

The social professions in Spain: past and present

Judit FULLANA¹

Carles SERRA²

Maria PALLISERA¹

1 Departament de Pedagogia

2 Departament d'Història i Història de l'Art

Universitat de Girona (Spain)¹

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship among the main three professionals who work in the social field in Spain: social workers, social educators and pedagogues. To contextualise the current situation with regard to these professions, the first section presents the most notable events in the history of the social professions. In the second section we present the main characteristics concerning the areas of work and the professional competences. In the third section we discuss some of the challenges related to the current training of these professionals.

1 Address: Facultat d'Educació i Psicologia, C/St Domènec, 9, 17071 Girona, Spain
email: judit.fullana@udg.edu, carles.serra@udg.edu, maria.pallisera@udg.edu.

Key words: Social worker, Social Care Educator, Pedagogue, professional competences

Introduction

As Kantowicz (2007) has pointed out, the social professions have different names in different European countries. *Social educators, social workers, care workers, special educators, youth workers, community workers and cultural animators* are all common names given to the social professions. Attempts to compare social work in different countries have proven difficult due to the fact that various factors affect the evolution of these professions: the history of social work and its key tasks, theoretical and methodological traditions in social work and the training provided, the kind of employment found by social workers, and the degree of its professionalisation (Meeuvisse et al 2007).

In Spain, different professions exist within the social field (Sáez and García Molina, 2003). The professions of social worker and social educator are those which are most clearly identified as social professions, the former being the one with more tradition in the field. Over the last two decades, however, other professionals, some of them traditionally linked to education in schools, such as pedagogues, have been incorporated into workplaces where social intervention takes place.

To understand the action of each one of these professional profiles, this paper is divided into three sections. The first section presents the most notable events in the history of the social professions in Spain, information which is necessary if we are to contextualise the current situation with regard to these professions. In the second section we present the main characteristics concerning the areas of work and professional competences of each one of these profiles. In the third section we discuss some of the challenges related to the current training of these professionals.

The evolution of social professions in Spain

The current alignment of social education work in Spain with international trends follows a slow evolution which was to a great extent disrupted by the Civil War and the Fascist regime imposed on the Spanish State for over 40 years (from 1936 to 1976). The dictatorship impeded the development of a welfare state comparable with those constructed around Europe during the second half of the 20th century, which in turn impeded the development of the first training initiatives for those figures who could be considered to be the predecessors of the current social workers (the first school for “social assistants” to be created in this country was the *Escola d’Assistència Social per a la Dona* – the Social Welfare School for Women – in Bar-

celona in 1932. Rather, the regime left all social support initiatives in the hands of *la Falange* (a National Socialist ideological movement), sectors with connections to the Catholic Church, and *la Sección Femenina* (literally, the female section of *la Falange*), which would considerably delay the professionalisation of social work, the institutionalisation of training processes, and a conceptualisation of social work above and beyond the discourse of charity and voluntary work.

The best-known professional figure responsible for social work affairs was the “**social assistant**” who would later come to call themselves “**social workers**” (Navarro, 1998). It was not until the mid-Fifties that the professional activity of social worker began to become recognised, a recognition consolidated in the mid-Sixties: the first syllabus to be standardised by the State “Schools for Social Assistants” dates back to 30th April 1964, these schools co-existing with private “Schools for Social Assistants” (the first of these being created in Barcelona in 1932). Most social assistants were trained in organisations with links to the Catholic Church until 1981, when “Social Assistant Training” became a university course at “University Social Work Schools”. (Barbero, 2002 and 2009, Martínez-Brawley and Vázquez, 2007).

Another professional figure in the field of social education in Spain is the **social educator**. The direct predecessor of this figure is the “*specialised educator*”, whose lifespan lasted from the end of the Sixties and throughout the Seventies. The name was taken from French, and little by little this figure gradually became a professional specialised in educational intervention outside the school. Specialised educators had to wait until 1991 to enjoy the recognition afforded by having their own specialised university training, which would receive the name of Social Education. This training covers three professional profiles that existed previously: *the specialised educator, the sociocultural animator and the adult educator*. (Fulana et al, 2009; Red Educación, 2003).

