Abstract

The relationship between vulnerable, underage male and female youngsters and drugs is a social reality that is becoming more and more important at the present time. This, in turn, is opening new lines of ongoing research. Efforts are being aimed at gaining more and improved knowledge of this problematic situation, and at defining a proper way to address it. Competences in this field are attributed to Social Pedagogy and Social Education, disciplines and professions where vulnerable children at risk are a traditional area of socio-educational interventions. The main objective of this paper is to theoretically examine the concepts of "vulnerability", "risk", "normality" and "educational interventions" with regard to youngsters in their relation with drugs. We hold that the above terms are relative and ambivalent and, consequently, have different contents subjectively built on the basis of several variables, mostly involving the particular circumstances of professionals themselves and the socio-political welfare framework. Therefore, in order to approach the definition of these terms, it seems necessary to take into account their own relative meaning with a view to making it evident that if an accurate diagnosis is to be made, then the peculiarities of the specific case must be taken into consideration. Made-to-measure solutions, tailored and adapted to specific, defined situations are needed. Without these, the chances of successful interventions are greatly reduced. This reflection also takes into account the characteristics of drug use by the group as defined above, and discusses the actions that are normally addressed to it. This analysis allows some suggestions to be made about the real basis for effective social interventions within the framework of Social Pedagogy and Social Education, leaving aside positions anchored in idealisms which have commonly guided social interventions in this area. The central thesis is based on the consideration of the youngster as an active individual, playing a leading role in his/her own change, even in vulnerability and risk conditions.

Keywords

Underage youngsters, vulnerability, risk, social normality, socialization, degrees of vulnerability, protection factors, drug use, Pedagogy and Social Education, socioeducational interventions.