48.1 - Inequalities, Discrimination and Inclusion: Expectations and Variations in Social Pedagogical Work with Unaccompanied Young Refugees in Institutional Care in Sweden

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Abstract

The study purpose was to provide new understanding about: 1) institution personnel narratives about the day-to-day work of taking care of young people who experienced a war, fled to Sweden and were cared for and placed in institutions; and 2) interactive patterns contributing to constructing the category 'social pedagogue'. The material was gathered through interviews with personnel who work with these young people at residential or care homes. The social pedagogic perspective in social sciences stresses including the individual in the community, which gives the individual confirmation of an identity through community participation. Successful interaction between individuals is fundamental for achieving community integration of unaccompanied children and young people in Sweden. Analysis of the study’s empirical material reveals major variations in what is expected of a social pedagogue working in institutional care in Sweden with unaccompanied young refugees who have experiences of war. A common denominator is that the mission of and context in which the social pedagogue operates appear flexible enough to enable an individual to play the role in a variety of ways. Only when the individual social pedagogue adopts an active, assertive, independent, personal and relatively strong posture will there be a chance of being important to other professional categories and for the client. From a Swedish perspective, it is easy to imagine that the war’s consequences are taking place ‘over there’, in a different country or another part of the world, at another time in place. It therefore becomes especially important to allow people with war experiences who are in Sweden to share and relate how the experiences are significant here and now. By allowing this sharing, knowledge is also created about how preconceptions, inequalities and discrimination can be faced and discouraged.

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