogy' (Nohl, 1935/1982; Scheibe, 1994) being vibrant. This overlapped with a German branch of the child study movement concerned with researching childhood and child development (Balcar, 2018). *The Century of the Child* (Key, 1902/1905) had also been promptly translated into German, but note that the period is not normally seen as having a burgeoning German children's rights movement, since this came later, after the Second World War. Second, separate to these developments and unique to Germany, there was a *Jugendbewegung*, a 'youth movement' shaped by the previous century's Romantic movement. This focused on young people's self-organisation and mutual socialisation in associations centred on leisure activities, such as hiking trips (Borinski and Milch, 1967). Youth was becoming acknowledged as a new, distinct life phase, and the self-determination of youth was being asserted. And third, the period saw a vibrant *Frauenbewegung* ('women's movement'), a first-wave feminist women's emancipation movement (Lange and Bäumer, 1901/1980). This overlapped with a social reform movement in which women played a prominent role (Notz, 2009).

These contexts provided a situation where the social professions could develop in quite different directions. In terms of academic discourses, Natorp and his successors' notions of social pedagogy identified a space whereby the social question could be answered with a pedagogic response. This drew on the reform pedagogy informed by the continental proto-social pedagogic ideas of Rousseau and Pestalozzi. Alternatively, the social question could also be answered with a welfare-based response. This drew on welfare and poverty discourses which came not from the continent, but rather from the Anglophone world. The settlement movement in the UK and USA was well known in Germany, for instance, and the concept was cautiously imported and adapted (Wietschorke, 2021). Similarly, the casework of the Charity Organisation Society, which had already drawn from the German Elberfeld System, provided a model ripe for transplanting.

Arguably the most important early-twentieth-century figure in the transfer of social work concepts from the English-speaking world to Germany was liberal social reformer Alice Salomon. Salomon was also a prolific social work author, with a legacy of around 30 books and 350 journal articles (Kuhlmann, 2000). Her writings both reflected and shaped the identity of early social work. German authors often illustrate social work and social pedagogy traditions with reference to the work of pioneers who effectively defined each occupational field (see, for instance, Niemeyer, 2012). This article will follow this approach, and Salomon's view of social work is presented next as key to understanding how Germans saw this young profession.

German 'social work': early use of a new term

Salomon's work in establishing a new social occupation can be placed in the context of a shift away from nineteenth-century attitudes firmly anchored in Christian charity. Previous approaches to care, such as the movement rooted in Christian compassion of 'saving' vulnerable young people (Kuhlmann, 2018), began to look out of date. Rethinking the motives for welfare work led Alice Salomon to reconsider the language of welfare. She began using the term 'social work' in her writings, often alongside more familiar 'welfare' terminology (in German, *Fürsorge* and *Wohlfahrtspflege*) from the turn of the century onwards (Kuhlmann, 2000; for an early example, see Salomon, 1901/1980). This was initially in an orthographically variant form (not *Sozialarbeit* but rather *soziale Arbeit*), and the usage was approximately synonymous with the more German-sounding alternative, 'social assistance work'.

Salomon (1921/1923) defined her 'social work' from a social justice perspective as 'the welfare measures which strove to raise the oppressed, dispossessed classes' (p. 20). This concern with the economically disadvantaged is typical of her writing: Salomon (1921/1923) was mindful of the need for

the 'protection of the weak' (p. 5) and 'vulnerable classes' (p. 1). A sensitivity to poverty and the task of poverty alleviation seeped into German definitions of social work throughout much of the twentieth century. This is in striking contrast with the UK, where questions of poverty have often been swept under the carpet in discourses, strangely underplaying its role in the problems that social work addresses (Jones, 2002).

Alice Salomon: shaping the profession, training and discipline of social work

By the Weimar period (1919–33), a clear bifurcation in the German social professions was visible. Salomon's efforts to establish social work had achieved results measurable with regards to Hämäläinen's categories. She founded a *Soziale Frauenschule* in Berlin in 1908, a college training female students to work as welfare officers, agency managers and volunteer welfare specialists. Salomon had studied economics at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin and subsequently acquired a PhD, but she deliberately chose the less academic form of a women's college for her practice-based training programme. In selecting the curriculum for the course, Salomon was defining an occupation in terms of its work settings, client groups and methods; students even had different specialisation tracks (Kuhlmann, 2000). By the early Weimar period, her publications, such as *Guidelines for Welfare Work* (Salomon, 1921/1923), reveal a differentiated set of practice fields, encompassing rehabilitative welfare for the disabled, welfare office work, housing welfare, public health-related welfare, targeted and general child welfare, child care and job-seekers' welfare.

