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Challenges of migration for the social pedagogy in Swedish context

Abstract

The key aspects to how the Swedish social insurance system is implemented are a high degree of universalism and the promotion of equality. The aim of this article is to explore certain issues of complexity in recent societal changes, in order to understand how to facilitate the provision of social welfare to disadvantaged migrant groups. The arguments presented in this article draw on contemporary research, current statistical resources and secondary sources in considering institutional aspects of social work and the provision of social pedagogy. The outlined contemporary issues concerning the migration situation in Sweden are reflected upon social segregation and social protection considered to be crucial to social pedagogy regimes. It is found that hidden social structures embedded in policy of e.g., multiculturalism may be counterproductive for the integration of new arrives.

It is concluded that social work and social pedagogy practice need to go behind the hidden modes of explaining immigrant groups marginalisation and the occurred mechanisms of structural and institutional logics within and out of the social welfare system. New arrives might need special attention as they are likely to suffer from vulnerability formed by poverty, dependence of social support and poor social cohesion in the host country. Awareness of these issues will make social pedagogy practitioner able to create a focal points of performativity and facilitate treatment of immigrant groups across the social service system.

Key words: Vulnerable populations, collaboration, social integration, social work, social care

Introduction

The development of the Swedish welfare system underwent a period of expansion that combined growth, economics and the international breakthrough of the Swedish welfare model. Traditional social welfare policy has been based on notions of solidarity and encompassed social security, income security, health, education, housing and personal social services provided through social work and the professions associated thereto (Bryson, 1992; Swärd et al., 2013). The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (NUTEC) and

Statistics Sweden (SCB) have found health care and social services to be the largest and fastest growing sectors governed by counties and municipalities, and financed through taxes and user fees (Social Affairs, 2006). From 1960 to 1980, there were considerable investments into building the social welfare systems (Edebalk, 2000), but the current ambitions with the welfare system have developed into a more open-ended issue and the considerable investments are now on the decline. The contemporary, inclusive welfare policy has had difficulties balancing between economic growth and democratic redistribution (Björgren Cuadra, 2015, Sward et al., 2013).

Formal safeguards with their focus on social and financial protective structures, as well as national delimitation of social insurance (Ferrera, 2005), in combination with ideals about equal treatment of different groups in the population, are being challenged by people's mobility across national borders and ongoing migration. A brief historical examination of the development of the Swedish welfare state demonstrates concerns of horizontal equity, expressed in attempts to spread the burdens of social support over a range of social groups (Bryson, 1992). These inclusive social policy schemes are very important to vulnerable populations such as new arrivals. Knowledge of the numerical anatomy of the refugee crisis is widespread at this stage. Last year, over a million refugees made it to Europe, most of them from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2015, 162,877 asylum seekers came to Sweden (Board of Migration, 2016), which led to an intensive debate in both political circles and in the media about their reception and the lack of credible ideas about how to integrate the new arrivals into society. After the WWII Sweden welcomed a large number of immigrant workers in a phase of economic growth and welfare expansion. By the mid-70's this type of migrants was replaced by refugees from Pinochet's Chile, Lebanon's civil war, Yugoslavia's disintegration or – as in the last decade – the turmoil of Somalia, the Middle East and North Africa, which triggered calls for immigration control and changes to social policy. These calls, noted by Brochmann and Hagelund (2011) while exploring relations between the Swedish welfare state parameters, resulted in recent scrutiny of social policies in general and development of new legislative proposals for restrictions in granting permanent residence permits in Sweden and creating limited space for more asylum seekers (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016). Questions about transnational social responsibility, norms and ideas about basic security and admission, have had a drastic impact on discussions about the consequences, both in terms of social policy, migration policy and social welfare protection for the individual citizen. At the same time, helping those who apply for support is made more difficult by societal structures and the growing number of immigrants who need support from social services, as well as by

uncertainty in terms of social welfare policy and the lack of collaboration between agencies and authorities (Björngren Cuadra, 2015; Swärd et al., 2013).

