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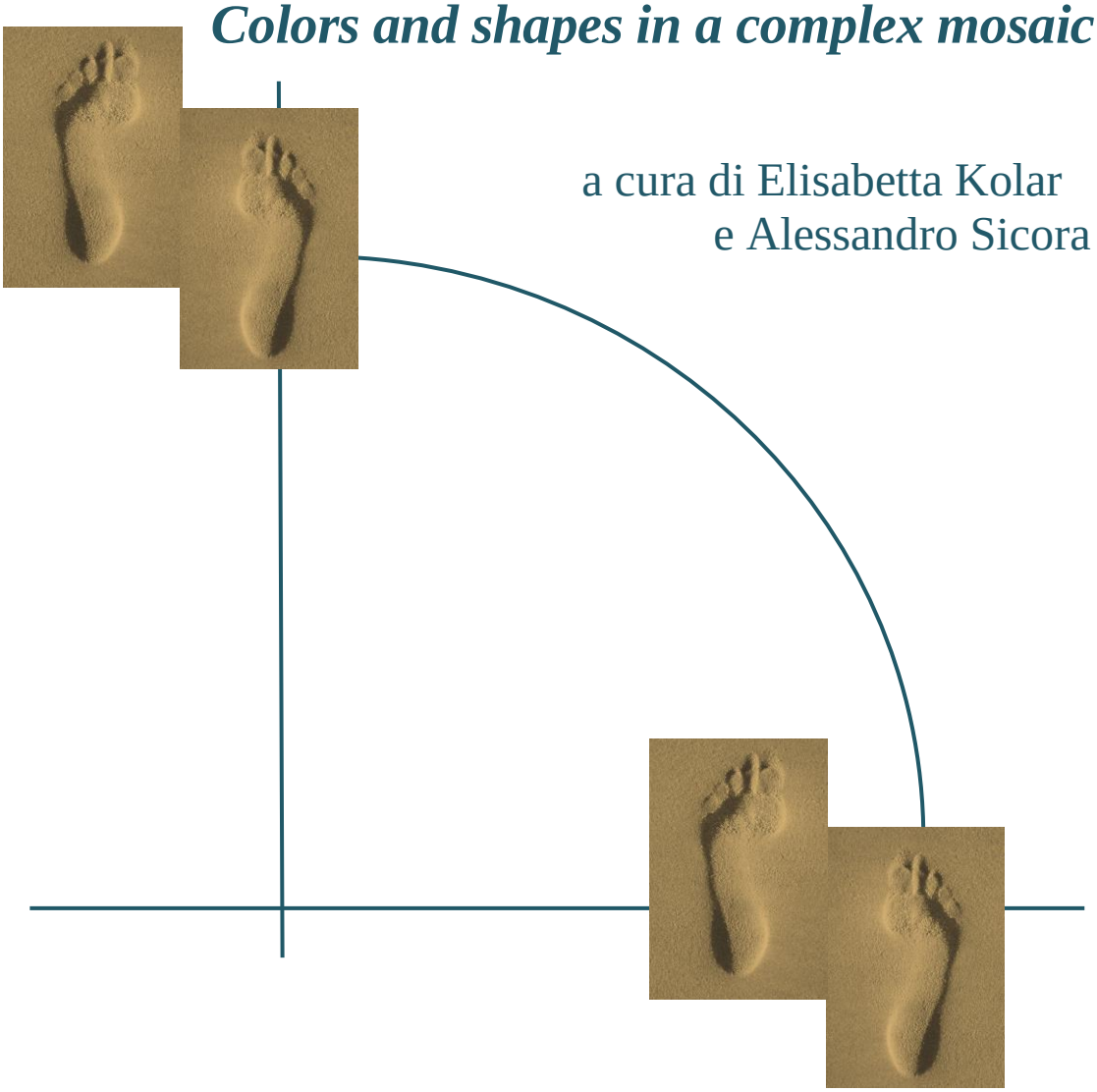
Social work around the world

Colors and shapes in a complex mosaic



a cura di Elisabetta Kolar
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CENTRO STUDI PER L'AMERICA LATINA

Con i *Quaderni del Csal*, supplementi della rivista *Visioni LatinoAmericane*, il Centro studi per l'America Latina (Csal) vuole ampliare la sua proposta editoriale.

Quaderno, nel suo significato etimologico, sta ad indicare un foglio piegato in quattro, un taccuino su cui si appuntano note e memorie per ricordare i passaggi salienti di quello che si è detto, o che si vuole dire, e di quello che si è fatto, o che si vuole fare.

È questa la funzione che noi vorremmo avessero i *Quaderni del Csal*: da una parte essere uno strumento agile di discussione, che miri agli aspetti essenziali del dibattito in corso con approfondimenti e riflessioni su tematiche specifiche riguardanti l'America Latina nelle sue relazioni con il mondo; dall'altra un documento *in divenire*, aperto a contributi successivi e mai definitivi, di studiosi e cultori delle questioni latinoamericane nel loro intrecciarsi con le dinamiche globali.

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Foreword. Why a mosaic on social work around the world is a picture by itself

A global view on what social work is around the world is a necessity for everybody, social worker or scholar, who are involved in international activity or interested in having a more critical and comparative reflection on social work training and education in his or her own country.

The official global definition of social work that was last revised in 2014 provides a common ground and understanding that is valid everywhere in the world. This, together with some basic literature read and studied almost everywhere, represents a good starting point to a wider and worldwide perspective. Nevertheless, sometimes it is useful to go deeper into the national situations, to draw specific pictures of them so to highlight commonalities and differences.

The aim of this special issue of *Visioni LatinoAmericane* entitled «Social work around the world. Colours and shapes in a complex mosaic» offers the reader perspectives about social work practice and education in ten countries across three continents; namely Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, England, Italy, Romania, Russia, Spain, South Africa and United States of America. In addition, a greater understanding of what «International social work» means will become better understood.

Most of articles in this special issue originate from two initiatives aimed to create international connections in social work education and research.

The first is the annual international seminar jointly organized by Chicago Loyola University, University of Calabria and University of Milano Bicocca. The first two editions of the Italo-American seminar took place at the headquarters of Loyola Chicago University in Rome

where social work teachers and students from Loyola and four Italian universities (Calabria, Milano Bicocca, Parma, Trieste) gathered to study and discuss issues related to migration (2009) and aging society (2010). Then University of Calabria welcomed Italian and American students interested in studying social work with families and children (2011) and social work fighting against poverty (2012). This 2013 seminar was focused on social work in the international arena comparing different national realities, with specific reference to the efforts made by social workers to work on/with clients/users, organizations and communities. This exploration was grounded in the understanding of the major features related with social work in eight countries located in three different continents and part of the paper presented there have been revised and proposed in this issue of *Visioni LatinoAmericane*.

Scholars from some of these countries came to Italy because of the second events that made possible the realization of this special issue of *Visioni LatinoAmericane*: the beginning of the Irses Marie Curie research «Civil engagement in social work. Developing global models». This program involved universities from 10 countries and was aimed at analysing the relationship between social work and civil society, through the description of social policy structures and reform processes, of civil society institutions and configurations, of socio-political contexts plus the role and position of social work within such contexts. The network created in this occasion produced some of the contributions in this special edition.

The lucky coincidence of the two events above, the kind availability of scholars from other two countries not involved in the mentioned programs (Costa Rica and Chile) and the interest expressed by Francesco Lazzari, editor of *Visioni LatinoAmericane*, have brought to this issue to fruition.

The articles are all describing the state of the art of the social work education and practice in the ten countries involved, but in some cases the Authors wanted to give some additional focuses: for example, on the historical background (Chile and Italy), on social problems and situation arising after the end of Ussr (Russia) and of the apartheid (South Africa), on the involvement of the social workers in the movement against the indiscriminate cuts in welfare state (Spain), on the impact of neoliberalism and managerialism on social work (England).

A mosaic is made by setting small colored pieces of stone or other material into a surface to form an image or a decorative design. Are the eleven tesserae, that is the eleven articles in the next pages, forming a composite picture? Do they show more differences or similarities? Does social work really have a strong common base or each national declination is significantly different?

The readers will give their own answers but the drawing emerging from the national «snapshots» in the next pages definitely confirms that everywhere, as stated by the global definition mentioned above, «social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people».

Of course, in many parts of the world social work has still to fight (or has to start again to fight) to reaffirm its role and mission, but it is clear that a global view, understanding and action can contribute to a successful, even if never-ending, walk in that direction.

1. International social work

Annamaria Campanini[*]

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Keyword

International social work, global agenda, social work education

Introduction

Interest in international social work has expanded greatly in recent decades, especially in the more industrialized countries which have experienced the challenges of globalization. This interest is observed by the growth in publications on the topic; the increased focus in training of an international dimension; the increased exchange of teachers and students in the international arena; as well as increased international research. The main contribution to these academic discussions is dominated by scholars of Western countries, especially United Kingdom (Uk) and United States (Usa).

If we look at the history, we can state that this dimension has been present in social work from the beginning. International collaboration has been fundamental to the growth of social work as a profession in different countries. Extensive international contacts between the profession's founders in the late nineteenth century enabled innovations

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such as charity visitors and settlement work to be spread from the United Kingdom to the United States.

The first evidence of specific attention to the international dimension in social work can be found in the first conference held in Paris in 1928. René Sand, a Belgian doctor, deeply convinced of the interconnection of different factors (economic, social and health) to promote true social development, identified the importance of professionalization of the philanthropic sector and of international exchanges. Following participation in a national conference of social work in the Usa, he promoted the international meeting in Paris, in which 2,421 representatives people coming from 42 nations participated (Bortoli, 2006). A significant part of the discussion was focused on education, which led to the creation of the International committee of schools of social work – later on called International association of schools of social work (Iassw). Its first meeting was in Berlin in 1929 under the presidency of Alice Salomon. As a consequence of the Paris international conference, two other international organisations were constituted: the International council of social welfare (Icsw) (representing welfare organisations) and the International federation of social workers (Ifsw), previously called International permanent secretariat of social workers (Ipsw) (representing social workers).