This catalogue of Weimar-period social work fields changed in the decades to come. Some were subsumed into other professions, most notably disability, which was subsequently shared by medicine and a purportedly pedagogic-based programme known as disability pedagogy. As the next section investigates, the childhood and youth-related fields here were subsequently claimed by social pedagogy. Nonetheless, a strong cluster of fields of practice uniquely linked to the nascent Weimar social work occupation remained, giving it a clear and broad occupational profile. To this day, German social work remains broader in its fields of practice and settings compared to Anglo-Saxon practice. A contemporary example would be German social workers based in employment offices coaching and supporting the unemployed. This wider German understanding of 'classic' social work thus recalls Lorenz's (1994) illustration of the European diversity of social work tasks. However, even if some of the practice settings seem unusual, the methods Salomon discussed are often immediately recognisable to international readers. These methods drew directly from the Anglo-Saxon practices she observed while visiting the USA. Salomon's text *Soziale Diagnose* (1926), for instance, was a reworking of Richmond's (1917) practice concept for social casework with families, as Salomon herself openly acknowledged in its foreword.

Despite her focus on preparing students for practice, Salomon was also consciously developing social work into a scholarly discipline, in German, a *Wissenschaft*, science. She spoke of 'the science of welfare' (Salomon, 1921/1923, p. iii). The nature of this 'science' matched Salomon's research and professional interests. Her commitment to feminist issues led to her empirically examining gender inequality (Salomon, 1906). The liberal feminism orientation of Salomon's social work can also be attributed to her being influenced by contemporary UK and US social work theorists and practitioners, many of whom were women she had met during her travels: Beatrice Webb, Lillian Ward and Jane Addams, for instance (Peyser, 1958). Salomon's young 'science of welfare' was also shaped by her disciplinary background in economics and her research on family poverty (for instance, Salomon, Baum and Niemeyer, 1930), giving it a sociological foundation quite absent in the philosophy-driven social pedagogy of the time.

To summarise, Salomon's promotion of Weimar-period social work led to hugely influential understandings of social work as a profession, science and training programme. Salomon's welfare-based approaches proved seminal. Her powerful legacy in shaping her chosen social profession can be contrasted with the work of her counterpart in Weimar-period social pedagogy, Herman Nohl. His quite different perspectives are considered next.

Herman Nohl: shaping the profession, training and discipline of social pedagogy

A research university-based philosopher-pedagogue, Herman Nohl was a prominent figure in the dominant education movement of the time, the *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*, founded on a very particular philosophical school, the hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey. Nohl was keen to profile the subject of pedagogy, conducting what Niemeyer (2003) has termed a 'pedagogification offensive' (p. 124). Nohl (1935/1982) passionately asserted that Germany was experiencing a 'pedagogic movement', basing this suggestion on the vitality of the reform pedagogy and youth movements. Nohl edited popular handbooks and journals, and was thus in a position to cement the hermeneutic foundation of social pedagogy.

The Weimar Republic's social policy provided an institutionally fertile environment for the promotion of social pedagogy with two innovative laws passed in the early 1920s: the *Reichsgesetz für Jugendwohlfahrt*, an early child welfare act, and the *Jugendgerichtsgesetz*, an early youth justice act. The *Reichsgesetz für Jugendwohlfahrt* had integrated the newer Prussian category of *Jugendpflege*, a kind of youth work. Nohl and his colleagues were thus able to identify social pedagogy not only as a theory/knowledge area, but also as a distinct field of professional practice with a ready-made client base: those children and young people addressed by the country's new legislation. Schilling and Klus (2018) have noted that this enduring understanding of social pedagogy as the discipline of children's services is underlined by the social pedagogic language of German children's services law.