Universalism is considered a central aspect of social welfare systems, meaning that it should be accessible by all citizens in need of each respective service (Rauch, 2007). Research investigating international migration highlights immigrants' over-representation in public social welfare programmes and social welfare provision (Boccagni & Richard, 2015), and their vulnerable position within different welfare systems (Björngren Cuadra, 2015). This emergence of new social service clients raises questions regarding the right of access to services, public obligations and the need for social pedagogy models in social work (Herz, 2016). Social pedagogy refers to the theory and practice behind the work of supporting and fostering the personal development and an individual's overall welfare and social care. Actually within the Swedish social services there has been a growing interest in social work practice caused by the need of social interventions among immigrant populations (Herz, 2016). Developing social pedagogy approaches to social work involves solving challenges in accordance with a process of socialisation and social inclusion (Eriksson, 2014). In this sense, its core aspects involve a process of integration into a community, the prevention of social exclusion and support for socially vulnerable people (Grunwald and Thiersch, 2009). In European countries, it applies especially to individualistic, adaptive and mobilising approaches to social welfare schemes and social work arrangements (Hallstedt & Högström, 2005; Stephens, 2009).

The situational change of moving from one country to another and adjustment to new cultural beliefs through social interactions consist of the adaptation and transformation process called acculturation or integration (Berry, 1997). Integration is of interest to social work and social pedagogy field work among immigrant population because of its emotional and interactional impact on an individual's social wellbeing, provision of social security and preservation of social identity. The concept of integration may have a range of definitions in a cross-societal perspective. According to Penninx and Gracés-Mascareñas (2016), integration occurs in relation to multiple societal domains as a process similar to socialisation and participation in existing social systems. Some scholars argue that the concept of integration into societal rules and structures, including underlying norms and values assumes the normative standard of adaptation towards the majority culture of the host society (Brinkemo, 2014). Yet, the mainstream into which immigrants are expected to conform is seldom clearly defined (Aman, 2012; Brinkemo, 2014). Thus, the debate on integration can be argued to have

been overloaded by opposite viewpoints and policies that demand adequate follow-up and research in the future.

However, only a few studies have focused on the integration aspects of immigrant populations within social pedagogy programmes. The main aim of this article is to outline some actual issues concerning the migration situation in Sweden, focusing on general structural and co-existing issues related to social segregation and social protection, in connection with social work and social pedagogy programmes directed to immigrant clients. However, in acknowledging these issues, my intention is neither to present an exhaustive exposé of the contemporary societal or professional discourse, nor to provide a comprehensive model of social pedagogy practices. My task is to contribute to the ongoing discourse and to highlight the complexity of the new globalized societal context related to posed risk for social segregation among new arrivals. The present paper reflects on this development, discussing challenges and possibilities in relation to social pedagogy and professional social work. The two perspectives of social segregation and social protection are considered as crucial in social pedagogy goals in empowering and supporting the individual's social position (Eriksson, 2014; Hallstedt & Högström, 2005; Stephens, 2009).

Social segregation

As the Swedish Welfare system is an integral part of the taxation system, employment is considered a central aspect of its existence. Current economic data indicate that unemployment rates are highest among those with a low education and/or who are born abroad. For example, unemployment among those who had been in the country less than two years, and who did not graduate from upper secondary school, was 55 percent in 2014. Unemployment declines the longer someone has been in the country, but you need to look at the data for those who have been in Sweden for 30 years or more before you see similar unemployment figures as for those born in Sweden without an upper secondary school education (Nannesson, 2016). The high unemployment rate among new arrivals and the housing segregation indicate that Sweden has failed to develop a successful integration process, harness skills and experience or clearly show what is expected of new citizens. It is when society cannot relate to growing segregation, housing shortages, employment gaps between those born in Sweden and those born abroad, or growing problems in schools leading to parallel societies developing, that acceptance of migration is negatively impacted. Massive immigration to Sweden created social segregation primarily through enormous pressure, mainly for the refugees themselves but also for the state agencies concerned with receiving

them and trying to manage the situation. Aman (2012) focusing on construction of a specific European identity by examining pedagogical narratives of intercultural dialogue in official documents identified tensions existing between the levels of pedagogy and performativity. On the pedagogical level the communities construct and verify identification with an inside of cultural space in opposition to the outside. The national identity verified as history is often falsified to maintain an illusion of a harmonious past. Performativity imply a creative moment in the present as pieces of everyday life: being, acting and living. Within this context of the levels of pedagogy that define - this is Europe, and performativity - we are Europe, dynamics of European society and to be a citizen of EU is understood as an act between inclusion and exclusion, where immigrants are perceived as neither Europeans nor part of European history or culture but rather possessors of characteristics conflicting with the existing rules and values (Aman, 2012). Such performative construction may be contradictory to social pedagogy as its approach is to be a bridge between individuals and their social environment and create a bond between subjects residing inside as well as outside the community.