The purpose of this emerging process of international cooperation of social work and social work education was the creation of a documentation centre for social work education that collected and catalogued materials from over 100 schools of social work. As a result of this first international survey on social work education, commonalities and differences in the curricula were identified. This highlighted the importance of adapting the programs to respond to the variety of social needs, different cultural backgrounds, different political, historical conditions and educational systems in each country. Eglantyne Jebb, emphasizing the increased international involvement of social work, after the first world war, encouraged participants to engage in international research, underlining that «the international social work requires constant contact between social workers, based on an international intellectual foundation» (Jebb, 1929: 651). The early years of the 20th century saw many activities being organized in different sectors such as international conferences, formative exchanges and summer courses. How-

ever, it is only after the Second World War that a stronger international exchange period began, along with the dissemination of American social work theoretical developments and their adoption in Europe and in many other countries. Since then International organizations (Iassw, Ifsw) have developed a common international definition of social work, promoted standards for training and guidelines on ethics. Together with the Icsw they remain engaged in a global agenda of social commitments for the future.

1. The international social work definition

Although social work recognises specific cultural and contextual dimensions such as historical backgrounds, social policy trends, pedagogical and disciplinary relationships and «politics», all of which have implications for the establishment of social work training in different countries and the specific ways in which the social work professional role is interpreted. Despite this local orientation, there is both international relevance and commonalities in diverse examples of practice across many countries of the world.

There have been a range of attempts to define social work and the social worker, since the first Paris conference (1928). For instance the scientific and professional communities, represented by Iassw and Ifsw agreed to this statement during the Montreal conference (2000):

«The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work».

This was later reviewed at the Durban conference (2009) when the same organizations revised this definition and commenced a further review with the involvement, of all the representatives, both educational and professional using online questionnaires, seminars and workshops during regional or international meetings. It is worth noting the workshops during the Hong Kong conference (2010) and the Bruxelles (2011) European conference, ensured high levels of participation and

rich suggestions. This enterprise is in itself proving to be more complex than was foreseen, not only for the diverse meanings and variations with which social work is interpreted across the world. This has resulted in educational considerations in those countries where the profession is a recent phenomenon as on those continents where social work has been structured for more than one hundred years.

The final definition, drafted by Iassw and Ifsw, and later approved during the International conference of Melbourne 2014 by the general assembly, states: «Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being». In this definition three new aspects should be highlighted.

First, that social work is not only defined as a profession based on practice, but also as an academic discipline. In the commentary that serves to unpack the core concepts, the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dimensions of social work that draw on a wide array of scientific theories and research along with the fact that social work is in a constant development are specified. Moreover, the uniqueness of social work research and theories is applied, emancipatory and very often co-constructed with service users in an interactive, dialogic process and therefore informed by specific practice environments. This aspect also allows for the promotion of indigenous knowledge that previously has been devalued, discounted, and hegemonised by western theories. In this way social work knowledge will be a result of a broader and anti-discriminatory process and will be more appropriately practised not only in local environments but also internationally.

A second important aspect is the fact that the definition underlines not only a generic social change, but also social development. Very important is the comment which states that «social development is conceptualized to mean strategies for intervention, desired end states and a policy framework. The latter in addition to more popular residual and the institutional frameworks. It is based on holistic biopsychosocial,

spiritual assessments and interventions that transcend the micro-macro divide, incorporating multiple system levels and inter-sectorial and inter-professional collaboration, aimed at sustainable development. It prioritizes socio-structural and economic development, and does not subscribe to conventional wisdom that economic growth is a prerequisite for social development».

The third element is related to the active involvement of the people in pursuing the social work aims, through defining the collective responsibility and the engagement of people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being, as a core aspect of social work practice.

2. What is international social work?

International social work (Mohan, 2008) is not necessarily what has been internationally defined as social work. This can be seen when we consider different authors that have discussed the problem since the middle of the 20th century. The reflection on international social work in the '40s and '50s seemed to restrict the attention to one particular field of activity, and stressed the importance of special knowledge and skills that the social worker should have to work for via international agencies, but also underlined the usefulness of exchanges between social workers through international conferences (Warren, 1939). Friedlander (1955; 1975) emphasized the importance of the international social work dimension for social workers employed in international agencies such as the Red Cross and the United Nations. Later Sanders and Pederson (1984), showed that the commitment of international social work should also be referred to the practice addressed specifically to immigrants and refugees, suggesting that ideas that support social workers to better understand different cultural backgrounds have to be provided in training in order to orient them to a higher sensitivity of the special needs that these people.

Hokenstad *et al*. (1992) highlighted the exchanges and the contacts that take place between social workers of different nations and suggested the possibility of creating an academic field of study geared to systematic comparison of social work in different parts of the world; together with various aspects such as the professional dimension, differ-

ent roles, methods used in practice, social work problems as well as the challenges they face.

The debate on the definition of international social work has been and is still very rich and interesting. Various proposals, from time to time, have focused on different aspects depending on whether the view adopted was global or more specific.

We can see from these references a broad concept of international social work, one that includes the ability to develop an understanding of the "whole", the ability to transcend concerns related to local context and to interpret the role in a more comprehensive and global way. This notion, accepted by several authors, aims to promote an image of social work that enhances international links, educates professionals through a path that encourages a greater awareness of international phenomena and addresses these problems on a global scale. Midgley (2001) stated that through a broad, encompassing perspective based on a global consciousness, it is possible to recognize different dimensions of internationalization that focus, in turn, on comparative enquiry, professional collaboration and specific forms of practice in international agencies that requires appropriate knowledge and skills. However, some sceptical voices, like Mohan (2008), are also emerging. Although he recognises the importance of having new books directly or indirectly related to international social work, he is very critical about the status of theorization and points out that American «literature on international social work is in abundance but much of it lacks substance».

It is thus appropriate to refer to the definition of Lynn Healy (2012) which integrates and presents international social work as a multidimensional concept: «a way of looking and appreciating the world (worldview) and acknowledging the impact of globalization on human well-being; practice, including locally based practice, informed by international knowledge; practice, concern and actions on globally experienced social issues; participation in international professional organizations and dialogue; understanding the global profession; promotion of development and human rights and a future action-oriented movement for global change» (Healy, 2012: 12). Healy defines the interconnectedness between global issues and the practice and policy carried on by the nation-state, emphasises the importance of the purposes of international social work: «to promote global social justice

and human well-being to ensure the ongoing relevance of locally based practice by calling attention to global realities that affect local conditions» (Healy, 2012: 12).

3. The social work commitment to a broader visibility at international level

Different initiatives have been undertaken by international associations during the years of which the most important are: the World social work day and the definition of the Global agenda. Additionally the World social work day was established in 1983 by the International federation of social workers in conjunction, since 1990, with the International association of schools of social work. The two main goals of this work being to sensitize social workers, students and teachers about the importance of an organization like the Un (which has a strong affinity with the social work mission) and to make visible to the leaders of the United Nations, and ambassadors of various agencies of the importance and relevance of social work in the world. This also serves to highlight the commitment to realising the foundations and the ethical values of both social work and the Un promoting the development of people and community, as well as respect for human rights. The idea of getting together, ideally in a single day all over the world, to address important issues, work towards developing a common identity and supporting each other.

A further ambitious initiative stems from the idea that the social work voice, while it remains fragmented, has little chance of influencing the agenda of those institutions which pursue the protection and the development of human rights. For this reason, Iassw, Ifsw, Icsw have joined together to build the Social work agenda for the coming years. The decision to jointly undertake global conferences and to define a common agenda stems from the perceived need to be heard in socio-political contexts by the single nations or regions, as well as by the international organizations, such as the United Nations. It was with significant difficulty that social work succeeded in being represented in the Un, as well as influencing their statements and activities such as the values of social justice, human rights, and respect for the individual.

It has also been identified that the challenges which social work must cope with require a strong international commitment and new strategies. One cannot fail to recall, in this regard, the words of Alice Salomon, one of the people who have most contributed to the development of social work in Europe. Her assertion was that social injustices are a consequence of an unjust economic system that operates internationally and it therefore requires a global commitment.

The three organizations were also involved in collective actions in the past and have developed a vision locally, nationally and globally in response to issues and challenges such as poverty, social protection, human rights, community development, crisis and emergency intervention, peace-building processes, but also responding to phenomena such as disability, crisis in the different phases of individuals and families life span, building partnerships with service users and development of interdisciplinary practices and appropriate social policies. Many of these aspects are also included in the document of the Millennium development goals as well as in the Universal declaration of human rights, but a real commitment from a social work perspective is necessary to integrate social, economic and environmental issues for sustainable development.

The reworking of contributions from around 3,000 academics, social workers, students and representatives of various social organizations during the Hong Kong conference in June 2010 were included in «the agenda» for future years. Thus the representatives of the three organizations developed a draft document for worldwide discussion, with the belief that it was necessary to activate a collective and participatory process among all those who are involved in social work and social development, in order to draft a document to be presented during the international conference in Stockholm in 2012. Four main areas were chosen: social inequalities within countries and between regions; the dignity and worth of the person; environmental sustainability and the importance of human relationships. Each of these areas was then broken down and analysed with the four points summarized below.

The recent and ongoing economic crisis and the decisions by world leaders to divert of resources from social development to support the financial system – have created growing inequalities with the ever-increasing marginalization of populations. The lack of a social protec-

tion system and the processes of community disintegration have worsened conditions in many areas of the world. In respect of «dignity and worth of the person», there are still worldwide violations or failures of human rights at social, economic, cultural and political levels. Respect for diversity and different belief systems is critical; the political landscape and the processes of peace-building are increasingly unstable; violence and oppression by non-democratic governments is always present in different areas of the world. The phenomena of terrorism, along with the problematic state responses and modes of conflict management at the global level are growing. Challenges include responding to the problems of migration, refugees, human trafficking as well as the role of the professional practice, education and the social development all complicate these areas.