Social pedagogy had thus morphed into the pedagogy of German child welfare legislation, an area later marked out by Nohl (1958/1960) in Rousseauian terms (via Goethe) as the 'pedagogic province' (p. 16). The charm of such formulations notwithstanding, it must be observed that the theoretically rich social pedagogy was now being defined without theoretical content. An oft-cited formulation comes from a colleague of Nohl's, who, writing in a popular Weimar-period handbook printed in the old German Fraktur typeface, rejected the broad understandings of social pedagogy proposed by Mager and Natorp. Instead, this new definition regarded social pedagogy institutionally:

> [Social pedagogy] describes not a principle, which the whole of pedagogy, its theory, as well as its methods, its institutions and its work … is subordinate to, but rather a part [of pedagogy]: everything which is child raising, but is neither school nor family. Social pedagogy is here a byword for that societal and statutory child raising aid which lies outside of school. The child raising aid arose as 'emergency help'. In other words, it is assumed that school and family under normal and healthy conditions suffice as child raising institutions. (Bäumer, 1929, p. 3)

This sketchy definition dominated in Germany until the end of the century. The German understanding of social pedagogy referred to by Göppner and Hämäläinen (2007) is clearly this one, for instance. Mollenhauer's (1959) influential understanding of social pedagogy as the theory of children's services also implicitly acknowledged it. Bäumer's definition has the virtue of simplicity. Nonetheless, it can be argued that its popularity and endurance is peculiar, given its deficit orientation and failure to cite the key theoretical anchor points of social pedagogy (Reyer, 2002b).

This German systematic unification of all non-school services pertaining to childhood and youth under the disciplinary umbrella of pedagogy has interesting and important consequences. First, in Weimar Germany, child welfare seemed to become the remit of social pedagogy, not social work as might be expected. Moreover, in the logic of this legislation-based system, child welfare social work, youth justice, residential child care, nursery care and youth work were institutionally integrated and collectively conceptualised (see, for instance, Mollenhauer, 1964). This point is particularly striking when compared to the British arrangement, where these fields of practice evolved into five formally distinct systems, each with differing training programmes, theory bases and institutional arrangements. The British classification into separate systems looks peculiarly fragmented from the German perspective, which regards them all as interrelated parts of one single system. Finally, although institutionally defined, the Weimar categorisation tacitly suggested a theoretical perspective. Young people's problems were not to be reflected on therapeutically or psychosocially, that is, in terms of psychotherapy and sociology. Instead, they were considered pedagogically, as questions of child raising and education.

Given that a social pedagogic field of activities had been identified, the next step was to conceptualise a corresponding training programme for it. A paper of Nohl's (1924/1965), published

in the year the *Reichsgesetz* legislation came into force, described the four-semester social pedagogic degree programme which he was establishing in Göttingen. His vision sees the research university as being responsible in three areas: conducting social pedagogy research and theory building; preparing professionals for leadership posts in agencies ranging from child welfare to youth justice institutions; and training non-social pedagogic professionals (doctors, the clergy, lawyers and the like) who would later come into contact with young people, to give them a 'social pedagogic attitude and knowledge' (Nohl, 1924/1965, p. 71). Interestingly, this idea suggests that Nohl was conceptualising his discipline not only as one for its own profession, but also other professions. Just as a social work student today might do a module on the science of criminology, Nohl was envisaging law students taking a course on the science of social pedagogy. It is unclear how Nohl's vision of a training programme was actually implemented in practice, but this location of social pedagogy at the esteemed research universities (*Universitäten*) under philosopher-pedagogues asserted its authority as a scholarly field of study. The Weimar period thus saw social pedagogy mature from Natorp's educational philosophy concept into Nohl's pedagogic discipline and profession, with its own hermeneutic philosophy-driven theory base, acknowledged legalistic definition and research university-based training programme.

