

POSSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN AND YOUTHS CENTRES IN DIMINISHING THE SOCIAL REJECTION

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Abstract

The article looks upon the possibilities of leisure time and support centres in diminishing the social risks and rejection of children and youths. Having studied the social pedagogical practice of Latvia, the article reflects the most salient social risks of children and youths, their causes and possible social pedagogical solutions for diminishing those negative influences. The article provides the general characteristics of the leisure time and support centres, main principles and functions of activities. The evaluation of the possibilities of Ventspils leisure time centre for the social pedagogical work to diminish the rejection is presented in the article; moreover, particular shortcomings and unused possibilities in diminishing social risks are pointer out. The Children and youths leisure time centres have a critical role in diminishing the social risks. Only in close cooperation with comprehensive schools, interest education institutions, children and youths' leisure time centres and other state and municipality institutions we can achieve success in diminishing the social rejection in the society.

KEY WORDS: socialization risks, social rejection, leisure time and support centres, promotion of socialization, social pedagogical activities of the municipalities.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje apžvelgtos laisvalaikio rēmimo centru galimybės mažinant vaikų ir jaunimo socialinį atskirtumą. Tiriant Latvijos socialinės pedagogikos praktiką, straipsnyje aptarti pagrindiniai vaikų ir jaunimo socialiniai rizikos veiksniai, jų priežastys ir galimi socialiniai-pedagoginiai sprendimai, mažinant šią neigiamą įtaką. Taip pat pristatyti laisvalaikio centrai, jų pagrindiniai veiklos principai ir funkcijos, aptartos Ventspilio laisvalaikio centro socialinės pedagogikos veiklos, mažinant atskirtumą, galimybės, nurodyti trūkumai ir neišnaudotos galimybės. Mažinant socialinės rizikos veiksnių įtaką, pagrindinį darbą atlieka vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrai. Tik glaudžiai bendradarbiaujant su bendrojo lavinimo mokyklomis, papildomo ugdymo įstaigomis, vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrais ir kitomis valstybinėmis ir savivaldybių įstaigomis galima pasiekti puikių rezultatų mažinant visuomenės socialinį atskirtumą.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: socializacijos rizika, socialinis atskirtumas, laisvalaikio centrai, socializacijos pažanga, savivaldybių socialinė-pedagoginė veikla.

Introduction

The contemporary post- industrial society offers the most diverse possibilities for the individual development by providing the necessary conditions for the socialization of the personality in the wide range of offers. The social, economic and cultural environment is able to create a corresponding positive socialization support system for each individual, which promotes the personality's successful joining in the society as well as conscious acquisition of particular attitudes, values and norms.

The Latvian society of the 21st century may be characterized not only as a transition society which is trying to master the norms of democratic life and forget the ideological biases but it has also in a very short period of time turned into a consumer society which has both its positive and negative features. The today's consumer is able

to fully meet his needs starting with the world around him and finishing with the wide range of cultural offers. The use of these possibilities depends on several factors:

- Provision of the individual's financial resources.
- Individual understanding of the developmental conditions he really needs.
- The ability of the individual to see his aims in the context of the society developmental trends.
- Preconditions of the individual's physical development and health conditions.
- The individual's skill to evaluate the possible risks of his social activity, etc. (Baldiņš, Raževa, 2006, lpp. 30).

Despite the gradually progressing increase in people's living standards, the Latvian society faces the economic stratification. Only that part of the society which is economically secured may use the wide choice of consumption. Unfortunately the large families, the children from families whose parents are unemployed as well as a part of the minority representatives is moved away from the above mentioned offer due to financial consequences, i.e., due to poverty.

Aim of this study: to find out the possibilities of Children and Youths centres in diminishing the social rejection.

Methods of research:

- Analysis of literature and documents.
- Interviews.
- Social pedagogical observation.
- Content analysis.

Results

Along with the poverty other factors, too, are noticeable in the socialization of children and youth, which may negatively influence the formation of young generation's social experience, such as, the low level of education of their parents, criminal background of the family, the health problems of the parents and children and youths themselves, violence in the family and among peers, social mobbing at school, etc.