Environmental sustainability, along with more frequent natural and man-made disasters, requires government capacity, as well as community involvement in the development of appropriate responses. It is necessary to create preventive activities, as well as proactive involvement with communities to support social, human and environmental development. The protection of the physical environment should not be disconnected from a consideration of the implications for sustainable social development.

The importance of «human relationships» includes the concern that global changes are having on the family and interpersonal relationships as well as on critical events at different phases of the life span. Greater attention is required on children and families, an ageing population, disability and physical and mental illnesses, as well as addiction and domestic violence and corresponding strategies to improve the quality of people's lives.

4. Debate and prospects

In spite of the critical importance of international issues and the efforts of Iassw and Ifsw, the profession does not yet seem to adequately respond and international social work remains a minority topic of interest for a small expert group despite the rich debate. As Nagy and Falk (2000) highlight the failure to resolve an agreed definition was a formi-

dable barrier to internationalizing the curriculum and as a result there was a need for a clearer and shared definition of what is meant by international social work, identifying its nature and purpose so that the curricula could be expanded to encourage a broader perspective of the profession. It is important that education increases the understanding of global events, exploring their influence and consequences, thus recognizing international and cross-cultural dimensions of local issues and using knowledge, along with comparative perspectives, to contextualize its analysis and evaluate the possible intervention strategies (Lyons, Manion, Carlsen, 2006).

The two associations (Iassw and Ifsw) agreed Global standards for education and training identify nine sets of standards in respect of: the school's core purpose or mission statement; programme objectives and outcomes; programme curricula including fieldwork; core curricula; professional staff; social work students; structure, administration, governance and resources; cultural diversity; and social work values and ethics. Although this provides support for the international dimension of social work, the debate concerning the relationship between universalism, diversity and internationalization, are themes that are emerging in the process of reformulation of the international definition of social work and the Global standards. The risk is an overview of these issues which on the one hand is based on the prevalence of western systems of meaning (included in the core values on which social work takes its guidance) and on the indigenisation processes, which is likely to cause fissures which do not bode well for social work.

Greater awareness by social workers of the centrality of ethnic and national identity in people's lives is necessary alongside the recognition of the significant roles in promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and appreciation of diversity is necessary. Ahmadi (2003) declares that international social work can and should play an important role in consolidating democracy, social justice and in implementing international conventions (e.g. on human rights, on the elimination of discrimination against women, on the rights of the child) as well as in preventing conflicts and support peace through the promotion of a global culture of integration.

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2. Life in a time of neoliberalism: social work in England

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Introduction; 1. What is neoliberalism?; 2. Neoliberalism and new public management; 3. Profile of social work in England; 4. Neoliberalism and social work; 5. Conclusion; References

Key words
Neoliberalism, England, social work, new public management

Introduction

Throughout the world the concerns and reverberations of the impact of the last financial crisis, caused by the banking sector, have had and continue to have on economies and societies[1]. Whilst the immediate and enduring impact of this latest financial crisis has been widespread, it is important to note that financialisation and globalisation of our economies along with «modernisation» of social welfare services have been on-going process. Critics argue that this process of neoliberal globalisation is promoting significant changes to our social political and welfare systems and societies, resulting in a variety of intended and unintended consequences. More broadly the economic crisis has impli-

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cations at a macro level for inequality, social unrest and at a micro level, youth employment, community cohesion and individuals. The severity of this crisis has resulted in some questioning, whether the consequence might involve the unwinding of the dominance of the neoliberal economic paradigm. However, this crisis, as with many previous crises, offers society opportunities to challenge existing models of capital development and accumulation but doesn't guarantee it (McBride, Whiteside, 2011).

This most recent crisis has come to be viewed by some as being «in the system», rather «of the system» (Jessop, 2012) and has been subject to considerable public efforts to recast those who should be held to blame. The importance of this effort can be viewed in the crisis which started as a result of a banking crisis, in the heart of capitalist economies, which was transformed and recast as a problem of the state and the poor (Jessop, 2012). The public perceptions and public narrative of both of these interpretations, have important implications for potential change, the latter perspective ensuring some public acquiescence to the necessity of austerity across many countries in Europe or whether the status quo is returned. In the case of the latter, social policy reform, along with the displacement of the costs of the crisis can be placed on the shoulders of non-elite groups through mechanisms such as austerity, whilst the former requires more fundamental reconsideration (Jessop, 2012). Additionally, financialisation and rapid movements of capital have resulted in reductions to the welfare state and greater use of penalisation to force the working poor into low wage jobs, as well as the inevitable work insecurity. There has also been the rise of the penal state as a result of social insecurity, rather than criminal insecurity and a disciplining of the working classes (Wacquant, 2010). Thus the poor are subject to disciplinary action by the state either through the promotion of «workfare» or an expanding «prisonfare» (Wacquant, 2012). Whilst the manifestation of this may be different in Europe than in the Usa, Wacquant argues that in Europe with its stronger tradition of state, that it is the police that have been strongly involved in the suppression of dissent as a result of civil disorder and anguish in low income communities (Wacquant, 2012). This is important for social work, not only as a result of the income and wealth inequality, but also for its impact on society and the profession.

It is important for social work that it understands the origins of the crisis, recognise the political, economic, historical and social origins of both the crisis as well as the proposed policy implications and critically evaluate its role as a consequence. These implications pose complex and challenging questions to consider the role of social work at a macro through to micro level in society. Critical perspectives utilising multiple lenses are important. Failure by the profession to correctly identify the nature, origins and complexity of the problem, will no doubt result in errors of analysis and proposed intervention. Despite these challenges, it is possible to identify similar collective themes, shared understandings, discourses and enactments internationally. This paper will be informed from the experiences of neoliberal implementation in the United Kingdom (Uk) and in particular, England (as one of the four nations that comprise the Uk), but it is often possible to detect similar global themes influencing diverse societies despite their different discourses, manifestations and political complexions.

1. What is neoliberalism?

In seeking to understand the global dominant economic and social policy doctrine of neoliberalism, it is important to unravel what is meant by the term and its ideology. In doing so, the current market economy should be viewed as a historically rooted form of social organisation, which whilst producing some benefits has also introduced many structural tensions which have the potential to be destructive for the society (Polanyi, 2001). Prior to the «market» and notions that the market could order society; politics, religion and social norms were the dominant forms of governance (Polanyi, 2001). As a result economic elements of societies such as land, labour and money were not principally commodities to be bought and sold, but rather they were embedded in social relationships and therefore subject to moral negotiation, community supervision and religious reflection. However, in our capitalist society «markets» have become autonomous, increasingly deregulated, and are believed by its proponents to be able to order societies for the better. The consequences for society of these changes are therefore important and as a result of this macro-economic doctrine it is critical

for social work to understand, critically evaluates well as offer perspectives and interventions.

Neoliberalism is defined by Harvey (2010: 2) as being «a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices». As a result, it is argued by some, that neoliberalism is refined form of earlier liberal models, grown from the opposition to the work of John Keynes in the 1930's and the later policies involving the New Deal in the United States of America but with some significant reforms (Kotz, 2002).

Neoliberalism therefore proposes that the market is the best allocator of resources to resolve the questions/concerns posed by society and that the parts of government that seek to interfere with the operation of the «market» harm «market» efficiency as well its supremacy (Marobela, 2008). Neoliberal proponents argue that individual choice is also strengthened through the operation of the market (Kotz, 2002). Indeed Clark and Newman (1997: 14) identify that the workings of governments are often perceived, by neoliberal advocates, as being monopolistic, with poor services and inefficiencies that require the discipline of «customers» (Sotirakou, Zeppou, 2006). This focus on the development of public service «customers» provides a mechanism for the transformation of government and the use of the private sector. The model further advocates that reductions in state responsibility enable reduced levels of taxation thus promoting economic growth which benefit all segments of society, including that of the poor. The resulting «trickle-down» effect of wealth and prosperity ensures the widespread of the resulting increased economic prosperity. Less regulation of capital markets and economic systems, reductions and reshaping of the role of the welfare state, augmented use of casual labour in employment and new models of accountability along with governance in the public sector (Pratt, 2006), have all become hallmarks of neoliberal implementation. As a consequence, the reshaping of the state has therefore been two fold, promoting the «invisible hand» of the market, while reinforcing

the «iron fist» of the penal state through the promotion of «workfare» (Wacquant, 2012).

Changes to welfare states when viewed globally may be considered through a variety of lenses. From the perspective of the global south; those in the global north already have more comprehensive systems which even in their «modernised» state might be considered, from their perspective, to be generous. However we should recognise that this change in the role of the state signifies a trend away from the previous role of the state to mediate the impact of capitalism, limit its exuberance and that this is now changing such that it also no longer provides a buffer against poverty (Gregory, Holloway, 2005). With the emphasis on entrepreneurship and social capital, the responsibility of poverty is increasingly located within the individual «citizen», rather than the socio-political system. For instance within the Uk, young people are encouraged to invest in their «social capital» through the use of school selection using league tables. More recent reforms to higher education have included massive hikes in student fees and the marketization of university courses. The state therefore is no longer seen as the guarantor and coordinator of equality and equity of access, but rather in maintaining the availability of an education market. Blame for any lack of employment or other structural concerns would therefore not be located in systemic social, economic, historical and political factors but rather in the individual who has failed to invest sufficiently in their «social capital» or not taken sufficient care in procuring this education and skills from the market.

Harvey (2010) observes neoliberalism as a «political» project, which supports capital accumulation, reduces labour market rigidity and rolls back previous social equality gains whilst restoring power to the economic elites. Almost inevitably globalised neoliberal policy therefore requires governments to support capital mobility, free trade, reductions to the size and scope of the state (often involving privatisation, deregulation and tax reductions), balanced fiscal budgets, inequality acceptance due to markets and labour flexibility (McBride, Merolli, 2013).