Distinct and separate social professions: the nascent social pedagogy's relation to early social work

The distinctness of the Weimar-period social professions becomes clear when applying Hämäläinen's categorisation system. As proto-sciences, the two were poles apart. Social pedagogy was seen as a subdiscipline of pedagogy (with very close ties to philosophy) and was characterised by its hermeneutic method; social work was seen as a subdiscipline of economics (with very close ties to social welfare) and was characterised by its employment of empirical social research. Social pedagogy thus tended to favour pedagogic understandings of social problems, while social work saw social problems from an economic or welfare perspective instead. As professions, the two subjects might be portrayed as splitting the period's institutionalised fields of social welfare practice between them, with social pedagogy asserting its claim to all those related to childhood and youth (as in Bäumer's 1929 definition, cited above), and by default, social work having an uncontested claim to the remainder, that is, adults' services and general welfare (see the practice-based definitions in Duden, n.d.a, n.d.b, or the history-based categorisation of practice areas in Schilling and Klus, 2018). Each of the two professions had its own methods, social work's drawing extensively from contemporary US practice, and social pedagogy's from European practice. In terms of training, the split was clear-cut: social pedagogy was an academic subject, tied to Natorp and Nohl's prestigious scholarly research universities, whereas the training for proto-social work was vocational and took place in the more practice-related college setting. This last point led to another difference – gender. The old research universities of Göttingen and Marburg were male-dominated institutions (Costas and Roß, 2002), while Salomon's college was a women's college with many female lecturers (Kuhlmann, 2000).

Yet it would be wrong to suggest that the demarcation between the two professions was similarly distinct and universally accepted. Maintaining the formal split into two different professions required an acknowledgment of Bäumer's (1929) definition. However, the theoretical emptiness of this definition meant that the need for an alternative was ever-present. A series of social pedagogy definition proposals thus followed in the second half of the twentieth century, typically taking a conceptual or theoretical perspective, instead of following Bäumer's institutional approach (Marburger, 1979; Naumann, 2009). Key concepts often reappear in these definition attempts; the German word for child raising (*Erziehung*), for instance, or that uniquely German idea of cultivation or formation, *Bildung*. Knirck (1962) considered social pedagogy's role in providing stability in the social order, leading him to use the term 'societal child raising' (*Gesellschaftserziehung*). This term, close to the idea of social education, is in the spirit of Natorp and was used a century earlier by Mager in the subheading of his journal (Kronen, 1980); the concept is also in the Duden (n.d.b) definition. Knirck (1962) also employed the notion of integration, using the term to describe the task of creating a unity or bond between the individuals coexisting within society. Integration (*Integration*, but also in German *Eingliederung*) is a key concept in the German social professions. It appeared in the preferred definition of social pedagogy by Mollenhauer (1964), who saw social pedagogy as a differentiated system of integration support necessitated by our industrial society's integration demands. In contrast, the term inclusion is entirely absent from twentieth-century social

pedagogy discourses (arriving in the German social work and education parlance late, in the twenty-first century). The idea of socialisation may be conceptually utilised in definitions. Klaus-Jürgen Tillmann (1972, p. 806), as cited in Marburger (1979, p. 10), viewed the discipline as the theory of 'socialisation conflicts', and Siegfried Keil (1975, p. 969, also cited in Marburger, 1979, pp. 9–10) saw it as the theory of 'socialisation support'. Other common social pedagogy definition elements include a focus on prevention (in contrast, social work tends to be reactive), or on learning and learning processes (on which social pedagogy focuses more than social work) (Mühlum, 2011).

Retrospectively though, putting aside the theoretical arguments, even on a practical basis the logic of the German social work–social pedagogy demarcation appears highly contentious. Clearly social work never formally conceded the area of childhood and youth, instead competing with social pedagogy for it. In other words, Weimar-period social work and social pedagogy were actually overlapping rather than distinctly separate fields. Moreover, the categorisation of separate pedagogic and welfare institutions is contradicted by the reality of agencies' complex mandates. German social work had always had a pedagogic element, with Salomon discussing child development and child raising (for instance, Salomon, 1916/2000). Indeed, Kuhlmann (2000) even provocatively argued that one could also choose to regard Salomon as an early social pedagogue, thus turning the established social work–social pedagogy distinction based on her 'social work' innovations upside down.

It must also be acknowledged that one reason why the Weimar years bifurcation is portrayed as a long-term split is the untypically long-lasting disciplinary status quo caused by periods of stagnation for both social occupations during and following the Third Reich period. Post-war German social pedagogy saw a return to dominance of Nohl's *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*. Germany's social work returned to a US-influenced model, with the booming method of social groupwork (renamed 'group pedagogy'; Kelber, 1965/1970) supplementing the social casework that had been established in the Weimar years (Hering and Münchmeier, 2014). In other words, Weimar traditions remained current in Germany well into the late 1960s.