When evaluating the present possibilities of the family and school in decreasing social risks, one should recognize their insufficient capacity and the possibilities defined by the system. The changes in the family structure which are expressed as a two-generation family in which the education of the children is carried out by only one parent due to parents' busyness in paid work, the lack of children's social and pedagogical control before and after the school as well as during children's vacation, creates a possibility for the child to unconsciously abide to the social risks and to develop the social experience unacceptable to the societal norms (Bērnus un kriminalitāte, 2001). The general comprehensive education system at present is aim-oriented towards knowledge, the development of pragmatic skills and abilities in children's and youths'

experience neglecting the aspects of personality's qualitative development. School as one of the most important instances of socialization tries to achieve the qualitative advance of pupils' knowledge, it is ready to even to violate the rights of children and youths for the safe physical and psychic development by inadmissibly increasing the study content and the time necessary for its acquisition. Children whose learning motivation is insufficient and the learning cognitive motives are not a priority are subjected to psychological aggressiveness during the study process at school which leads the child and the youth to drop the school which had to be a conflict free zone. Recently the tendencies of social rejection among the classmates are vividly expressed in schools of Latvia. This phenomenon touches those children and youths who in property or developmental aspect are different from the others. As the social pedagogical practice proves the class teachers and the school pedagogical staff on the whole not always is informed and sees the problem; besides their insufficient competence in conflict solving does not allow to lessen this risk factor in due time. The above-mentioned situation makes the society actively look for the solution to this problem how to decrease the influence of the social risks on the course of children's and youths' socialization. The analysis of the activities of Latvia's pedagogical environment presents one of the potential directions of solving the problem – the development of children and youths' leisure time centres. The leisure time spending of children and youths in the experience of parents and teachers often relates to the children and youths' interest education institutions, former pupils' centres and present interest education centres which have rich traditions in the country. However, the analysis of the work of these institutions testifies that not all the social needs of children find support in these interest programs and interest clubs.

The most salient features of Children and youths' leisure time centres (further in the text – CYLTC) are the following:

- Accessibility of CYLTC to children and youths the whole after-school time;
- CYLTC ensures a possibility to spend the leisure time under pedagogical guidance though not limiting the content of child's expressions if it is in a socially acceptable form;
- In case of need the CYLTC offers social pedagogical support for children's and youths' families by involving them in activities;
- CYLTC ensures the satisfaction of children's primary needs (food, clothing, possibility to wash, laundry, etc.);
- CYLTC offers support to pupils in doing their home assignments, in purchasing the teaching materials;
- CYLTC offers a possibility to acquire information from TV and INTERNET in the free time as well as to read children's publications and daily press;
- CYLTC promotes the cultural educational activity of children, youths and their families by organizing excursions, hiking, visits to concerts, theatres, cinema and other entertainments.

The given difference reflects directly the main functions of CYLTC:

1. Preventive function:

- Informing about the possible social risks and their consequences,
- signing of an agreement between the Centre and the customer who actually eliminates any expression of anti-social behavior;
- finding out the basic needs of children, youths and their families and creating conditions for satisfying these needs.

2. Resocialization function:

- critical evaluation and change of the present life and everyday life;
- change of the present activity models and cooperation skills;
- facilitation of getting aware of new, respectful needs;
- simultaneous social pedagogical support to the child and family.

3. Educational function:

- promotion of acquiring new knowledge about oneself and one's problems (social environment);,
- promotion of the necessary skills and abilities;
- enrichment of the emotional sphere and enlargement of the emotional world;
- strengthening of children's, youths' and their parents' power of volition;
- strengthening of self-analysis and critical skills (Martin, 1997).

As it is seen the children and youths' leisure time centres observe essential social pedagogical and social work principles in their functioning:

- they are oriented towards everyday life and life of people – the starting point and end point is the experience of the addressees;
- they are connected with the situation – they develop positive attitude towards the peer group and the friends;
- they take into consideration the social conditions – it pays attention to, e.g., parents' unemployment, some socially burning problem;
- they are oriented towards participation – the addressees have the right to participate in decision making concerning the situation and the people;
- they put emphasis on integration – there is no division or segregation, a person with strange behaviour or disability is not pushed aside;
- they are connected with the addressee – the content of the activity refers to a definite problem and the needs of the respective children and youths (Овчарова, 2002).