Additionally there has also been widespread internalisation of neoliberal doctrine into everyday discourse and culture, including through the influence of tv programmes such as «Big Brother» and «The Apprentice». Through these, the ethos of modern workplaces are rein-

forced by competition between contestants, acceptance of external authority, individualism, team conformity and always being positive (Windle, 2010: 254; Bauman, 2002). This promotion of individualism undermines notions of universalism, solidarity, equality and equity and begins to reshape the discourse and ideas of who might be considered deserving and who might be underserving in society. The internalising of these neoliberal ideas and values helps convince, that the system is legitimate and the true nature of neoliberal projects are often being disguised or presented as fresh and reformist through the use of political spin (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2001). It is therefore not surprising that many countries seeking to introduce neoliberal economic reforms have undertaken this using the language of «modernisation». This was the case in the Uk by successive governments in a policy of reducing the welfare state.

2. Neoliberalism and new public management

Neoliberalism and new public management (Npm) has provided the vehicle to the promotion and incorporation of private sector tools and values within the public sector, as well as facilitating the transfer of public service delivery to the not for as well as for private sectors of the economy (Monbiot, 2000; Davidson, 1993). Within England, social welfare/work has experienced substantial change in the past two decades resulting in reductions to state provision, growth in for profit services, organisational change and the application of private sector management techniques and consultants (Hafford-Letchford *et al.*, 2010). Alongside these structural changes there have been workforce difficulties in recruitment and retention, low pay (Hussein, 2011), care quality scandals (Care quality commission, 2011) and regulatory and business environment changes (Harris, 2003).

Hood (1991: 4-5) identified Npm techniques and tools as: the use of explicit standards and performance measures; the management of the public sector utilising private sector techniques and values; the emphasis on results rather than process; breaking down public services into their component parts; promotion of competition in public service provision; and greater discipline in the allocation of resources. Other or-

ganisational changes include the use of specialised, flat and self-determining organisational units rather than large, hierarchy bureaucracies; use of contractor type relationships as well as market mechanisms to deliver public services (Pollitt, 2001). These changes are often operationalised through privatisation of state services; promotion of internal markets, reductions to universal service delivery; promotion of individualism alongside ideas of resilience and efficiency and finally the clouding of the boundaries between private and public sectors. The changed use of terminology such as «customer» and «service user», as well as the use of tenders and contracting all support the further introduction of these processes and markets (Borghi, van Berkel, 2007; Clarke, Newman, 1997; Newman, Clarke, 2009; Valkenburg, 2007).

In addition to the promotion of public sector change, society has also undergone cultural transformation, including the commodification of parts of society that were previously considered impossible to marketise such as social welfare, pollution and water (Connell *et al.*, 2009). This shift in the structure and organisation of public services has promoted further and normalised notions of efficiency and accountability, while other principles such as equality, equity and participation have been de-emphasised (Gregory, 2007). For social work, with its commitments to values like social justice, this should poses significant concerns as does social work reticence and slowness to theorise as well as engage critically in these debates.

For social work, the decline in values such as social justice, equality and equity is problematic, especially as the new emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness has significant implications for practice. For instance, concern about equity of access might be usurped by notions of management efficiency, resulting in services that may be considered efficient but do not deliver services needed by the community.

Commentators view globalisation as an indication of the international introduction of neoliberal market reforms (Quiggin, 1999). Despite on-going implementation over three decades, the social work profession has been slow to articulate, theorise and consider the implications for practice (Khan, Dominelli, 2000; Dominelli, 1991; Lyons, 1999). However, more recently there has been renewed, although limited, consideration of these impacts (Lyons, 2006; Dustin, 2007; Dominelli,

2010) and this paper continues that trend by exploring some of these implications.

3. Profile of social work in England

Social work became a 3 year degree level qualification in 2001 and the title of «social worker» is protected requiring registration with the professional regulator. The curriculum for the profession was influenced by the then professional body General social care council (Gscc), subsequently incorporated into the Health and care professions council (Hcpc) and as heavily influenced by social work employers and the government. Since gaining its degree status, a number of influential reviews have been undertaken to review the practice and training of the profession (Social work task force, 2009[a]; 2009[b]; 2009[c]; Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Narey, 2014). The Narey (2014) report is particularly interesting given the authors work in the prison service, it being commissioned within weeks of the more thorough Croisdale-Appleby report and Narey's subsequent appointment as a government ministerial advisor after its publication (Cleary, 2014).

The newly formed College of social work developed a professional capabilities framework (Pcf) which came into operation in 2013 and this highlights nine overarching areas of capability that social workers should be able to demonstrate on qualification; namely: professionalism; values and ethics; diversity; rights, justice and economic wellbeing; knowledge; critical reflection and analysis; intervention and skills; context and organisation and professional leadership (Martin *et al.*, 2014). All these areas now are required to be addressed in the qualifying curriculum and although the knowledge base for the Professional capabilities framework is articulated, the exact curriculum in each university is determined locally and agreed with the college through regular inspections.

Qualifying training also incorporates 200 days of assessed fieldwork placements which are undertaken in two placements. The fieldwork practice educators being involved in the assessment of practice and written assignments during this time. It is also necessary for all students to have clearance of any criminal record via a disclosure and barring

check (Dbs), which is undertake at the start of training. On qualification, social workers also need to undertake an assessed and supported year in employment (Asye) and to complete a portfolio in order to achieve the status of a qualified social worker (Martin *et al*., 2014). Regular continuing professional development (Cpd) is then required to maintain their registration with the professional regulator and this renewed every 2 years, subject to ongoing Cpd. Whilst it is a requirement to practice that social workers remain registered with the Hcpc, registration is optional for social work educators based in academic institutions (Martin *et al*., 2014).

Within the context of practice, the Gscc (2002) developed a code of practice for social care workers, which emphasised the protection of rights for service users and this was further developed 15 standards of practice proficiency by its successor regulator, the Hcpc (2012). There is no standard career structure for the profession, other than in the early years of practice. In addition the British Association of social workers has developed a code of ethics, but its membership is only approximately 10,000 of the 87,000 registered social workers and therefore is code is aspirational (Basw, 2002; Dickens, 2012).

As a result of reductions to the welfare state and privatisation of services, many social workers have seen their role change from direct service delivery to that of care manager/commissioner of these services from private or not for profit service providers (Martin *et al*., 2014). These providers often employ unqualified social care workers, resulting in a shrinking employment market for social workers.

Within this environment the management and supervision of social work has always been considered important in practice. The key purpose of supervision in the profession being on education/professional development; support/personal development and administration/accountability. It is within this context that supervision was also viewed as an important aspect of quality control and the bond between the professional worker and their agency. However, the profession has now experienced reductions to the support of professional practice, increased administrative burdens and the promotion of management practices (Beddoe, 2010; Noble, Irwin, 2009; Simmonds, 2010).

4. Neoliberalism and social work

The profession has therefore been both passive and slow in its theorisation and resistance to market related social policies. These have changed the way in which recipients of social work services are viewed, their eligibility to access them and the scope of services offered. Consumers along with their care have been elevated to commodities that can be sold in care markets. These changes have wider consequences for the notions of citizenship, although this is outside the scope of this paper. However neoliberal policy implementation is eradicating the association with politics and public jurisdiction to that of customer and being seen as self-interested individuals that are operating within an economic relationship (Clarke *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore the ideology also believes that professionals themselves act in self-interested manner, without altruism, promoting their own agenda's, requiring strong leadership and management to temper this. However despite these assumptions relatively insufficient attention has given to social work human resource systems with little workforce intelligence available to support the management process (Evans *et al.*, 2006). As a result, it is difficult for Uk social workers to fully understand the implications and challenges of: workforce (Hafford-Letchford *et al.*, 2010), staff recruitment (Evans *et al.*, 2006; Curtis *et al.*, 2010); retention difficulties and the importance of promoting good people management and evidence based practice (Evans *et al.*, 2006). In addition the average work life of a social worker is 8 years in the Uk and this compared unfavourably to pharmacy which is 28 years, medical doctors at 25 years and nurses who average 15 years (Curtis *et al.*, 2010). This evidence suggests that there are considerable challenges within the professional workforce but this area is under researched.

One of the challenges for social work is that the profession is ambiguous in its nature, such that regardless of its definitions, it exhibits equal measures of both strength and weakness. However despite the professions commitment to social justice and that's its interventions with individuals and families whose social distress is a manifestation of social structures, questions remain about its role and responses. Under neoliberal and Npm policy and management systems, fault is often located within the professional worker rather than the broader questions

about systems, organisations and their culture, efficiency drives and a lack of resources. Macro-economic and social policies such as neoliberalism have considerable impacts on how society is structured, organised and shaped. As a result, it is surprising that this structural framework has not facilitated more consideration and debate by the profession in recent years. This state of affairs raises question about the whether the profession is being shaped by outside forces beyond its control, whether it has been adaptable to macro-policy shifts (Jordan, 2004) or even has been too uncritical of its own role and position (Lorenz, 2005).

The impact of neoliberalism on social work has been significant and has included; the shaping of the profession and its training, promotion of managerialism; the advancement of markets and private sector providers; altering the relationship between professional assessments and resources; uncritical use of performance indicators and notions of efficiency; varying the core of social work delivery away from being mainly relationship based; recasting users of services as customers and commissioners of services; reductions in universal service provision and promotion of individualism (Dominelli, 2010). As indicated earlier, the scale, scope and impact of these globally must be viewed within the context of local practice and policy but also consideration of its nature as a global profession.