To summarise, while a traditional German distinction between these two occupations can be reconstructed – one that was popularly considered valid for much of the twentieth century – it fails to acknowledge the continually porous boundary between the two only ostensibly separate Weimar-period 'sciences' and professions. Wilhelm's (1966) suggestion that the term social pedagogy should be solely viewed historically to describe the 1920s movement is a sobering notion, but one not without justification. This consideration of the two social professions' identities now continues with an examination of late-twentieth-century developments.

Post-1968 developments: training reforms, continuity and change

Social pedagogy theory progressed in the late 1960s, suddenly appearing less distinct from that of social work. It supplemented its hermeneutic basis by integrating critical theory, sociology, communication science and other disciplines into its theory base (see, for instance, Mollenhauer, 1968/1970, 1972/1976). In terms of training, however, the formal distinction between the occupations was initially maintained. Both social professions profited from an expansion of higher education in the early 1970s which, institutionally, had a dual nature (Wendt, 2017), following the logic of Weimar-period developments. The scholarly research universities offered social pedagogy as a specialisation path in their pedagogy degrees, usually with a focus on those areas Nohl had considered the 'pedagogic province'. This research university discipline was able to reproduce itself, in the sense that social pedagogues were able to stay at the university and obtain their PhDs in pedagogy. The umbrella discipline of pedagogy morphed into the scholarly discipline of *Erziehungswissenschaft,* literally translated as 'child raising science', but more broadly understood as education science. Social pedagogy practice was also taught at vocational colleges for social pedagogy (*Fachschulen*), these non-degree-qualified workers often working under the management of university pedagogy graduates. There were obvious professionalisation opportunities resulting from the academic status of social pedagogy, which was later visible in the impressive conceptualisation of Germany's 1990 Child and Youth Welfare Act. This was a forerunner to child welfare legislation on account of its preventative and participative character and its granting of concrete family support entitlements. In Hansbauer, Merchel and Schone's (2020) words, it represented a 'paradigm shift'

by abandoning earlier regulatory approaches and instead seeing child welfare as a 'social pedagogic service' (p. 43).

Social work, in contrast, remained closely associated with a different higher educational institution, the newly founded *Fachhochschulen*, polytechnic colleges. Evolving from the colleges for social welfare, such as Salomon's *Soziale Frauenschule*, the training in these social work schools had a practice, rather than a research focus. Indeed, they were unable to grant social work PhDs. This gave them an unequal status to the research universities, and they were seen as less academically prestigious. They had a heterogeneous senior faculty teaching base, made up of professors representing the component professions and disciplines: law, sociology, psychology and the like, but ironically, rarely social workers, since social workers were not normally PhD holders (Amthor, 2003). It can be argued that this weakened social work's status. The polytechnics sometimes offered social pedagogy degrees too, although the most well-known social pedagogy theorists did not teach these, since they mostly remained tied to the research university professorships. When entering employment, polytechnic graduates received a remuneration that is around 20 per cent lower than their research university-trained social pedagogue peers, as well as lesser career opportunities (Berger, 2001). Many prestigious specialisations of Anglo-Saxon social work long remained underdeveloped in Germany. Mental health social work, for instance, remained rudimentary compared to abroad, since the domain was claimed by psychiatry.

This consideration of the separate training programmes for each social profession thus reveals differences in the umbrella discipline for students, formally separate career paths and contrasting professional identities. Although social workers became more numerous than their social pedagogy peers, these various factors support the suggestion made by Lorenz (2008) that of the two German twentieth-century modes of social service delivery, social pedagogy seemed to have a dominance over social work.

