

# **The Concept Of Multidisciplinarity In The System Of Helping Professions In The Context Of Undergraduate Education Of A Social Worker And A Special Pedagogue**

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**Abstract:** This project shows a collection of different helping professions. The main project aim is to describe selected job positions (helping profession) and, afterwards, draw attention to the essence of the importance of interdisciplinarity cooperation in order to guarantee the student success. This means, in this project several professions will be described and then interrelated in order to demonstrate how it is necessary that all of them work together and cooperate. All of this, paying special attention to the education field.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In this essay I will expose some of the different helping professions carried out nowadays in our undergraduate education system. It is important to consider that there are many and different professions whose aim is to help people (or students in this specific case). It is necessary to know deeply what each of them consists of. In this writing I will take a close look at four of these occupations: social workers, social educators, special pedagogues and school counselors.

It is important to highlight the definition of each of these professionals. Once the definition is clear and each of them is surely differentiated from each other, I will talk about their functions, competences and skills. After that, it is crucial to look at these jobs through an academic and educative vision. This means that I will talk about their importance in the context of undergraduate education.

In the analysing and development part, the interdisciplinary cooperation between these workers will be evaluated. So, as it is the main aim of this writing, I will talk about the importance that the cooperation between all the helping professionals has in order to guarantee the students success.

In order to sum up, I will make a brief conclusion with some of my opinions towards the studied and described topic.

## **II. THEORETICAL PART - RESEARCH**

To begin, I will expose the different definitions of the helping professions and their different functions and competences. In this part I will also talk about their importance inside the education field.

### *Chapter 1: Social Worker*

The social workers focus their work on the human being. When talking about the human being these workers, according to Puyol and Hernández (2009), focus on the environment in which they live and the different situations which imply any necessity of action and help. This means that the social worker needs to study and act on two different things. On one hand, it acts on the people while, on the other hand, it acts on the environment and the human surroundings with the aim of guaranteeing both general and personal benefit.

Kisnerman (1990) specify that the collective of people on which a social worker acts are those people who can not solve their special needs themselves and ask them for help.

A specific project about social work in the European superior education space carried out by María Jesús Domínguez in 2003, states that social work needs to act towards all those social changes that demand new requests of action inside the education field. This takes us to talk about how the concept of “Social Worker” is addressed in education and its functions.

If we look at the relationship between education and social work we need to talk about three types of education first, depending on how it is organised. The types, according to Coombs and Ahmed (1973) are: formal education; “the highly institutionalised education system which expands from the first years of primary education until the latest university years”, informal education; “a longlife process through which the people acquire and gather knowledge and skills through daily experiences and their relationship with the environment” and non formal education; “all the educative activities done outside the official system”.

Social workers play an important role in all three types of education as they need to adapt their job to the student's environment, context and learning but their paper is crucial in informal and non formal education. According to Freire (1980) they play such an important role because they are the ones who, using the discussion method, get to the learning of another type of knowledge (that depends on each one) that it is also important to consider and that goes further than formal education. The work done by Freire concluded that social workers are a good support tool to the current formal teachers.

### *Chapter 2: Social Educator*

Very close to the social worker figure we find the social educators. Social educators may also be considered helping professionals because they are needed to give different tools in order to improve our social lives. The social education is defined by the Spanish State Association of Social Education as a “citizenship right which takes the form of recognition of a profession of a pedagogical nature, generating educational contexts and mediating and training actions” (2007, p.3). These mediating and training actions are the ones that have the helping role.

So, the social educator is the person in charge of transmitting the type of knowledge that contains an important social calibre in order to educate towards an integral socialisation. As an educator, there is an extremely close relation between this profession and the educational field. According to Molina and Blázquez (2006) the social educator is the person in charge of go over culture and mediate between the social context and the people living it, giving them the knowledge and tools that they need to live it. This one would be its main function.

In undergraduate education it would be necessary to have a type of social education that covers all the students and not only the ones with specific necessities. In this way, all students can get a social knowledge from the social educators that would let them face real life situations and contexts.