Furthermore, the process of McDonaldisation (Dustin, 2007; Ritzer, 2011) has also had an impact on social work practice and is the perfect example of processes and systems of management rationalisation. Within this McDonaldised process, efficiency is seen as the ideal way to obtain a desired management result, most often through following a range of procedures along a predesigned workflow (Ritzer, 2011). Each aspect of the service is then calculated through a process of quantitative calculations, whilst qualitative aspects are deemphasised (Ritzer, 2011). The process provides homogenised products that are consistent and those that interact with the service, as customers, are encouraged to consume these services as quickly as possible, in addition to production and outcomes being standardised (Ritzer, 2011). Within this form of work organisation, staff discretion is absent and the staff are often managed by procedures, supervisors, checklists and formal management processes (Wastell *et al*., 2010). Thus procedures and routines be-

come uniform; with reductions in social work professional discretion, regulated social work tasks, targets, occupational standards and focus on efficiency and effectiveness as key measures (Harris, 2003, James, 2004). As a result, responsibility for decision making on professional knowledge, is now replaced by the gathering of evidence to decide if the necessary thresholds to receive services have been achieved (Adams, Shardlow, 2005).

Across the work place and the profession, changes to the structure of the profession can be observed with increased use of flexible working practices, longer working hours, greater flexibility in recruitment and dismissal and the acceptance of new working roles (Duménil, Lévy, 2004). Workers are often employed on shorter working time or temporary contracts, with the creation of new roles that require few if any formal qualifications for work that was previously undertaken by qualified staff. Whilst this flexibility has been advocated as necessary, to support labour market problems by international agencies such as the Organisation for economic co-operation and development (Oecd), others such as the United Nations International labour organisation (Ilo) have argued for greater regulation of both finance and increased labour security (McBride, Merolli, 2013). Traditionally, more stable employment has facilitated employment progression, promoting loyalty and employee commitment. However the increased focus on employment casualization to reduce labour costs in capitalism has resulted in larger salary inequality differences between managers and staff (Connell *et al.*, 2009).

An added complication in the employment of social welfare/work staff is the wider implications within a market driven environment, especially where cost is a primary consideration in low commitment employment with the resulting employment tensions that arise between employers and employees (Boxall *et al.*, 1998). In this complex and competitive market situation organisations may seek to employ lower skilled staff to support their financial statusor improve profit margins. Work force retention, skills scarcity may all be unintended consequences. Within this market driven environment, the links to care worker vacancies and turnover are important for the quality and levels of care that are provided. Hussein and Manthorpe (2011: 6-9) identify a number of issues that appear associated with this changing structure

and context of Uk care service provision; greater staff turnover in the for-profit sector, staff turnover around 25% and substantially higher than the staff turnover for the economy (15.7%). Furthermore changes to European Union (Eu) migration rules rather than policy initiatives (Hussein, Manthorpe, 2011) have also resulted in an influx of workers from previous Eastern Europe into the care sector (Hafford-Letchfield *et al.*, 2010). The challenges of work practice acculturation, language skills as well as the political implications are under researched, despite a correlation between workforce indicators, quality and turnover of nursing aids (Uk equivalent of care workers).

Further challenges for professional social work leadership is that the need for social welfare services often massively exceeds resource availability (Lymbery, 2001). It is often social workers rather than their managers or political decision makers often are those who are blamed for the shortfalls, or for any errors which might be the consequence of these shortages (Lymbery, 2001). This has important consequences for professional wellbeing, often leaving social workers feeling helpless and alienated from their professional roles (Pullen-Sansfacon, 2012). The contributor factors associated with resources is hardly ever acknowledged or rectified by politicians or managers (Lymbery, 2001).

5. Conclusion

In this paper it was argued that neoliberalism's impact has been widespread, transforming communities, societies and the profession. Whilst social work's response has been muted, the rise of social inequality and societal stressors such as unemployment, family dysfunction suggests that the profession needs to consider its intervention at several levels to be successful and to continue to have relevance.

It is therefore clear that social work now finds itself in a precarious position not only within the Uk, but potentially in some other countries. The dominant neoliberal economic model is impacting on our communities, societies and profession, with the impact of socio-economic policies i.e. austerity and financialisation clear to see in those communities, practice and in our services. The challenge for social work includes the need to be far more critical and strategic in its analysis, reflection, and inter-

vention. The implications for social work include and extend well beyond debates about autonomy and professional discretion, the role of competence based practice, supervision models, performance and accountability systems and individual practice. The profession should be engaged critically and leading in key policy and practice debates, finding its voice and confidence to seek collective solutions.

Almost inevitably neoliberal economic models leave social work with many professional dilemmas and debates, including the professions role and responsibility, what training and skills deficits hamper effective engagement, how should it engage critically and as a collective, and how it should engage citizens in these complex debates. Responses are required at policy levels, as well as at individual practice level, but critically, social workers should be open to debate and view the wider global social work fraternity as providing advice, support and critical reflection of differing models of analysis and intervention.

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3. Social work education and practice in Italy: emerging issues, challenges and concerns

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Introduction; 1. The physiognomy of Italian social work: society, social policy, education system; 2. Italy and its social policy; 3. Being a profession: routes and arrival points of social work in Italy; 4. Italian social work today and where it can be next: challenges and concern; References

Key words

Social work education, social work practice, welfare mix, neoliberalism

Introduction

Although during the fascist period (1922-1943) there were some evidence of it, social work in Italy has only developed fully since after the second world war in conjunction with the growth of a structured welfare system. Initially the system was based on national public organizations, then later it became rooted in municipalities where as today it is structured like a net of non profit and public organizations, even if the latter are still predominant than the former[1]. The essential element of this system is made up of 40.000 registered social workers. Approximately 9 out of 10 of them are civil servants.

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Since the end of the ‘80s social work education has been carried out only in universities, in 2012 there were 38 universities offering 45 social work bachelor programs. Moreover, social work master programs can be found in 36 universities across the country.

The current economic crisis (the most serious since the second world war) is heavily affecting the system of social services. The main ongoing challenge is to maintain adequate levels of support to individuals and families who are facing increasing difficulties. Social work education must find new ways to train professionals and enable them to embody the values required in this field of work.

The aim of this article is to describe social work education and practice in Italy and locate both in the frame of international social work development. This description will be focused on similarities found in the Italian structure and what is going on in the rest of the world, as well as on the peculiarities of the so called «South Europe–Mediterranean model» which is deeply centred on the role of the family in the care of vulnerable people.

1. The physiognomy of Italian social work: society, social policy, education system

Social work practice and education are shaped by mutual action and reaction of significant systems located within national borders but they are also deeply influenced by what is going on at an international level.

This complex process takes place over time and is subject to the influence of broader historical events which unite the destiny of different peoples and regions of the globe. Among the dense network of interactions three systems emerge as leading engines: society (a group of humans defined by specific patterns of relationships, institutions and culture), social policy (the sum of legislation and actions produced for dealing with social issues and needs) and educational system (all the institutions and mechanisms building and imparting knowledge).

The aim of this essay is to describe how social work education and practice are structured today in Italy and, in brief, how the current situation has been achieved. By connecting a kind of red thread to join the past with the present it is possible to draw scenarios for the future. This

is especially useful nowadays when a deep crisis is affecting Europe (above all South Europe) and is changing the role of governments in ensuring respect for the rights of social citizenship.

2. Italy and its social policy

In spite of its prominent place in European history, one must underline the fact that Italy only became a united nation in 1861. These divisions are still visible today in the many territorial differences in Italy (the country is divided in 20 regions and in 8,092 municipalities; Ministero dell'interno, 2012) and, even more, in the gap between the richer North and the poorer South. Today (more precisely in 2011), Italy is the 23rd country for population (60,770,000 people) and 8th for gross domestic product (Gdp), but only 27th in term of Gdp per capita on purchasing power parity (32,647,46 Us dollar) (World bank, n.d.).

In order to briefly describe the Italian society and the influence the state has on it, some indicators will be highlighted in this section: the Gini coefficient and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, for income and sex inequality; opinion expressed and rate of divorce, for the importance of family; life expectancy and proportion of population who is 65 and older, for health and aging; percentage of resident foreign people, for migration; cash payments and deficit of the government for the weight of the state on economy and people's life. Of course, the picture given by these indicators is partial but is good enough to give a general idea as to where to place Italy on an international level and to provide a frame for a better understanding regarding Italian social policy and social work in the following sections of this chapter.

Is Italian society equitable? It looks like the answer is positive if based on a world perspective, however the same cannot on a European level. In fact the Gini coefficient[2] was 33.9 in 2011, below the Europe-

[2] «The Gini coefficient is defined as the relationship of cumulative shares of the population arranged according to the level of equivalised disposable income, to the cumulative share of the equivalised total disposable income received by them» (Eurostat, n.d.). Low Gini coefficient indicate high equality in income distribution. The

an Union average level (30.7), way below the average in Norway (22.9) which stands as the most equal society in Europe and in the world, but Italy stands much further from South Africa (63.1), that is the most unequable country in the world in terms of income. Similar conclusions are reached with reference to gender inequality: 22% of the seats are held by women in Italian parliament. In the world the minimum is 1% in Oman, the maximum 56% in Rwanda; in Europe the maximum is 43% in Finland (Eurostat, n.d.; World bank, n.d.).

Italy is often considered a family based society and even today in case of need caused by temporary or permanent vulnerability (e.g. disability and old age) the help in most of the cases is looked for and found within the confines of the immediate and wider family. In the world value survey conducted by Inglehart and his research group people interviewed in Italy said that family is «very important in life» in the 93.3% of the cases (the average value for all the 57 countries involved in the survey is 90.3%; World values survey association, n.d.).

Nevertheless, Italian families are getting smaller and smaller due to the decline in fertility (1.42 children per woman in 2008), the ageing of the population and the increase in marital instability (in 2008 180.3 divorces per 100,000 married were granted). Consequently, 28.1% of the families are composed of one person living alone, 27.3% have 2 components, 20.8% have 3, 17.8% have 4 and only 5.9 % have 5 or more (Sabbadini, Romano, Crialesi, 2010). It is evident that it is harder for smaller families to take care of their members in need. The weakening of this very important role of the family, together with one of the largest percentage of people aged 65 or more in the world (20.29% in 2011; Istat, 2013) is also effecting the quality and quantity of migration, since even 1,500,000 (more prudent estimates are around 600,000 and 900,000 people) of the 4,570,317 foreigners living in Italy (Filippi, 2008; Istat, 2011) work as «*badanti*» that is women (only in a few cases men) taking care of elderly or disabled people and being paid by the person or its family. Furthermore, the life expectancy at birth can also be noted as an indicator of well-being: 83 years in Italy in 2012. Only Hong Kong, Japan, Ice-

maximum value (1 or 100) corresponds to a hypothetical situation in which a single person has all the income of a nation.

land, Switzerland and France have the same value. Sierra Leone has the lowest level, that is 45 years (World bank, n.d.).