A complex approach to lessening the social risks of children and youths lies at the basis of activities of the centres situated in the residential areas. One must positively assess the recent practice in Latvia to establish such leisure time centres in many

towns of Latvia, thus decreasing the social division and distancing. All the structures providing social service and ensuring the environmental order in municipalities work on the territorial principle and this makes the work of these centres easier. It ensures a possibility to involve children and teenagers from disadvantaged social risk and financially poorly-off families in the work of the leisure time centres. The territorial social workers, municipality inspectors responsible for the minors and the leisure time social pedagogues work in a team with a common aim – to find and to involve all children and youths in socially acceptable forms of spending the free time. The leisure time centres in the residential areas offer a wide choice of activities which children, youths and their families willingly use. If the material support the exemplary school or the interest education institution offers frequently is rejected because the socially weak families are ashamed that they are given clothes and footwear brought by the visitors of the centre from well-off families and this provision of support is public then in the residential areas this giving and getting support is more anonymous. The visitors of the leisure time centre have a similar social fate and the sense of shame is lesser.

During the study the researchers analyzed the documentation of Ventspils Children and Youths' Support Centre "Nāc līdzi!" – Statutes, working plans, visual material (pictures, photo albums, presentations made by children and youths, posters of the events). The analysis of the documents proved that during the respective period the centre had been working along the following directions:

- Social and pedagogical assistance to children who come from social risk families, suffer from neglect and form the so called environment of "street children".
- Informative and educational work in children's sexual education and their understanding of substances causing addiction thus promoting the strengthening of their understanding about the advantages of healthy lifestyle.
- Informative and educational work in developing the societal attitude in cases of children's abuse and leaving them in neglect.
- Psychological assistance to children, adolescents and their parents and other adults connected with children working individually or in support groups.
- Implementation of different useful leisure time events.
- Pedagogical supervision group "Rīta skoliņa"/ The Morning School/ of 2–6 years old children which promotes the development of children's interaction skills with their peers.

Ventspils Children and Youths' Support Centre "Nāc līdzi!" is situated in the centre of Ventspils, in the residential area of multi-apartment housing; its branch is situated in Pārventa district of the city. Such a placement of the centre allows children and teenagers from all districts of the city attend the Centre and use its services.

The working time of Ventspils Children and Youths' Support Centre "Nāc līdzi!" has been planned so that children and youths are able to use its services immediately after school. Thus the pedagogical control of children and youths is being ensured as well as their rights to be in a safe and conflict-free place. The ensuring of this basic

social need to children and teenagers from the social risk families forms a positive experience how to spend the free time in a normative environment and within normative behaviour, to evade from criminal activities and social risks. The Centre offers support to children and teenagers who might feel endangered psychologically or physically in their families and helps them to escape from violence which one can meet in an uncontrolled environment (meaningless spending of time outside family, school or centre on the street) on the part of their peers.

The Centre provides possibilities for children, teenagers and in case of need also their parents to satisfy their basic needs – free food to children, washing of personal clothes, showers. As it was admitted by the interviewed staff of the Centre and the parents, the free food to children is of significant importance to the families, taking into consideration their financial and material situation. The parents told that the support of the centre to the family creates the sense of security for their children, that in case the family lacks financial resources the children will be provided a hot and substantial meal at least once a day. The feeding of children and teenagers organized at the Centre is important also from the aspect of socialization – children master positive social skills in eating culture, they learn how to use appropriate cutlery and tableware for the particular food.

As many children and teenagers come from socially unprovided families who live in materially poor conditions (their flats have no running water and sewage system, bad central heating, interruption in electricity supply, overpopulation of premises, etc.), the Centre provides comfortable conditions for these children to spend their leisure time in harmonious and arranged surroundings and environment – spacious, light, clean and warm rooms. This creates positive experience in children and they develop the understanding of qualitative living space and thus they will be able to use the acquired experience in their independent lives.

The results of the interviews allow concluding that the support given by the Centre to children for providing them with clothing and footwear has been highly appreciated both by the children and their parents. The staff of the Centre try to develop a careful attitude towards the clothing and outer appearance which previously has caused the isolation of these children and teenagers in their schools. Therefore the Centre gives these children a possibility to take a shower if there is no hot water at their homes as well as to wash their clothes free of charge.

The study proves that the children's parents single out the following services as primarily important at the Centre:

- provision of food;
- provision of pedagogical control and supervision;
- assistance in doing the home assignments.

The children and teenagers attending the Centre, in their turn, point out as the most important the following possibilities offered by the Centre:

- a possibility to spend the leisure time in an interesting way among their peers;

- to work with the computer and Internet;
- to use toys and games which they do not have at home.