The third figure is the **pedagogue**. The presence of pedagogues in the field of social intervention is relatively recent. Although pedagogy as a subject has existed at Spanish universities since 1904, until well into the Eighties it was understood to be a discipline (a field for theoretical reflection without necessarily corresponding to a professional figure) or a figure from the field of school education (the pedagogue as a consultant or support technician in this field). It was not until the mid-Eighties that the presence of pedagogues began to be recognised and valued in the non-formal sphere. Despite this late start, the last two decades has witnessed notable progress in the presence of pedagogues in the non-formal educational

sphere and the field of social intervention. In some cases they carry out functions similar to those carried out by other figures (social workers and social educators), in others they hold positions of more responsibility (due to the fact that pedagogues previously held a qualification considered higher than that of other professionals). (Besalú y Feu, 2009; Riera, 2003; Red Educación, 2003).

As we can see, the situation in Spain with regard to professionals coexisting with interrelated functions in the field of social education is relatively complex. It is worth pointing out that these professionals, in particular social workers and social educators, often work side-by-side in the same institutions. The following section shows a comparative analysis about the areas of work and professional competences of social workers, social educators and pedagogues. Moreover, we argue some of the reasons which explain similarities and differences among these professionals.

The professionals that work in the social field today: areas and competences.

Faced with the aforementioned situation of different professional figures working in the social field, it is by no means easy to clearly differentiate where the functions carried out by the different groups of professionals begin and end. The *Table 1* provides an overview of the spheres of action of social workers, social educators and pedagogues.

The first thing we can see from the table is that all three professional figures participate in most of the areas of intervention in the social and educational field or, in other words, there are very few areas of activity that can be considered exclusive to one of the three profiles object of our analysis. Thus, for example, in the health services there are some areas which are more covered by **social workers** as those responsible for aspects of healthcare provision: for example, primary healthcare centres and home care for ill people suffering from chronic or terminal diseases. Equally, in services related to housing, such as programmes which offer, study and allocate subsidised housing, of the three professionals considered in this paper, only social workers have any kind of presence.

Table 1: Professional areas for social workers, social educators and pedagogues in Spain

PROFESSIONAL AREAS		QUALIFICATION		
		Social worker	Social educator	Pedagogue
Primary Social Care Services	Home help and home visit services			
	Primary care teams			
	Day care centres			
	Emergency social services			
Specialised social services	Care for children, young people and families	Child protection centres		
		Technical teams		
		Fostering and adoption		
	Care for women			
	Care for people with disabilities			
	Care for the elderly (homes, social-health and day centres)			
	Care for drug addicts (recovery centres, day centres, homes, social and labour integration services)			
	Shelter and care for refugees and immigrants			
Health	Primary healthcare centres			
	Home-care for people suffering from chronic or terminal illnesses			
	Support organisations			
	Hospitals			
	Social healthcare centres			
	Mental health services			
Justice	Penitentiary institutions			
	Youth justice	Detention centres		
		Monitoring alternative / non-incarcerated penal measures		
	Mediation			
	Technical assessment for judges			

PROFESSIONAL AREAS		QUALIFICATION		
		Social worker	Social educator	Pedagogue
Schools	Teachers in schools			
	Primary Care Teams			
	Educational guidance			
	School workshops for transition to work			
Other centres, programmes and educational services	Occupational training centres and occupational transition programmes			
	Adult training centres			
	Local educational services/programmes (health education, environmental education, transport safety, forestry, etc.)			
	Leisure services, extracurricular activities, school camp and summer play groups			
	Play groups			
	Educational programmes for visits to museums/libraries/centres of cultural or natural interest)			
	Civic centres, cultural centres, other centres			
Public administration youth departments				
Public administration cultural departments				
Community development				
Companies and institutions	Human resource departments			
	Training departments			
Production of educational materials				
Housing services				
Non-profit organisations and bodies working on international cooperation programmes)				

In services related to the formal educational system, however, there is a greater presence of **pedagogues** than the other two professional figures dealt with here. Pedagogues may work as teachers in secondary schools, specifically in services providing educational consultancy and guidance and in other educational and cultural services in educational administration. Services provided for human resource departments that entail training staff in companies and institutions are also areas which are mainly occupied by pedagogues, although to a lesser extent.