The state, that is the largest collective actor, paid 42.2% of the Gdp in providing good and services and its cash deficit was 4.0% of Gdp in Italy in 2010. In the same year the minimum and the maximum percentage recorded by the World bank for the government expense was respectively 11.00% in Laos and 63.1% in Ireland, which has also the worst cash budget deficit (31.3%). On the contrary, Kuwait had the highest surplus, that is 17.5% of Gdp (World bank, n.d.). Since a deficit cannot be sustained in the long term, expenses cuts and/or tax increase are the only known way to produce budget balance. Social care and services are usually the favourite «victims» when the first of the two options is adopted.

What are the main features of the social policy in Italy? This country is usually included among the nations grouped under one of the following welfare state models: «Christian democratic» or «South Europe/Mediterranean».

As observed by Aspalter (2011: 740), «Christian democratic welfare regimes are marked by 'corporatist systems of social service provision' (Bode, 2003). That is, non-government organizations (Ngos) and especially church organizations carry out the brunt of social service provision. Both the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of solidarity form the base of Christian social teachings». Italy, as well as Spain, Portugal and Greece, «proceed with the establishment and consolidation of the standard social insurance programmes» and «privileged transfers over services. (…) Social assistance and the fight against poverty have been (...) the weakest front of achievement for (...) [these] four countries» where «families historically functioned as an effective (though informal) safety net: a social 'shock absorber' and welfare broker for their members, active across a whole range of policy fields such as child care, unemployment assistance, care for the elderly and the disabled or housing» (Ferrera, 2005: 4-5).

Not surprisingly Italy has been defined as a «pension state» to underline the disproportion between form of protection for the workers and the benefits for the whole population (Fargion, 2009). In fact, in 2006 Italy, whose gross expenditure on social protection accounted for 26.6% of Gdp (26.9% in the Eu), used 60.5% of this amount for old-

age and survivors' benefits. Sickness/health care absorbed the 26.8% of total social benefits, disability 5.9%, family/children 4.5%, unemployment 2.0%, housing and social exclusion 0.3%. All these percentages are quite below the Eu ones (Puglia, 2009).

In the '80s, after the definitive end of the dream of an Italian welfare state of a Nordic type where benefits and protection «from the cradle to death» are provided, the national parliament and the government, started to adopt laws and regulations to facilitate the activity of voluntary associations, cooperatives and other third sectors organizations. The system of social services was settled by the 328/2000 Act and the subsequent regional laws were passed as a result of a major constitutional reform that has since transferred most of the legislative power of social services from the centre to regional powers. The public sector has a responsibility to ensure all the people full respect for the rights of social citizenship, but does not necessarily have to provide benefits and services directly: a senior citizen who is no longer capable of taking care of himself/herself can go into a public nursing home or, if this is not available, in a private and accredited one for which the public pays contributions in order to cover the costs of the care needed. For this reason the main municipalities (the level of political power closer to the people) have to activate and realize processes of concerted planning. The so called *piani di zona* (area plans) defined for each *ambito*, that is a territory whose size is thought to be optimal for a better governance of social interventions. Each *ambito* includes a territory whose population is no smaller than 60,000 people, can be extended as a portion of a large or middle size town or can include several small municipalities. An area plan can be seen both as a contract and a prefiguration of the future: goals, actions, resources and time schedule are defined as always happen in any planning process, but its outcome is also a sort of contract because public actors and non-profit ones are committed to build and realize complex plans to which they contribute money, people and other necessary resources.

After the idea of concerted planning, another basic concept guiding the Italian social policy in the new century is the recognition of the specificities of the local communities, not only in relation to their needs but also to their resources. In order to avoid injustices and inequalities among communities and territories (in opposition to the principle of

universalism and with the breaking of solidarity between the poorer areas, mainly in south Italy, and the richer ones) the «basic levels» have to be defined by the state. In fact, as outlined in the revised Italian constitution, the state has exclusive legislative power to determine the basic levels of benefits/services relating to civil and social rights to be guaranteed throughout the national territory. This provision is the pivot on which the seal of the unity of the Italian system turns in the face of ever increasing push towards regionalization (Costa, 2009).

The concept of «welfare mix» is now wildly used also in Italy. It emphasizes institutional plurality and shared responsibility for welfare. Inevitably, social welfare systems draw on a variety of organizational resources, all of which are embedded within a broader set of exchange and production relationships. As the guarantor of citizen's legal entitlements and a key source of power, the state, understood more broadly as the public sector, is recognized as playing a vital role in the creation of social markets, understood as quasi-markets for social goods and services which separate purchasers, usually government agencies, from providers. The public sector is balanced, however, by two equally important sectors, the private and non-profit sectors, each of which operates according to a unique set of norms and principles. Thus, within the mixed economy approach, it is the relationship between the public, private and non-profit sectors that determines temporal and spatial variation in the output of social welfare systems (Gonzales, 2007).

3. Being a profession: routes and arrival points of social work in Italy

There were 40,065 registered social worker in Italy on 30.09.2012 – this is the most updated available information (Cnoas, n.d.), that is 63 for every 100,000 people – just for a comparison, in Italy the same ratio is 604 for physicians (Fnomceo, 2012). Even if, as better described later in this section, this profession had already been around for decades in different kinds of social services and organizations, a full juridical recognition was achieved only in 1993 when the national parliament approved the 84/1993 Act (Regulations of the profession of social worker and constitution of the professional register). The first article of this important act provides a syntactic definition: «1) the social worker

works with technical and professional autonomy and judgement in all phases of prevention, support and recovery of individuals, families, groups and communities in need and distress and can conduct teaching and training activities; 2) the social worker performs management tasks, contributes to the organization and programming and is entitled to coordinate and manage social services».

The two sections of the *ordine professionale* (professional association whose registration is compulsory to work as social worker in Italy) reflects the distinction written in this first article: section A is for people in charge of direction, management and coordination of social services; section B is related to the function better described at the point 1 above.

In both cases, some of the most important characteristics of the profession are (Sicora, 2005): 1) use of interpersonal and communication skills; 2) employment by public (or non-profit) sector; 3) strong link between social worker and the organization where he/she works; 4) social work as «operational theory» (that is, knowledge is not an end in itself, but constantly directed to guide professional action); 5) strong connection between values, practice and education; 6) field of work subject to rapid changes (trivial to say, but social work acts within a society subject to continuous evolution. One example: in Italy the «migrants» were the hundreds of Italians who left their country to find a job abroad till when, approximately 25 years ago, the direction of flow has definitely reversed and also Italy, as many other European countries, has become a country of immigration), 7) basic education provided by universities (since late '80s).

Where do the Italian social workers work? Combining the outcomes from two different researches (Censis, 1999; Facchini, 2010), the most important emerging features are that 9 out of 10 social workers are public servants and freelance workers are almost nonexistent.

Municipalities (the public bodies closer to the citizens and responsible, by law, to provide them services) employ almost half of the social workers (more precisely 45.5% according to the most recent of the two above researches), the local branches (identified by the acronyms Asl or Uls) of the National health service a portion of 30% (Facchini, 2010) or 24.4% (Censis, 1999) and the Ministry of justice, together with the Interior ministry, only a small part (around 5-6%). Users met by social workers are in the first case the general public, while in the other two

cases are related to more specific needs: the National health service provide social services where social and health conditions and problems are deeply mixed (disability, mental disorders, dependencies, old age, motherhood and childhood), the Ministry of justice implements intervention for underage and adult offenders.

The private sector is almost entirely non-profit (exceptions are, for example, rest houses owned by entrepreneurs) and includes charities, foundations, associations and «social co-operatives» (it is an associate form of entrepreneur whose profits are mostly distributed to its members who may be paid employees, volunteers, etc.). These organizations are active in specific fields of intervention and employ a slowly but steadily growing number of social workers.

What are the major milestones in the history of social work which have enabled it to arrive at the current configuration described previously? And how have the interactions among the three systems mentioned in the introduction (society, social policy, education system) manifested themselves over time?

There is still room for further study on the functions that the first social workers had in the policies of social control during the fascist period (1922-1943). Recent archive researches confirm a gloomy picture with glimpses of light and then reinforce the idea that preserving the memory of «*assistente sociale fascista*» (that is «fascist social worker», how the «grandfather/grandmother» of actual social workers used to sign at the bottom of many of the reports still preserved in the state archives. This title, in fact, was issued by the School of San Gregorio al Celio opened in Rome from 1928 to 1942; Dellavalle, 2012) can keep memory of a past which nobody wants to return to.

Looking forward, beyond the break of the second world war, the traces of a long path till today are marked by three milestones, which, originated within society, social policy or education system, represent turning points in social work history in Italy: the reform laws in the ‘70s, the exclusivity of social work education in the university sanctioned by Presidential Decree 14/1987 and Ministerial Decree of 30 May 1985 and, finally, the already mentioned Law 328/2000. It can be said that these events have generated four specific stages.

The first step of the proposed timeline started immediately after the second world war and was characterized by a particular importance of

basic education. At this stage social work needed to be completely re-ordered in accordance with the rebuilding and rebirth of Italy. The opening of social work schools made by Onarmo (Opera nazionale assistenza religiosa e morale agli operai), Ensiss (Ente nazionale scuole italiane servizio sociale) e Cepas (Centro per l'educazione professionale degli assistenti sociali) (Neve, 2009) began a period of qualitative and quantitative development extended on the ‘50s and the ‘60s when more and more social workers were employed by agencies controlled by the government. In these large organizations (even if they had a quite extended nets of local branches) supervision was especially widespread and well developed (Busnelli Fiorentino, 1990), maybe even more than during later decades when the reality of social services has been fragmented in smaller organizations where, also because of budget limits, supervision has often not considered of priority interest. In 1964, at the end of the so-called «economic miracle» (1958-1963), which brought social change and comfort in large segments of the population, there were about 4.000 social workers in Italy (Sgroi, 2001).