During the study it was stated that the Centre with the wide range of services provided in fact ensures satisfying children and youths' needs. Every day the Centre organizes educational lessons and out-of-door leisure time activities for 5 hours – listening to music, table tennis, table hockey and other games as well as working with the computer and Internet and provides support in doing the home assignments for school. Besides these activities children and teenagers have a possibility to attend regularly swimming classes at the city swimming-pool and the skating-rink. The Centre also organizes different excursions to the local museums, city library and hiking tours in the neighbourhood. These activities of spending the leisure time enlarge the social experience of its customers by showing models how to use free time more usefully and fruitfully. It should be mentioned that these activities are organized simultaneously for all children and teenagers regardless of their age, national belonging and the social status of the family. The respondents involved in the study in most cases mentioned the positive atmosphere reigning in these events. The mentioned differences, however, is not the basis for interpersonal and intergroup conflicts if such arise during the events of the Centre. Thus the activities of the Centre promote a positive integration of different children and teenagers in the society through learning tolerance and understanding being together with different children.

In cases there arise some interpersonal disagreements during the leisure time activities, the psychologist and social pedagogue of the Centre eliminate the cause of the conflict and its escalation. The social pedagogical work and psychological situations continue in order to teach children to understand the mistakes in their behaviour and to learn to control their actions by increasing the level of their personal communicative control.

The social pedagogical studies on the practice of children and youths' leisure time centres reveal also some disadvantages and limitations in implementing the aims of these institutions. The practice of these centres to define strict timing in which the children and youths of a certain age group may spend their free time has little social pedagogical validation, for instance:

10 a.m.–4 .30 p.m. grade 1–6 pupils

5 p.m.–8 p.m. grade 7–12 pupils.

Such an approach is not acceptable because several children of the same family attend the centre and thus the unity of this family is under danger. The spending of the leisure time in evening hours is topical also for junior school pupils whose parents are working at that time.

Not always the centres have teaching resources available needed for supporting the doing of school home tasks at the centre; besides the staff of the centre not always is trained for such a task.

Conclusions

The social pedagogical intervention is made more difficult in Latvia due to linguistic communication among the children, youths and pedagogical staff who represent different nationalities. As the visitors of the centre are children, youths and parents whose mother tongue is not Latvian and its acquisition had not been sufficient, the pedagogical staff has to perform social pedagogical activities with the help of the Russian language. Thus it is necessary to organize social rehabilitation or resocialization trainings simultaneously to different groups which demand more people, greater material and premise resources and additional competences.

In the conclusion it should be mentioned that present social pedagogical practice of Latvia testifies that children and youths leisure time centres have a critical role in lessening the risks. Only in close cooperation with comprehensive schools, interest education institutions, children and youths' leisure time centres and other state and municipality institutions we may achieve success in lessening the social rejection in society.

Gauta 2007 07 12

Pasirašyta spaudai 2007 08 28

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VAIKŪ IR JAUNIMO RĒMIMO CENTRŪ GALIMYBĒS MAŽINANT SOCIALINĀ ATSKIRTUMĀ

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Santrauka

Šiuolaikinė popramoninė visuomenė siūlo įvairių individo vystymosi galimybių, siekdama užtikrinti asmenybės socializacijai būtinas sąlygas. Socialinė, ekonominė ir kultūrinė aplinka gali sukurti kiekvienam individui tinkamą teigiamą socializacijos paramos sistemą, kuri skatintų sėkmingą asmenybės brandą, skatintų sąmoningai puoselėti požūrius ir vertybes.

XXI amžiaus Latvijos visuomenė apibūdinama ne tik kaip pereinamojo laikotarpio visuomenė, kai pažįstamos demokratinio gyvenimo normos ir pamirštami ideologiniai apribojimai. Per gana trumpą laikotarpį ji tapo vartotojų visuomene, kuriai būdingos

konkrečios teigiamos ir neigiamos savybės. Vartotojas šiandien gali užtikrinti visas savo reikmes, pradėdamas materialinėmis vertybėmis ir baigiant kultūros pasiūla.

Naudojimas esamomis galimybėmis priklauso nuo daugelio veiksnių:

- individo finansinių išteklių užtikrinimo;
- individo supratimo, kokios būtinos sąlygos, kad galėtų tinkamai bręsti;
- individo gebėjimo kelti tikslus visuomenės išsivystymo tendencijų kontekste;
- individo fizinio išsivystymo ir sveikatos būklės sąlygų;
- individo gebėjimo įvertinti savo socialinės veiklos galimą riziką ir t. t.