According to Borges and Cid (2019) social education does not require any evaluation and this fact helps the students to have a kind of confidence that they do not have with their current teachers. As this is a clear advantage and as Frigola (2021) states in his study, the social educators should be seen as current teachers supporters by giving them help in different social, emocional and individual circumstances and they would play an essential role in the undergraduate education. This means that schools should begin to consider the role of these educators and give them more importance that the one they currently have nowadays.

### *Chapter 3: Special Pedagogue*

As in the case of social educators, every school needs to count with the presence of special pedagogues. Special pedagogues focus their profession on the students who show any special need. According to Urnėzienė and Budrytė (2014) these pedagogues help those students by working on their not fully functional features. Moreover, they collaborate with the students' parents and current teachers in order to guarantee the complete success of the student.

The following picture shows the three main objectives that, according to Zemancíková (2010), the pedagogues should fulfil in order to help the different groups of students:

- **Answer to the increasing amount of undesirable behavior of students.** Target group: students with problematic behavior in terms of upbringing and social pathological behavior.
- **Answer to the need of equal education opportunities.** Target group: students from socially disadvantaged environment.
- **An offensive answer of social pedagogy to current developments in society, aiming to preserve normality and health of individuals and groups.** Target group: all school students.

Zemančíková, 2010

The most important skill that special pedagogues need to show is their love to their job and to their students, who need to feel this love in order to show their progress. Mahfuza (2019) states that special pedagogues have a great capacity to get inside the students' context and, in consequence, that they need to develop a great responsibility towards the children with special needs in order to guarantee them the same advance as the rest of the students of the education system.

*Chapter 4: School counselor*

Every school counts with a helping professional whose paper is crucial; the school counselor. According to Villarroel, Gairín and Garcés (2017) the school counselor is a person whose role inside the school organisation is to make it better, promote changes and help its members. Depending on each context the counselor job will be focused in one way or another.

In fact, the school counselor has different functions and, in order to accomplish them, he needs to have several competences. The study carried out by Villarroel, Gairín and Garcés (2017, p.100) classifies the competences in four big groups which are: “Guidance leadership, Guidance project management, Guidance on vocational and personal development and Pedagogical accompaniment”. In the next table the different skills are exposed:

<b>SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS</b>
<b><i>I group: Guiding leadership</i></b>
Spread the institutional educational project allowing the school community to feel identified with the educational institution.
Adopt ideas and make judgments aimed at improving the quality of education in vulnerable contexts.
Generate collaborative intervention strategies with family support and psychosocial-vocational projects in the educational institution of vulnerable contexts.
Manage conflicts, ability to negotiate and solve disagreements between members of the educational community.
<b><i>II Group: Guidance project management</i></b>
Socialize clear visions and the influences done by the environment on the biopsychosocial development of the schoolchild to teachers and students in a vulnerable context.
Analyze the situations of personal, educational and vocational development of students with school levels.
Design intervention projects focused on personal, educational and vocational development, depending on the

students, for their integration and participation in the working world.
Attend internal criteria of excellence and school performance according to the specific educational needs of students in the educational community.
<b>III Group: Guidance on vocational and personal development</b>
Apply vocational exploration techniques that aim at the self-awareness of students in the educational community.
Develop skills of socialization and empathy with techniques and instruments appropriated to the needs and sociocultural reality of students.
Apply intervention methodologies to strengthen pedagogical practices that involve the commitment of all school workers in obtaining learning results from the students of the educational institution.
Collaborate in support networks with Higher Education institutions to provide effective guidance to students.
<b>IV Group: Pedagogical accompaniment</b>
To develop social and personal skills for communication and goals achievement in the students of the educational community.
Apply intervention methodologies incorporated in pedagogical practices that involve everyone's commitment in the achievement of academic goals.
Adopt ideas and make judgments aimed at improving the quality of education in vulnerable contexts. Promote teamwork among the different workers of the school community.