While the population dichotomy may be perceived as a division into *us* and *them*, where who we are is defined by access to the services of the welfare state, a normalising majority culture is faced with processes of change in combination with demands of reciprocity. Demarcations between *us* and *them* and the ongoing re-creation in the meeting between domestic society, the cultural grammar of others and their need for help, consist of social positioning and notions of what is happening, what should be happening and what rights the new arrivals should be entitled to. A collectively ascribed identity of migrants as welfare recipients and a burden on society's services consolidates institutionalised reinforcement of passive reception of support, as well as ethnic and social segregation of new arrivals (Herz, 2016). Segregation in society along lines of ethnicity and class is reinforced by socio-economic inequality, particularly for recently arrived migrants who often have difficulties establishing themselves in a new society and labour market, and who settle in certain areas, thereby increasing housing segregation. A growing criticism in migration research highlights perspectives that focus on individual and economic factors, isolated from their social context (Björgren Cuadra, 2015). Other important factors for successful integration, both internationally and in Swedish research, have shown how society's structure, socio-political organisation and state agency operations classify and reproduce hierarchies of inequality in society (Bernstein, 1975; Chambon, 2013).

Swedish society adopted a normative ideological position in favour of multiculturalism (*mångfald*), accepting the impact of globalisation in Swedish civil society and as a symbol of

tolerating differences. Multiculturalist ideology from an integration-societal cohesion perspective has been discussed and analysed by Aje Carlbom (2006), who has done research at Rosengård in Malmö with a population having its origins in Muslim countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria etc. He highlighted how the politically good intension may enhance the social process rising among an imagined community of ethnic homogeneity of Arabic-speaking Muslims who are involved in religious-political projects where they try to avoid becoming influenced by the host country. Hamde (2008) noted that multicultural policies have resulted in increasing gaps among different groups rather than leading to societal cohesion or social justice. From social pedagogy perspective the multicultural and hidden political logics may be problematic, seeing past counterproductive issues basically because it may be more politically correct to show acceptance toward cultural rules and life styles originating in peoples' old home countries (such as for instance women's societal positions or religious-political tribalisation) rather than to objectively analyse the problem of approaching integration and support adaptation to the new identity. Moreover, some individuals may stand their ground and resist the influence of the host society (Carlbon, 2006). In addition, the process of integration over a time period encompasses first a phase of letting go of the old identity, second, positioning in-between the old and the new identity and finally the transition to a new identity (Berry, 1997). Consequently, social pedagogy schemes have to consider that the dominant multiculturalist perspective, occurred social degradation and loss of control increases vulnerability to individual's identity in previous or in-between positioning which may hindrance integration and new self-image.

Social protection through mobilizing schemes

The relationships between social conditions, ethnicity, culture and identity has garnered increasing attention in research (Eliassi, 2015; Björgren Quadra, 2015). Accordingly, it is important to note that structural inequalities between the foreign and native population was found to be present in ill-health. Although there is numerous imaginable mechanisms that could have a negative impact on integration, Leao and colleagues studying socioeconomic characteristics of a Swedish population sample of more than 14 000 persons found increased poor self-rated health in immigrants who lived in the country less than 15 years and arrived at higher ages in comparison with the matched reference group of having Sweden as a country of their origin (Leao et al., 2009). This is in agreement with previous epidemiological studies conducted in Malmö city, which found ethnic differences in self-rated health (Lindstöm et al, 2001). There are also strong links between immigration, integration and welfare state failure

in delivery of universalistic policies (Brochmann and Hagelund, 2011). Several of the arrivals to Sweden, 35,369, had no guardian (Board of Migration, 2016), often yang boys who were called unaccompanied children and adolescents. The situation for unaccompanied children places considerable demands on social work (Brunnberg, Borg & Fridström, 2011). Many migrants, both adults and children, have suffered traumatic events, been subjected to psychological stress, disintegration of family and have language difficulties in the new country. Confronting a new country brings significant challenges to the fore, which impact the life of the individual. That includes confronting a new culture, a new ethnic group with its traditions and norms, as well as confronting a new societal structure.