Flux and fusion: a turn-of-the-century realignment for the social professions

Social pedagogy's integration of sociological and critical theory ideas stretched the tenability of the formal split of the two social professions, as the welfare and the pedagogic were now acknowledged as being intertwined. The solution appeared to be a gradual blending of the two fields. This was marked symbolically in 1971 with the founding of the journal *neue praxis*, neatly described by its original full title of *Neue Praxis: Kritische Zeitschrift für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik* [New Practice: Critical Journal for Social Work and Social Pedagogy]. Social pedagogic and social work questions were now undogmatically addressed side by side, typically from a robustly critical perspective. In the literature from then on, it became increasingly common to see social work and social pedagogy mentioned in the same breath. Thiersch and Rauschenbach (1984) audaciously discussed *Theorie der Sozialarbeit/Sozialpädagogik* in a popular handbook: a single-theory discourse for two disciplines previously considered theoretically separate. This theoretical and practice realignment can be interpreted in various ways (see Hämäläinen, 2019): as a merger to a wholly new profession and theory base, or as a partial bilateral convergence, in Mollenhauer's (1966) earlier words, towards a 'cooperative form of social scientific theory building' (p. 7) with components of the former theory bases remaining intact. Alternatively, it can be regarded as one profession assimilating the other (and its theory base). From the perspective of the professions, it might of course be seen as the abandonment of what had, in any case, been an artificial separation.

The status of social pedagogy was thus ambivalent at the close of the twentieth century. On the one hand, although formally established as a research university-based academic (sub)discipline, its standing was not comparable to that of neighbouring disciplines (such as psychology or education) or professions (such as the therapeutic professions or teaching). On the other hand, enough progress had been made for Thiersch (1992) to famously describe the previous hundred years as the 'social pedagogic century'. As the twentieth century came to a close, Lothar Böhnisch (1997/2018) published *Sozialpädagogik der Lebensalter* [Social pedagogy of the human life course]. The term (social) andragogy had failed to enter the German language, but the concept of social pedagogy as something for the whole human life course was finally definitively acknowledged.

A lexicological blow came at the turn of the century, when the tongue-twisting formulation *Sozialarbeit/Sozialpädagogik* was firmly replaced by a much shorter one, *Soziale Arbeit*. This term was

popularised in the titles of newly reformed polytechnic degree programmes for both professions, taught together as one. The expression approximately describes those fields of professional activity comparable to social care in the UK, although more explicitly including early education and youth work than the British equivalent. The term is designed to represent both social work and social pedagogy traditions equally, despite its superficial resemblance to one at the cost of the other. From a semantic perspective this new term is dissatisfying. It contributes to the gradual removal of the word *Sozialpädagogik* from the social professions' vocabulary. The hypothesis could be ventured that it (incorrectly) suggests that the field had been somehow 'de-pedagogised', since the lexical item 'social pedagogy' is now used in the German literature much less frequently. This idea, the 'disappearance' of social pedagogy, is investigated below, but first the German question of social care as a 'science' is considered.

Establishing a broad 'science'

Having created this new hybrid profession, a concern of authors was to consolidate its standing. While an Anglophone categorisation of the social professions' identities might be twofold, for instance as 'a practice-based profession and an academic discipline' (IFSW & IASSW, 2014, n.p.), the traditional German view is threefold, focusing on the *Profession*, *Studium/Ausbildung* and *Wissenschaft*, corresponding to Hämäläinen's tripartite perspective. In other words, the English term 'academic discipline' captures two meanings that Germans may prefer to split: not only the idea of a subject with tertiary-level education, but also the notion of a subject as a 'science'. Of course, both the *Wissenschaft* and its education are founded on the premise of a systematic core of coherent theories, research and knowledge. In Germany, such a process of scientification seems standard for the human professions: the knowledge and theory base of the police force is thus subsumed under *Polizeiwissenschaft* ('police science'), the knowledge and theory base of law under *Rechtswissenschaft* ('legal science'), for instance. The equivalent for the new broad German social care profession would thus be a *Wissenschaft der Sozialen Arbeit*, usually still anachronistically referred to in terms of the earlier concept of *Sozialarbeitswissenschaft* ('social work science'). As this latter formulation reveals, the discourse had its roots in the period when the two 'sciences' were still separate (in the 1990s), and it was driven by polytechnic-based authors, keen for social work to escape from what they regarded as the research university-dominated disciplinary cul-de-sac of *Erziehungswissenschaft*, education.