Table 1. Translation from the Villarroel, Gairín and Garcés (2017, p. 108) list of skills

All these skills are demonstrated in the school counselor functions. The Sanz and Sobrado (1998) investigation talks about six different functions that would be: “Diagnostic-evaluative function, informative function, formative function, support function, therapist function, preventive function” (p.41). If we consider all this function we can say that the counselors’ paper is indispensable in the helping and guidance process of all students.

In fact, students are the ones who most need this professional figure. As Amor and Serrano (2020) state, students positively value the school counselor job because it is crucial to solve their learning difficulties and for their academic orientation. So, we could say that the most important areas of intervention of these workers are the professional orientation and personal advising area and the orientation in teaching and learning processes area.

### **III. Analysis And Development: Interdisciplinary Cooperation**

The matter that I want to discuss in this essay is the relationship established between the different professions that I have just developed. The first highlighted thing is that they are all helping professionals. If we take this idea we should consider how they are related to each other and, after that, how they cooperate to offer their help. Moreover, I would like to focus this interdisciplinary cooperation specifically in the education field. According to Stárek (2021) “for establishing team cooperation is crucial that other members accept individual differences, learn to understand, respect others, and build personal relationships with other members of the teams. Every member is important and can bring something unique to the team”.

On one hand, I would like to connect the labour of the social worker with the one of the social educator. It is important to state that the social educator will give the students or the people in general the main tools to correctly live and get along with the environment surrounding them. If the people accept and embrace those tools the intervention of social workers would not be so necessary. According to what I have said in the theoretical part, the social worker would consider every person's environment and situation in order to help him or her. In fact, if this person has got the instruments to accurately face his or her social challenges the social worker intervention can be focused on other matters of the subject.

So, the social worker and the social educator should be related in order to complement each other. This means, the social worker should tell the social educator the main social problems that students face in their daily life, in order that the educator can give them the best strategies and advice to face those situations before they become really alarming and before they need the social worker intervention once again.

On the other hand, I need to consider the relation that I have just made and relate it with the special pedagogue job. As they focus on the students' special needs, they need to know their social background in order to design specific pedagogical intervention programs. The suitable people that will give them this kind of information would be both, social workers and social educators. Moreover, the special pedagogue will cooperate and collaborate with the social worker and the social educator labour because he will give them specific data about what the students (both the ones who need special needs and the ones that do not, as special pedagogues would help every of them if necessary) need in order to learn and progress properly and according with their social surrounding. So, we find here another relation between all these professions.

Last, I mentioned before the school counselor job and his labour is also closely related with all the professionals that I have mentioned. As the school counselor offers his help by guiding the students, he needs to know each student perfectly. We have seen that students change depending on their social context, so school counselors need to obtain this contextual information from someone in order to guide students correctly.

Those who would help the counselor in this labour would be the three professionals that I have explained before. Every of those professionals would give the school counselor specific and useful information about the student. The social educator will tell which social tools the student has in order that the counselor knows the starting point. The social worker will concrete on the social problems that students face in order that the school counselor know which kind of orientation is necessary. Last, the relation between the school counselor and the special pedagogue is indispensable because they need each other in order to create educational and orientative programs adapted to the students needs.

Looking the other way round, the school counselor can give each of these professionals a response of what they find in their guiding labour in order that every of the professionals deepen on their knowledge about the student.

Therefore, I have seen that all this helping professionals are related to each other and that their collaboration with each other is fundamental for the correct development of a person or student. Moreover, I must highlight their cooperation and multidisciplinarity as they all have the same aim, helping those who need it.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper was to show how important helping professionals inside the educational field is. In addition, I wanted to relate them as they each collaborate and complement each other.

I have exposed what their labour consists of, what objectives and competences they have and how they help the students. The thinking that I have done later concludes that they are professionals that need information provided by other helping professionals. As they all have a purpose, cooperation is elemental in order to guarantee everyone social, educational and personal success.

In conclusion, by the elaboration of this paper I express how important multidisciplinarity and cooperation is in the system of helping professions in education. To sum up, I can state that every helping professional has a specific labour to do on every student but the complete helping labour can only be done if all those professionals work together and row towards the same objective.

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