In the ‘70s and ‘80s (second stage), there are major changes of social work, social care and health care. The origin of this particularly fruitful period can be found in the many reforms that see the light in these years. Among the many, these can be remembered: decentralization (Decree n.616/1977 and others), National health service reform (Act n.833/1978), new legislation for family (for example, Act n.405/1975 established the *consultori familiari*, that is a counselling service for health and social needs of family members), psychiatric reform (Act n.180/1978) which decreed the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the establishment of community services for mental health. The need to update knowledge and skills on these reforms and on the methodology for their implementation urged schools of social work and organizations providing social services on organizing training courses for professionals on duty (Sicora, 2005).

A third phase was opened in the second half of the ‘80s as a consequence of two events of regulatory significance: the Presidential Decree n.14/1987, already mentioned above together with the definition of social work it provided, and some decrees enacted in 1982 and 1987 that have made academic qualification compulsory to work as social worker. Therefore, private and public schools (in the second case, usually

promoted and financed by local administrations) that till that moment had provided social work education with 3 years courses after high school stopped their activity. The consequence of this event have been very deep in the development of social work as a discipline. At that time different opinions were expressed: there were those (Giorio, 1996) who believed that university could lead to more internalized and professional behaviours bringing a stronger consolidation of the profession in the long run, and, on the other side, there were others (Vecchiato, 1995) who thought that universities offer courses that are too distant from field practice, unable to assimilate new stimuli coming from society and social services and to bring knowledge as a whole and not as a fragmented pictures painted from the perspective of several scientific disciplines (sociology, psychology and others). In any case, the '90s appear a period full of opportunities for theoretical reflection (publications, conferences and seminars) aroused by the challenge posed by the inclusion of social service in the academic world.

Another milestone, opening the current forth stage, is represented by the already mentioned n.328/2000 Act, with the consequences on social policy described in the previous section, and the Bologna declaration. This important agreement was signed by 29 countries in 1999 and is considered a very important step in the development of an European higher education system. As Campanini (2009: 37) wrote, «in accordance with the principles of the Bologna declaration, Italy has introduced a national reform of higher education, which establishes two levels of degree in all university faculties. With regards to social work, there is a degree entitled 'Sciences of social work' and a master's degree in 'Planning and management of politics and social services'. In the academic year 2009-2010 there were: forty-five bachelor/undergraduate courses (first level), thirty-seven master degree courses (second level) and only five doctorates that have special paths for social work (Trieste, Rome, Milano Bicocca, Sassari and Trento)».

4. Italian social work today and where it can be next: challenges and concern

What specificities have characterized social work in Italy over the last 30 years up until the present day? There are three useful key-words to answer this question: methodological unitarity, trifocality (or multi-focality) and plurifuntionality (Dal Pra 1991; 2013).

Dating back to the '50s in Italy, as in other countries casework, group work and community work, as well as the so-called auxiliary methods (service management and applied research) had been important parts of social work practice and education in Italy. In the '80s, however, after a full sedimentation of the reforms promoted in the decade before and previously mentioned in this essay, «theoretical reflection on the unitary method as guiding and directing the framework for social workers' intervention started developing in Italy. In contrast to other countries where the methodological process is still articulated through different and separate kinds of interventions – i.e. casework, group-work, community work, and administrative work – the unitary method adopted in Italy requires professional intervention to adopt the same methodological approach without taking into account the kind or number of users, whether person, family, group or community. This process, aims to support a rational and scientific action whilst maintaining a careful emphasis on a holistic approach, and it is divided into different phases listed in chronological and logical order as follows: assessment of need, development of the project and definition of the contract, implementation of the project and the monitoring and final evaluation of outcomes» (Campanini, 2007: 108-109). The development of this peculiar theoretical frame was the direct consequence of the reforms affecting social services. These changes in legislation have been built on a community-based perspective and have been opened to all the people and not only to those with special needs and conditions, therefore it seems more effective to consider people and situations in a unified way rather than separately.

In fact, the methodological unitarity is one of the key features of the *Servizio sociale di territorio* (territory based social work), provided by municipalities and, as already said before, directly involving almost half of the Italian social workers. This consists of professional and mul-

ti-purpose actions addressed to the general public concentrated in a limited area, is shaped on the needs of that specific territory and pursues the integration of social and health care, as well as of the public and private spheres in an interdisciplinary approach (Tassinari, 2013).

Moreover, in all the fields where social workers are engaged, the concept of trifocality comes as a consequence of methodological unity and refers to the need that each assessment and intervention made by a social worker has to be focused on three areas at the same time: client/user, community and organization where the practitioner works. What the social worker does and with the person or family in need is only a part of what is required for an effective intervention. The other two important sets of actions are related, firstly, the development and integration of community resources in order to build an integrated system of services and answers the needs of the people and, secondly, the planning and organization of the agency in order to produce better services and to realize social citizenship rights (Lazzari, 2008; Gui, 2013; Sicora, 2013; Lazzari, Gui, 2013).

Social work is also pluri- or multifunctional because it has to operate simultaneously and in an organic and coordinated way on several fronts: face to face work with the users; services design, organization and management; promotion, animation and coordination of resources and services of the community and the private sector to solve general and individual social problems; study, research and analysis on problems and resources of the territory in order to carry out projects able to implement local, participatory and planned social policies (Dal Pra, 1991).

Even if traditional models of social work (psychosocial, problem-solving, task-centered, just to mentioned the most well-known) are still popular, the systemic model – based on the systems theory and the pragmatics of human communication of the Palo Alto school (Campanini, 1988) – and the network approach (Ferrario, 1992; Sanicola, 1994; Folgheraiter, 1998) are probably the most influential theoretical frames seen in social work practice and education today in Italy.

Probably the best window to view the state-of-the-art of the Italian social work is the *Dizionario di servizio sociale* (Dictionary of social work), first edited in 1995 by Maria Dal Pra e deeply revised, renamed as *Nuovo dizionario di servizio sociale* (New dictionary of social work)

and edited by Annamaria Campanini in 2013. This more recent version includes 189 terms written by more than 154 authors.

This piece of work is also an effort to strengthen the weak position of social work in the Italian academic world. «The lack of recognition of social work as an autonomous discipline, the very low amount of specific courses contributing to the total number of credits at bachelor and master levels, and the difficulty for social work teachers to get tenure in universities, affect not only the possibility to develop specific research but also the quality of the professional preparation of social workers» (Campanini, 2009: 37).

Two circumstances are particularly eloquent in supporting this: only 12 positions of teaching in different universities have been filled by people who had a job experience as a social worker or at least graduated in social work. Apart from these few cases, courses of social work (commonly named «Principles and foundations of social work» and «Methodology/methods of social work») are usually taught, in some cases even for free, by expert social workers who are selected each year and carry out this activity during the time left off from their work as employees in social services. Alternatively and in a growing number of cases the courses above are assigned to people who have tenure but are sociologists. It is to be noted that 12 positions mentioned above were not won after a selection on social work issues but on sociology since in the academic Italian system social work is considered a sub-area of General sociology; there are no department or faculty of social work at all. According to official data of the Ministry of university (Ministero dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca, 2012) sixteen of the total forty-five B.A. existing in 2012 in Italy were located in faculties/departments of Political sciences, eleven in Science education, five in Sociology, five in Humanities, three in Law and the remaining in Medicine or other disciplines.

Another concern comes from the limited time for the internship, that is only 450 hours at the bachelor level in many universities. On the other side, a new opportunity is represented by the obligation to lifelong learning for all social workers enrolled in the *ordine professionale* (professional association).

The situation of social work education described here represents undoubtedly a source of concern, but also a challenge for the professional body and the slim battalion of tenure professors.

But, of course, there are also other problems some of which pose threats to social work and its mission today in Italy. First of all, the ever changing social environment requires the helping professions to equip themselves more adequately to deal with old and new problems such as ageing, migration, new families and other issues. The deep recession started in 2008 makes this task even more difficult.

Secondly and as a direct consequence of the crisis, social policies are changing and also in Italy neoliberalism, managerialism and marketing are concepts entering more and more deeply in the choice of policy makers and somehow of social workers, even if not, at least till now, at levels known in other countries. Not surprisingly, recent nationwide research found that the majority of the experienced Italian social workers thinks the capacity of social services to meet the needs of users has worsened over the past 10 years (Carboni, 2010).

Neoliberalism is «a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practice» (Harvey, 2005: 2). In times of budget cuts and when the easy formula «public = inefficiency and waste; private efficiency and freedom of choice» is gaining more and more consensus, the neoliberalist recipe attracts interest also in the social policy makers. Granting recognition and money to private services instead of building and operating services their own is becoming a common solution chosen by national and local public powers as well as the monetization of benefits and services (the money given is thought to be good in strengthen the individual free power of choice). The impoverishment of the professionalism and the role of social workers is evident (Burgalassi, 2012). Also in the light of international literature on this subject, strong criticism has been expressed on managerialism and case or care management by some scholars in Italian universities (Fargion, 2009; Lorenz, 2006).

Somehow related on a micro level to the social policy dynamics described above, the poor ability of many social workers to actually manage the organizational dimension and enable it to respond more effectively to the demands of the users are often the main obstacles which make it difficult to realise the trifocal perspective urging social workers to operate simultaneously on and with user, organization, and community. Burn-out or cold identification with the bureaucratic mechanisms are often the outcomes of this situation.

International comparison is particularly useful in order to adequately face this and other difficulties social work meets today in Italy. On this level and in a globalized world, everybody can teach and everybody can learn, but, most importantly, all social workers can bring together their different experiences and endeavour to find better solutions to deal with common problems and help those in need, which has always been the ultimate goal in the world of social work since its beginning.