Darbo tikslas – aptarti vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrų galimybes mažinant socialinį atskirtumą.

Problema nagrinėjama taikant šiuos tyrimo metodus: literatūros ir dokumentų analizė, interviu, socialinis-pedagoginis stebėjimas. Empirinė tyrimo bazė: Ventspilio dienos centras „Einam kartu“ ir Rygos miesto vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrai. Nagrinėjant šeimos ir mokyklos veiklos galimybes mažinant socialinę riziką, reikia pripažinti nepakankamą jų imlumą ir visuomenės diktuojamas taisykles. Šeimų sandaros pokyčiai (dviejų kartų šeima), kai vis dažniau vaikus augina tik vienas iš tėvų, didelis tėvų užimtumas darbe, vaikų socialinės ir pedagoginės kontrolės trūkumas iki ir pomokykliniu laikotarpiu, mokinių atostogų metu, sudaro vaikui sąlygas nesąmoningai paklusti socialinėms rizikoms ir vystyti visuomenės normų neatitinkančią socialinę patirtį. Pastaruoju metu Latvijos mokyklų gyvenime ypač ryškus vaikų ir jaunimo socialinis atskirtumas tarp klasės draugų. Tai ypač aktualu vaikams ir paaugliams, kurie finansiškai ar išsivystymo požiūriais skiriasi nuo kitų. Kaip rodo socialinės pedagogikos praktika, klasių auklėtojai ir mokyklos pedagogai ne visada yra informuoti ir įžvelgia šią problemą, yra nepakankamai kompetentingi spręsti socialinius konfliktus, neleidžia laiku šio rizikos veiksnio sumažinti. Minėta situacija skatina visuomenę ieškoti būdų, kaip mažinti socialinės rizikos įtaką vykstant vaikų ir jaunimo socializacijai. Latvijos pedagoginės aplinkos veiklos analizė rodo vieną galimų problemos sprendimo krypčių – plėtoti vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrų veiklą.

Taigi vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio ir rėmimo centrų (toliau – LC) veiklos požymiai:

- LC prieinamas vaikams ir jaunimui visą mokymosi laiką.
- LC užtikrinamas laisvalaikio leidimas pedagoginės vadybos sąlygomis, neribojant vaikų saviraiškos laisvės, jeigu pasirinktos formos yra socialiai priimtinos.
- LC prireikus siūlo socialinę-pedagoginę pagalbą vaikų ir paauglių šeimoms, jas įtraukia į savo veiklą.
- LC užtikrina vaikų pirminių reikmių (maitinimas, apranga, higiena ir t. t.) tenkinimą.
- LC teikia paramą mokiniams ruošiant mokyklines užduotis, suteikia mokytis būtinų priemonių.

- LC siūlo laisvalaikiu naudotis TV ir internetu teikiama informacija, skaityti vaikų literatūrą ir spaudos leidinius.
- LC skatina vaikų, jaunimo ir jų šeimų kultūrinį lavinimąsi: organizuoja ekskursijas, žygius, teatro, kino, koncertų ir kitų renginių lankymą.

Latvijoje iki šiol socialinės pedagogikos veikla sudėtinga dėl skirtingų tautybių vaikų, jaunimo ir centro pedagoginio personalo nesusikalbėjimo, nes tarp centro klientų yra vaikų, jaunimo ir jų tėvų, kuriems latvių kalba nėra gimtoji, ji mokama nepakankamai gerai, todėl socialiniai pedagogai priversti vartoti rusų kalbą. Todėl laisvalaikio centruose socialinės reabilitacijos ar resocializacijos pratybas būtina rengti vienu metu įvairioms grupėms, nes reikia didesnių žmonių, materialinių išteklių ir patalpų.

Taigi Latvijos socialinės pedagogikos praktika jau šiandien rodo, kad vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrai padeda mažinti socialinę riziką. Tik glaudžiai bendradarbiaujant bendrojo lavinimo mokykloms, švietimo įstaigoms, vaikų ir jaunimo laisvalaikio centrums ir kitoms valstybės, savivaldybės įstaigoms, galima sumažinti visuomenės narių socialinį atskirtumą.