In these sociocultural systems of meaning, people try to create order and direction in their lives, which in theory is linked to a wider relativist perspective that emphasises changing social contexts. This means that the view of the phenomenon of culture and belonging may be based on fundamentally different ontological positions, either essentialism or constructivism. In order to explain the different dimensions of how societies are organised, researchers use e.g. clan theory as an explanatory model (Brinkemo, 2014). From that perspective, the cultural confrontations that occur can be interpreted partly through the way modern society is organised and partly through the organisation that forms clans. Organising society in clans is dominated by the members being held together through centuries-old historical and family ties. This type of society ensures order through clan structure rather than through a central power. The modern state rests on the principle of equality before the law and the idea of a general welfare system offering security, autonomy, freedom of opinion and equal treatment. The modern state is seen as an obvious way of organising human communities. If the state sees people as autonomous individuals, the clan sees people as parts of a collective organisation. If the state is weak, people tend to organise in clans, which historically guaranteed safety, context and security. Current research indicates that in safeguarding their own culture, ethnic groups may attempt to establish their historical affiliation and culture from a perspective of essentialism. This leads to many people having difficulties adopting new roles and positions in Swedish society and instead becoming involved in socio-political problems in their country of origin. Other studies concerning conditions and structures for various forms of socially constructed subcultures, have explored e.g. young people's street culture and creation of gangs (Lalander, 2009), social care for people with disabilities (Dychawy Rosner, 2015) and the elderly care (Magnússon, 2014).

Social work involves confronting everyday expressions of stress in contemporary society, such as difficulties gaining access to the labour market and the drawn out processes

for immigrants to establish themselves in society. The drivers of implementation can be perceived based on tension between, on the one hand, preventive efforts aimed at combating social vulnerability and, on the other, work to promote stability and order in society (Payne, 2006). The current review of so-called violence-promoting extremism highlights the fact that implementation measures are affected by e.g. the view disseminated by the media, which is represented by a security policy doctrine (Herz, 2016). Social work, in particular with migrant youth who are vulnerable, needs to be grounded in a more structured manner in traditional social pedagogy efforts, and methods that are based on more comprehensive knowledge about care provision in social work, in order to confront and relate to people in violent and vulnerable situations. It is about support in adaptation processes grounded in a context with structures that promote balance between the sociocultural aspects that individuals bring from their country of origin, and those they come across in the new country. A significant focus should also be placed on preventive social work such as polarisation, subcultures and interventions in violent environments.

The identification of traumas, need for socialisation measures and social pedagogy support are vital for the future integration of the new arrivals, as well as for their psychological and social well-being. The target group is perceived as a vulnerable group, where many carry memories of war and organised violence, and are in need of special treatment in a culturally foreign country. The social pedagogy approach is based on treating people with social problems and providing support through the role expectations available. The approach highlights the relational interaction between the individual and society. The objective is to eliminate existing exclusion and use social confirmation to change problematic situations and reinforce positive social interaction. The opportunities for social education in social work with traumatised clients can be developed on the basis of Eriksson's (2014) three strategic dimensions. These are partly based on adaptive, mobilising and socio-dynamic interventions.

Concluding discussion

As a result of global migration there are growing multi-ethnic societies and multicultural group of clients' populations that require integration into appropriate social services. This study highlights the complexity of and challenges for the social pedagogy in Swedish context. The existing dynamics of socio-political environment must take migration policy into consideration when formulating social work and social pedagogy practice. In today's multicultural society with the existing notions of multiculturalism, it is difficult to define a

uniform culture or homogeneous living conditions (Aman, 2012; Berry, 1997; Chambon, 2013). This calls for social pedagogy interventions toward migrant populations to improve social protection and decrease social segregation. Social pedagogy work toward integration requires sensitivity to a person's world (Grunwald and Thiersch, 2009) and the specific patterns existing within societal transcultural similarities and differences that exist among people from various cultural backgrounds.

