

'social workers are, after all, 'social' workers, not teachers or healthcare workers, so they need to understand the social and the political.' (174)

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2018.1464532>



Pedagogías de lo social, by Xavier Úcar, Barcelona, Editorial UOC, 2016, 157 pp., ISBN 978-84-9116-199-8

There are few authors who give themselves and us the opportunity to read the *why* and *for what* of the texts with which they gift us their writing. These hidden and sometimes uncomfortable truths, which transcend what is reflected in the words, are closer to reason or emotions.

Xavier Úcar, Professor of Social Pedagogy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and Chair, since 2012, of the Ibero-American Society for Social Pedagogy (SIPS), does so in one of his latest works: *Pedagogías de lo Social*; a text edited by the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), to which two other titles provide continuity – *Relaciones socioeducativas: la acción de los profesionales* [*Social and educative Relationships: the professionals' action*] and *Pedagogía de la elección* [*Pedagogy of the choice*] – that emerges from his reflections and experiences around daily learning, all with an explicit and unequivocal intention to offer them to those who, as students or teachers, academics or 'practitioners,' have chosen education to be one of the main concepts that form the backbone of their personal and professional careers.

This is the scenario in which the work – and its author – defend a pedagogy with broad civic horizons, which goes beyond classic labels, giving a meaning and content to that which is socio-educational, confirming to each subject their capacities to improve their ways of *being* and *finding yourself* in the world. Pedagogies, emphasizing the plurality of their semantic routes, opt for the freedoms that are built by choice and deliberation but also by the dialogue of knowledge and shared responsibilities, not only to provide us with a new look on education and training, but also and above all to activate the changes that make us up individually and collectively.

It is here where the twenty stories acquire a full meaning that, with the format of so many other chapters, invokes the educational and social in all their diversity and seeks, according to the author's will, that each of them have an entity *in* and *of itself*; so much so that every reader can choose on how to approach their reading: orderly, systematically, randomly, slowly or quickly ... , on the basis of the wishes, needs or interests with which they start the book.

It is worth noting that as it is this way, it leaves in the hands and in the eyes of those who open its pages the opportunity of browsing the numerous questions and answers that make up the pedagogical and social puzzle in the hyper-connected societies we inhabit. The idea of the 'pedagogy as puzzle' suggests a particularly suggestive metaphor, faced with the requirement that many pieces fit into it, in different times and places: those that are created in the theories and those that are projected in the practices, tirelessly seeking consistency between the one and the other, with a historical or most emergent perspective, but from where the subjects can never be dispensed with, as Úcar recalls '*it is always the person in their process of becoming a subject who chooses and completes the pedagogical puzzle*' (p. 42). In doing so social pedagogy recognizes and endorses an intense critical-reflexive vocation, which is inclusive and liberating: pedagogy committed to education for all and the whole of education, so that educating and living form an inseparable part of the same event.

The book presents its arguments in twenty brief chapters, covering aspects from society to education and then on to the pedagogical, showing the multiple realities in which its educational and social initiatives are projected: the school and the family as institutions of the commons; everyday life as a source of experiences and learning (face-to-face and virtual); people and social groups as constructors of plural citizenships; technologies as mediators of new formats, languages and sociocultural dynamics; the distributed curriculum; formal and informal education; etc.


With the above, Professor Xavier Úcar invokes some of the challenges facing social pedagogy in the societies of the third millennium, giving rise to a diverse and heterogeneous cluster of questions that have no easy answers; quite the contrary, he warns, they open the door to new questions about the field's identity and entity: is it a science, a practice or an art form, or all of them at once? In his opinion, some of these questions force us to rethink our approach to social pedagogy by providing us with a new vision that has little or nothing in common with the uncomfortable truths we have settled on in recent years. And what *'Pedagogías de lo social'* achieves is to contribute decisively to our having the opportunity to transform these truths and make a more social and better society.

It is not a minor issue to consider, as does the author ... whether the fact that everything is – or can be pedagogy – means that nothing is this; or if the *'learning from no-one'* is incompatible with the *'learning everything'*, to the point that everything and all of us become sources of learning, so that it is no longer necessary 'go' to learning, since it is this that is available for us. The ubiquity of learning and, inevitably, teaching, puts emphasis on the ubiquity of pedagogy, whatever its signs of identity; even more so when the educational in addition to meeting the social, becomes universal, to the point that *'everything and everyone are or can be pedagogy'* (p. 79) – an 'everyone,' points out Úcar, that requires us to construct a more heartfelt, conceived and participated vision of education, capable of responding to the challenges posed by the reality of the human condition: pedagogy that will give meaning to what is being said and done on behalf of education, as an ethical imperative to strengthen democratic values against the tyranny of the markets.

To proclaim the goodness of shared endeavour, far from obviating the complex and polysemic nature of the expression 'social pedagogy,' confirms its characterization as a scientific, academic and professional knowledge in which multiple and varied interdependencies that weave social and pedagogical issues are articulated, provides a key role to theoretical devices (paradigms), axiological principles (values) and methodological processes (praxis) in which they are underpinned. It is in the links that are established between all of them where the *pedagogies of the social* pass from reflection to action, and from this to that, requiring – as Paulo Freire would say – both technical, scientific and professional training, as well as dreams and utopia.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2018.1464537>



Spirituality matters in social work: connecting spirituality, religion, and practice, by

James R. Dudley, New York and London, Routledge, 2016, 358 pp., ISBN 9780415747042 (pbk), ISBN 9780415747035 (hbk), ISBN 9781315797144 (ebk)

With this scholarly work on spiritual and religious matters in social work, James R. Dudley counts among the many others scholars who have understood that spirituality and religious beliefs are indeed some major sources of strength to so many people. *Spirituality Matters in Social Work* is a