As Göppner and Hämäläinen (2007) have observed, this discourse on social work (or more accurately, social care) *as* a science is both quite different to the discourse on social work *and* science, and also unique to Germany. One consequence of this discourse is a series of theoretical attempts to capture the very broad collective essence of the social professions. Theorists are faced with the challenge of producing theories which 'fit' a quite conglomerate profession: contemporary German *Soziale Arbeit* includes not just social pedagogic fields, but also areas as diverse as probation work, adult social care and homelessness services. Göppner and Hämäläinen (2007) have noted how the unlimited contextual diversity of practice situations inevitably leads to complexity in assigning causality to problems. The two authors have thus suggested that as a consequence, social work/social pedagogy theory has developed a tentative and questioning stance with regard to matters of causality. This idea is close to what Niemeyer (2003) identifies as the *diskursive Wissenschaft* ('discursive science') tradition in conceptualising social pedagogy (p. 24). It also echoes the discourse on *reflexive Sozialpädagogik* (Otto and Dewe, 2012). Such lines of argument can be ventured as explanations for German social work/social pedagogy's conscious avoidance of those technocratic and positivistic approaches that have characterised the much narrower UK/US social work.

The broadness of the new *Soziale Arbeit* field can thus be portrayed as one catalyst for the development of a healthily discursive and cautious approach to assessing practice situations. It should be acknowledged though, that social pedagogy's supposed assimilation into this new, wide discipline has been interpreted more negatively, as a threat rather than an opportunity. A gloomy line of argumentation suggests that it is a disappearing profession in Germany, and to conclude this article, this position is now investigated.

The disappearance of social pedagogy?

The claim that social pedagogy is vanishing was common around the turn of the twentieth century and has even been made in an English-language publication (Braches-Chyrek and Sünker, 2009). Writing in German, Reyer (2002b) bluntly offered an 'obituary' for social pedagogy. Such doomsaying had perhaps been foreseeable, given social pedagogy's decades-long refusal to be theoretically pinned down. Holtstiege (1976) had discussed the 'theoretical awkwardness' (p. 15) and the 'diffuse theoretical situation' (p. 18) of the discipline, and how this was weakening the identity of social pedagogy as a profession. These issues had never been satisfyingly resolved.

For British readers, the idea of a social profession disappearing first lexically, as the profession's name is slowly abandoned, and then de facto, as its training programmes are reformed, presents a cautionary tale. British social work, criticised and seemingly unloved for decades (since Brewer and Lait, 1980), might be seen as currently undergoing the early stages of such a process, with social workers self-identifying as 'council workers', and social work fields being renamed social care fields. To contextualise such perspectives though, it should be noted that an uncertainty about the exact theoretical and disciplinary status of social pedagogy has been a perennial source of anxiety for German theorists. Exactly a century before Reyer's obituary for the discipline, early social pedagogy historian Edelheim (1902) had unpicked Natorp's social pedagogy definitions, unhappy that Natorp's formulations actually describe the 'sociology of pedagogy' and social ethics rather than a real social pedagogy.

Despite the pessimism of some, the claim that German social pedagogy is 'disappearing' can be challenged. The name of the profession has indeed changed. However, the continual dominance of hermeneutic and phenomenological lifeworld-oriented (Thiersch, 1992/2009) and reflective theoretical approaches (Otto and Dewe, 2012) in social care education underlines how German professionals have retained their social pedagogic *Haltung*. The modern training of social professionals does not neglect classic social pedagogic direct work methods, such as those using creative media, for instance. Germany's social care legislation (including recent amendments such as SGB VIII section 13a) is still firmly and explicitly oriented on social pedagogic concepts. Moreover, although the welfare state has been under fire in the twenty-first century, social pedagogic fields in Germany have actually expanded dramatically. There is an agenda for more social pedagogy, not less, as changing family norms have led to the mainstreaming of nursery care and after-school activities programmes. Correspondingly, there are new pedagogic degree programmes such as early education, which are clearly social pedagogic in nature, if not in name. 'Social pedagogy' has perhaps become a more fragmented field in Germany. The term now seems to describe a set of theoretical perspectives informing a range of separate professional identities, rather than describing only one single profession, as in the past. Nonetheless, while acknowledging that the noun *Sozialpädagogik* appears less frequently on twenty-first-century German library book spines, it can be argued that the heart of German social pedagogy is still beating audibly.

Note

[1]All the translations are the author's own where the literature cited is in German in the original.

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

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