A simplified dichotomisation of a population with domestic and foreign backgrounds respectively, has been brought up in the current discourse where people argue that a negative focus on the migration perspective may obscure the heterogeneity of the population as a whole (Carlson, 2006; Hamde, 2008). Dividing citizens into minority groups can lead to a culturalization of people's living conditions that plays down the differences in power and the integration difficulties of minority groups. Access to financial resources and material circumstances constitute tangible power states that strengthen or limit the room for manoeuvre of the individual. Consequently, pattern of social segregation and demands in social protection correlate, in several aspects, with social work and social pedagogy field of implementation. Depending on the process' character of integration there may be numerous obstacles that may define the situations involved in social pedagogy operations. The significant brake with the universalistic welfare state model implies the potential emergence of new poor and vulnerable population. Blume, et al., (2007) found immigration to be a determinant of poverty among newcomers. Social assistance formed as social pedagogy programs is in this context very important in enhancing the life changes of marginalised populations. Pedagogical performativity as a creative movement of appropriate support may improve lives of migrants currently in the in-between phase of the integration process.

Social work research indicates that social workers, facing the challenge of everyday practice, in general are subjected to high workloads. Social work in Sweden is currently experiencing severe problems with organising the work and different operations are experiencing difficulties in providing the support necessary for quality assurance and skills training of employees (Astvik, Melin & Allvin 2014). The provisions that regulate how social workers treat their clients depend on the organisation and the societal framework that regulates the current organisation. The current situation in society leads to social workers having to strike a balance between their clients' lifeworld and the regulatory framework in which they operate. The social pedagogy approach to social work normally relates to the living space that people create, rather than to institutions of bureaucracy (Grunwald and Thiersch, 2009). In social practice, employees are often faced with complicated pragmatic

situations where they indicate difficulties in reconciling the hands-on knowledge with the existing bureaucratic framework (Astvik, Melin & Allvin, 2014). Beyond the everyday instrumental activities, such as assessment of assistance needs, *phronesis* is a social-ethical knowledge that engages with the objective of helping the client become part of the community. Building social reciprocity and a shared social life must be considered as being beyond instrumental operational patterns where the actions themselves are considered good in a social-ethical sense.

Current tendencies of accepting an impersonal professionalism, strongly linked to an understanding of bureaucratic limitations, create a dependency on individuals in social work situations. Thus, practice is linked to the bureaucracy's divided and strongly regulated fields of every day social work routines in relation to what Gibbon et al., (1994) call useful and serviceable application of knowledge developed on the basis of an instrumental form of expertise. The extant organisation that persists must be considered counterproductive in instances of complex demands and an increasing need for a flexible framework within which the social worker can operate (Boccagni and Richard, 2015; Bryson 1992). While it is strategically important in social work to focus on the lifeworld of the individual (Grunwald and Thierch, 2009), its efforts in the Swedish context are, to a great extent, framed by bureaucratic procedure (Herz, 2016). Simultaneously, Eliassi (2014) showed that Swedish social workers regard cultural differences as key when designing interventions. Thus, there is a need for improving professional awareness regarding the decontextualized officialdom and structural everyday inequalities that may be reproduced within social services among immigrant groups.

The new types of created contexts must not limit the social pedagogy pragmatism of the meeting with and treatment of a vulnerable client. Social work as a field needs to articulate its theoretical and pragmatic framework in order to be able to develop interventions that address new forms of sociocultural spaces and support inclusive social communities. Important research questions need to be asked concerning the educational models that social work requires in addressing clients in vulnerable situations who have different cultural affiliations. Currently, there is a growing uncertainty concerning the existing level of protection and the growing class disparities, which pose a severe challenge to the future of the Swedish welfare system in a globalized world. Today's social work indicates an inherent tension between the fundamental tasks of practitioners, the demands of the position and the structural conditions of society. As integration and re-socialising are considered one process, social work and social pedagogy need to focus on the strategies used, how and under which conditions they

are used, as well as the consequences of their use. Mobilised adaptation, a coordinated integration process and the motivation and confirmation of the individual should also be highlighted based on intersectoralism and the structure of the society in question. The key issue is whether there is a willingness and an opportunity to take responsibility for *the other*? What challenges will social work come across in integrating the newly arrived vulnerable groups? Will the Swedish welfare model need to be redefined and if so, in what way? Who will pay for development of a process of inclusion to the existing welfare level of new arrivals? In the end, it is not the rules alone that matter most, but the quality of actual provision of social services.

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