With regard to **social educators**, from the table we observe that the professional areas in which they work are not exclusive to them. They share many areas of activity with social workers on the one hand, and pedagogues on the other. However, although areas may be shared, the functions they carry out are different. In child protection centres for children in a situation of social risk, for example, social educators are responsible for attending to and accompanying the children on a daily basis, whereas social workers are responsible for aspects related to the child's family and work on technical assessment teams, along with other professionals such as pedagogues.

In order to understand this difference in functions, we must bear in mind the fact that until now the pedagogue held a five-year degree, whilst the social educator held the university qualification a three-year degree. This implies that pedagogues have a superior qualification that allows them access to certain jobs and to carry out more senior functions in multidisciplinary teams as well as more executive-type functions and functions involving managing social and educational services. With regard to social workers, on the other hand, although as social educators they also hold the qualification of three-year degree, their greater tradition as professionals in the social field has meant it is much more common for them than for social educators to form part of case assessment teams, or carry out executive functions and functions related to social services management. The gradual identification of social workers with this type of work has meant that their training has begun to leave out the more educational content. This has contributed to reinforcing the management dimension and dispensing with aspects of training more linked to direct and ongoing work with individuals and groups.

We have compiled *Table 2* in order to demonstrate more clearly the **functions** carried out by these three types of professionals. We also find here that there are functions carried out by all three professionals. For example, all three carry out functions aimed at detecting the needs of individuals, families, groups and communities; they must also all produce work plans, which they then monitor and evaluate. Furthermore, they also carry out work which involves coordinating work-teams, teams for motivating and developing the community, and mediation teams. Some functions are more character-

istic of social workers, however, such as the management of services and social assistance. Generally speaking, it is social workers who implement the more administrative processes related to awarding grants and social assistance, and carry out the work of monitoring individual cases (individuals, families or groups). The function of educational support and direct intervention with individuals and groups is, at the time of writing, the one most characteristic of social educators. When it comes to social work, pedagogues, on the other hand, tend to participate on interdisciplinary teams and are in charge of functions relating to diagnosing the educational needs of individuals and groups, carrying out specialised educational interventions, coordination and pedagogical work with educational teams, and pedagogical consultancy.

Table 2: Functions carried out by social workers, social educators and pedagogues

FUNCTIONS	QUALIFICATIONS		
	Social Worker	Social Educator	Pedagogue
Diagnosing individual, family, group and community needs			
Educational accompaniment for individuals and groups			
Producing work plans for individuals, families and groups			
Information, guidance and consultancy regarding social resources			
Management of services and social assistance			
Production, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects			
Management, coordination and administration of centres and services			
Coordinating teams			
Organising community activities and community development			
Mediation			
Secondary school teaching			
Academic and professional guidance			
Educational consultancy			
Design and production of educational materials			
Design of training programmes			
Educational research			

Social education work in Spain – some reflections

As we can see from the observations we have made here, the presence of the different professional figures involved in the field of social work is not a static and established presence; quite the contrary, it is in constant evolution and subject to changes that occur in university studies, pressures from different professional associations and the social context. All in all, we can identify areas and functions where the presence of these professionals is more well-defined, and other areas and functions where there is an overlap and where it is possible there will be more changes in the coming years.

Having attempted to present the scope and functions of these three professions, which will very soon enjoy the same level of university qualification, we would now like to discuss some of the challenges we believe this type of training poses.

Until now, social educators and social workers had a three-year university education, and received a diploma as a qualification, whilst pedagogues had a five-year university education and received a degree. For the 2009-10 academic year, many Spanish universities have begun to offer degree courses, which means that within four or five years there will be parity for these academic courses.

The Bologna process has provided us with an opportunity to make innovative new training proposals. We must, however, take into account the fact that within our context economic restrictions and rigid university regulations are important obstacles that impede the construction of the required training programmes. A reduction in resources allocated to the field of social work has led to many universities simplifying their degree courses as a means of survival. This entails sharing modules and even whole courses for purely economic reasons, and does not allow for an in-depth review of these professional figures.

