



Education in Anthroposophic Social Therapy

The following theses were developed in 2018/19 by the 'Social Therapy Working Group' (STAG), a working group of the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development. They are intended as a suggestion and working aid to introduce concerns of the anthroposophic educational impulse in social therapy. They represent STAG's current understanding, make no claim to completeness, and will be developed further in the future. Furthermore, STAG supports article 24 of the UN Disability Rights Convention on 'Education'.

Critical comments, additions and suggestions are expressly welcome (siegelholz@lehenhof.de).

Fundamentally, we understand education as a means to acquire what is necessary in order to understand and participate in the world we live in.

(A) GENERAL HUMAN ASPECTS

1. Education is essential and holistic **personality formation**. The human being is the only creature not biologically determined by instincts and drives. We seek, create and educate ourselves throughout our lives and it is this activity that makes us human. In this sense, an intrinsic need for education can be assumed.
2. In **childhood**, this education process is shaped by imitation, intentional education and socialization. Close attachment figures and the immediate social environment have the most significant influence on child development. As **adults**, further development takes place through our own self-aware I and based on personal motives, impulses and intentions.
3. The process of personality formation is never finished. Education is **lifelong learning** – a process, not a result. At the end, the task remains to let go and learn to die.
4. Understood in this way, education is neither a transfer of knowledge nor the acquisition of skills in and of itself. Developing skills becomes education when it helps us to better **understand ourselves** in the world, to make new discoveries about ourselves, and to comprehend ourselves as developing beings. In this sense, education leads to inner growth.
5. Education requires that we **question** our certainties and habits, and what is familiar and taken for granted. It allows the unexpected, confusing and foreign, and overcomes obstacles and limitations. The path of education leads us into the unknown and unlocks new possibilities. Education leads to change.
6. Education factors in the possibilities of **crises and detours**.
7. Education also includes the **acceptance of what cannot be changed**, as well as the ability to distinguish between what can and cannot be changed.
8. Education aims for a **self-concept**, for self-reliance, self-determination and self-efficacy, and for identity and diversity.
9. Education takes place in the **harmony between perception, understanding, feeling and acting** and also includes **social learning**.

10. Education requires **exchange between the individual and the social space** or environment. Humans learn from each other, from relationships, from questions and answers, from mutual reflection, dialogue and advice, from encouragement and enthusiasm, from adoption, boundary-setting and further development.
11. In recognition of changed life circumstances, education has the task of enabling our life in a **digital world** and our ability to work with digital media.
12. **Art** can become education when it inspires us to go beyond the superficial and to discover new dimensions. It connects the visible with the invisible.
13. Education also includes the fundamental **spiritual dimension** of being human. Religious and spiritual beliefs influence our personality.

(B) PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

14. **Professional education** is more than simply qualification for paid work. It is also a way to find our own vocation, our own tasks, our own contribution to the world.
15. A vocation or profession is no longer the only point of departure for professional activity – the individual human being who practices a profession, further develops it and transforms it is equally important. A profession shapes a person, but the **person also shapes the job description**.
16. If educators and students mutually agree on an **education plan**, if they agree on expectations and offerings, a productive learning community with individual goals can develop.
17. Today, education is the building of skills for an **open future**. The knowledge and therefore also the skills and possibilities available to humanity at the beginning of the 21st century are so enormous, technological advances so rapid, and changes so far-reaching, that it is hardly possible to predict how we might be living only decades in the future. The challenge is to teach and learn the ability to deal with ever-changing tasks and to shape innovative processes. This requires openness, imagination, presence, competence and a continuous discussion of values.

(C) REGARDING SOCIAL THERAPY, SPECIFICALLY

18. **Education for accompanying and working with people** will particularly focus on three levels: technical/methodological training, social education, and personal development.
19. In **social therapy**, co-workers have the task of making possible, supporting and accompanying educational processes, and strengthening emancipation processes.
20. For people who are particularly dependent on others, education must especially attend to **questions of individual possibilities, needs and goals**: “Why am I different? Why can’t I do some things? What do I want to learn, and what am I able to learn? Who do I want to be? What are my wishes and dreams? How can I educate myself in order to reach them?”
21. **For people with special needs, vocational education** should not be limited to training competence for a general labor market or a specific activity. In the interests of personal development, it is also important to learn how to learn, and to discover and support personal biographical motives and impulses.

(D) THE SOCIAL-THERAPEUTIC EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

22. A professional relationship, an institution or a community can become a unique **living and educational space** if the opposition between (alienated) work and (real) life dissolves – if it becomes:

- a space for personal development;
- a space for finding and living a vocation;
- a space where people meet each other as developing individuals, as equals and on a heart level;
- a space where people meet each other with appreciation and respect, although they know that each person is unique and will always remain a bit different;
- a space that creates a culture of trust and of allowing mistakes, which allows each member to shape her or his own life;
- a space where work is integrated into life and where it contributes both to a good, purpose-filled life and to development;
- and a space in which areas of learning and experience are consciously created and made available, and in which individuals can participate and experience themselves as part of the developing community.

Social Therapy Working Group, 08.10.2019

Freia Adam, Paula-Maria Blaxland-de-Lange, Sara Colonna, Hartwig Ehlers, Brigitta Fankhauser, Jon Geelmuyden, Juliane Gravenhorst, Andrea Kron-Petrovic, Achim Leibing, Udo Pfeil, Henk Poppenk, Stefan Siegel-Holz, Sonja Zausch.