The evolution of professional figures and the current configuration of the professional field in Spain determine that each one of the three figures develops a unique role in the social field. So, training should combine common subjects and contents specifically addressed to each professional. Our proposal highlights the need to work specific contents for each one of the profiles but without forgetting to design a common base of training and also sees interdisciplinary work as a priority. The common training should include the analysis of social problems, the institutional context and the legal and political framework. In order to promote interdisciplinary work it would be valuable to include within the training of each of these professionals clear information regarding the other professionals with whom they have to

share many functions. It would be possible to take as a basis for this visits to social education centres or services, or talks by practicing professionals, allowing them to present the work carried out by different professionals working for the same service, and to define which functions are their own and which are shared. Equally, the use of case study methodology or PBL (problem based learning) may favour the analysis of social situations from different disciplinary perspectives and, at the same time, greater comprehension of the role the different professionals can have in the analysis and resolution of the case or problem.

Furthermore, degree courses are generalised in their focus and it will be necessary to think of possible specialisations. As the three professionals share areas of work, postgraduate training with a common focus makes perfect sense. It will be necessary to analyse, on the basis of detected training needs, what possibilities there are of organising specialised postgraduate training courses that take into account both the differentiated training requirements of each professional and the professional baggage that accompanies each one. We must take into account, then, that specialised postgraduate training for these professionals will have to be planned in such a way as to be of interest to all of the different professionals that comprise the field of social education.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Barbero, J.M. (2009). *Treball social a Catalunya:1932-1978*. Barcelona: Col·legi Oficial de Diplomats en Treball Social i Assistents Socials de Catalunya (col. Hacer)

Barbero, J.M. (2002). *El Trabajo social en España*. Zaragoza : Mira Editores.

Besalú, X. i Feu, J. (2009). *Pedagogia: professionals de l'educació i la cultura*. Girona: CCG.

Fullana, J.; Pallisera, M.; Tesouro, M. & Castro, M. (2009). Professional placement and professional recognition of Social Education graduates in Spain. A ten-year balance, *Social Work Education*, 28(4), 336-350.

Kantowicz, E. (2007), 'Dilemmas in comparative research of education for social work in Europe', *European Journal of Social Work*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 297-309.

Martínez-Brawley,E.E. and Vázquez,O. (2007). The professionalization of Spanish social work: moving closer to Europe or away from its roots? *European Journal of Social Work*, 11: 1, 3-13.

Meeuwisse, A., & Swärd, H. (2007). 'Cross-national comparisons of social work – a question of initial assumptions and levels of analysis'. *European Journal of Social Work*. Online publication, 1 January 2007. Downloaded 18 October 2007.

Navarro, A.L. (1998). De la asistencia social al trabajo social en los servicios sociales. *Acciones e investigaciones sociales*. 7, 73-96.

Red Educación (2003). Las titulaciones de Pedagogía y Educación Social en las Universidades españolas: Planes de estudios y salidas profesionales. Documento de trabajo, 9 de diciembre de 2003.

Riera, J. (2003). "La tasca professional de Pedagog (psicopedagog en els diferents àmbits professionals d'actuació", en 1s Jornades del Col·legi de Pedagogs de Catalunya-Presentació Social del COPEC. Barcelona.

Sáez, J. y García, M. (2003). Emergencia de las profesiones sociales: de la dimensión discursiva a la dimensión política, ética y práctica. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*. 10, 195-219.

Identity questions of professors in social pedagogy training

Gabriella BODNÁR

Andrea RIEZ¹

University of West Hungary, Sopron, Hungary

Abstract

Introduction of social pedagogy in Hungarian higher education resulted in the enhancement of a new professional field which can rely on traditions and affiliated professions like family protection, supervision of step-parents and child protection which areas need experienced professionals being familiar with procedures and the relevant laws and regulations. We must review the expectations towards social pedagogy lecturers. They must have the following set of skills and competences: the ability of co-operation and building contacts; being a good communicator; commitment to quality when doing social work; ability for evaluation and self-evaluation; skills as mediator and as representative, personal responsibility when doing consultancy tasks, ability to adapt; being able to make individual decisions and to work in a team, being able to co-operate with social pedagogy professionals and also with interdisciplinary cooperation with other professions; command of foreign languages, commitment to professional ethos, professional identity.

1 Gabriella Bodnár PhD, University Associate Professor
Andrea Riez, University Assistant Professor
University of West Hungary (NYME) Benedek Elek Faculty of Education,
Institute of Social Training and Education
H – 9400 Sopron, Ferenczy J.u.5.
bodnar.gabriella@bpk.nyme.hu
riez.andrea@bpk.nyme.hu