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4. Social work and welfare policy in Romania: history and current challenges

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Index

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Keywords

Social work, Romania, social work education, history of social work, welfare

Introduction

Situated in South-Eastern Europe, Romania became independent in 1866 and on the 1st of January 2007 joined the European Union (Eu). The majority of population is Christian Orthodox (86.5% in 2011) and according to the most recent census from 2011 (National institute of statistics, 2013) besides Romanians (88.9% in 2011) there are two main ethnic minorities: Hungarian (6.5%) and Roma (3.3%). The total population residing in Romania is of 20.1 million inhabitants, down from 21.7 in 2002 and 23.1 in 1990. In 2012 its Gross domestic product (Gdp) per capita (Pps) reached half of the Eu average (Eurostat database). Administratively, Romania is divided in 41 counties plus 6 districts of the capital city, Bucharest (Nuts 3 level) and 8 regions (Nuts 2).

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1. A historical perspective on social work in Romania

Bordering the Eu to east, Romania is placed somewhere between the East and the West, at the gates of the Middle East. Historical, geographical and cultural factors alongside economic, political and social ones influenced the early forms of social work. The current territories of Romania (with the three provinces Moldova, Valachia/Wallachia and Transylvania) were for long periods of time conflict areas, even occupied (the Roman empire, the Ottoman empire, the Austro-Hungarian empire) or a quasi-colony of an empire (e.g. the Ottoman empire). As a result, many people where in need of assistance (Livadă-Cadeschi, 2002).

Analyzing the evolution of social work in Romania in the contemporary era Buzducea (2009: 123-124) identifies three stages: the development stage (after the 1st world war), the communist stage (1945-1989) when social work was demolished/dismantled and the post-communist stage of re-building/reconstruction (1990-present). Lambru (2002: 61-69) identifies four stages in the history of social work in Romania:

1) 1800-1920, when the structure bases of the social work system were created;

2) 1920-1945, when the institutional structure matured and diversified;

3) 1945-1989, the decline of the social work system;

4) after 1989, the restructuring and modernization of the social work system. Combining the two perspectives it is possible to add a pre-modern era when social work was carried out mainly as a charity, by the church, but with increasing role from the state/public authorities.

1.1. First stage: the early years, the charity era

In 13th century, under the influence of Christian religion, the first forms of social assistance for the poor were created alongside monasteries, being called «infirmaries» (in ro. *Bolnite*). In 14th century the support for the poor was mentioned as an attribute of the prince (in ro. *voievod)* who required the lords/noblemen to contribute to this work of charity. In 1295 in Transylvania an institute of the poor from Bistrita is

registered (Lambru, 2002). In 1365 near Campulung Muscel a village for those in need and/or ill (e.g. blind, disabled, crippled) was mentioned and the locals where exempted from paying taxes to the prince court (Prince Radu Negru). The same village was also mentioned in 17th century (1639) during the reign of Matei Basarab (Buzducea, 2009: 115). In 1480 in Moldova (Stefan the Great) began the work of charity. In 1524 a social assistance institution was mentioned near Bucharest (Curtea de Arges monastery) where poor people could benefit of shelter, food, clothes and money. Also in 16th century regulations were created: for instance a poor card (authorization) was allowing begging only for the disabled; the poor able to work were receiving help only if they could prove that the gains from work were insufficient, thus begging was forbidden. In Bucharest, prince Negru Vodă is creating similar institutions (called *calicii*) in 16th century, the funding coming from the Charity box (in ro. *Cutia Milei*) (Manoiu, Epureanu, 1996).

Similarly to the Elizabethan poor law from 1601 in England the responsibility is placed to the church (Pop, 2005), but with some involvement from the authorities. The control of the social assistance recipients was important, in 1686 a list of the poor receiving money from the city hall budget was available at the dean (clerical) of Bucharest (Buzducea, 2009). In 18th century more and more social assistance institutions are created next to monasteries and hospitals (e.g. Coltea, Pantelimon, Domnita Balasa girls' boarding school). In late 18th century (1775) prince Alexandru Ipsilanti is creating the Charity/poor box, in the same year a law on child protection being promoted (Livadă-Cadeschi, 2002). More institutions for children in need/orphans, for teenage-mothers, for the elderly, for the ill and the poor are created in the following years (Mănoiu, Epureanu, 1996). In 1831-1832 the organic regulations are establishing social assistance institutions and their functioning, the funding being secured from the orthodox church, from the prince court, but also from donations from the boyars/landlords (in ro. *boieri*). However, only in 1881 a social assistance service of Bucharest city hall is to be found, in charge with the protection of orphans and missing children, by placing them to foster-mothers/nannies (in ro. *doici*) or «raising mothers» (Mănoiu, Epureanu, 1996: 7; Livadă-Cadeschi, 2001). Similar services and social assistance institutions are subsequently created in rural areas, the communes being also responsi-

ble of caring for the disadvantaged (from 1894 with the law on reorganization of communes).

1.2. Second stage: the development of social work

The end of the first world war witnessed the creation of Romania as a nation-state (December 1st, 1918), which created the premises for developing the social policies, including the area of helping the disadvantaged. In 1920 the Ministry of labor, health and social welfare is established, including a Social assistance department with representatives at county and local (commune/village) level. Some 13,000 beggars and vagabonds/trumps are to be found in Bucharest alone around 1920 (Mănoiu, Epureanu, 1996: 9). The Social services act from 1930 is created the premises for decentralized social services at local level. A first census of social assistance institutions at national level from 1936 revealed only 50 public ones (Mănoiu, Epureanu, 1996: 6) the great majority (830) being private institutions (Lambru, 2002: 67). In 1941 a first database of social assistance beneficiaries from Bucharest wasis designed with the aim of improving the efficacy of social work interventions (Lambru, 2002). The creation of «Principesa Ileana school of social work» in 1929 was another step in the development of social work in the interwar period. In 1943 a new law organised the social assistance activity within the Ministry of labor, health and social welfare in three departments: social assistance, familiy protection and mother and child protection (Lambru, 2002: 71).

1.3. The third stage: the communist era, the dismantling

The new regime established after the end of second world war attempted to reduce the role of social work, mainly for ideological reasons. In a communist society, where people were expected to be equal, poverty and inequalities were not forseeable, thus social work had a marginal role. A series of reorganisation measures started in 1947 with the division in two separate departments of health and social welfare within the former Ministry of labour, health and social welfare

(Lambru, 2002). Slowly the well developed social work system was dismantled, reorganised and responsibilities divided between various departments and ministers. The dissolution of social work education (at university level in 1952 and completely in 1969) was the final step in demolishing the profession. Professionals were replaced by civil servants, performing administrative activities and filling in forms for some emergency benefits (Zamfir, 1999). Social assistance institutions for abandoned children, people with disabilities and the elderly were the only ones surviving, but in precarious conditions. Pro-natalist measures and family friendly policies started with a decree from 1966 forbidding abortion. This measure lead to many illegal abortions, a deterioration of women' reproductive health and increased child abadonement. Social policies were largely work-related and families with children were receiving support (e.g. generous child allowance, free kindergartens and education, etc.) from the state (Zamfir, 1999). The deterioration of the standard of living in the 1980s created the premises for the popular uprising in December 1989.

1.4. The fourth stage: the post-communist era, the reconstruction

After more than 25 years of oppression by the communist regime the process of reconstruction of social work started in early 1990. The Ministry of labor and social protection takes over social assistance measures in August 1990 and in November a State secretariat of handicapped is created to coordinate the social assistance activities (Lambru, 2002). Social work and sociology education are re-established in the same year at university level, but without taking into consideration the interwar heritage (Mănoiu, Epureanu, 1996). After the fall of the communist regime the images with children living in institutions/orphanages in degrading conditions broadcasted in international media revealed a shocking reality, unknown for the majority of Romanians. There were over 100,000 children estimated in residential care in 1990 (Zamfir, 1999). Given this situation and the lack of trained staff (although there were still a few graduates of social work from the communist period, before the banning of education), much of the work in the first years after 1989 was humanitarian and charity work (as in

the early times). Some of the first measures referred to people with disabilities (in 1992 a first law to protect people with disabilites/handicap was passed), but a law on social welfare/minimum income was issued only in 1995, with support from the World bank (Wb) (Zamfir, 1999). Attempting to reform the old type institutions for children proved to be a difficult task, largely undertaken as a result of presurres from the international community. Many international Ngos (e.g. Holt international, Save the children, World vision, etc.) and institutions (e.g. Eu, Usaid, Unicef, Unpd, Wb, etc.) were involved in the development of social work system (albeit the majority in child protection area) in the last decade of the 20th century. The first law of social assistance (Law n.705/2001) was only a declaration of good intentions, being replaced in 2006 (Law n.47/2006) and then in 2011 (Law n.292/2011). With the first reform in child protection which started in 1997 (ordinances n.25/1997 on adoption and n.26/1997 on children in need) a new system is slowly created. In the second decade after the fall of communism the general framework of social work services was further developed. Measures such as the establishment of the social services law (Ordinance n.68/2003), a law on prevention of social exclusion and marginalisation (Law n.116/2002) together with the introduction of several cash benefits (guaranteed minimum income, in ro. *venitul minim garantat*, in 2001, single parents allowance in 2003, heating allowance, etc.) contributed to the repositioning of social assistance. The most important provision was the creation of the National college of social workers in 2005 as the central body to regulate the profession (Law n.466/2004 on the statute of social workers) which also sets the Code of ethics to govern the practice (in 2008). Until the end of 2013 some 4,500 social workers were registred in the National register of social workers (see National college of social workers from Romania's webpage[1]).

[1] www.cnasr.ro.

2. A short history of social work education in Romania

The education in social work at university level was established with support from the Association of Christian women. In 1929 appears «Principesa/Princess Ileana school of social work» appears, within the Romanian social institute (sociological organization) and with the approval of the Ministry of labour, health and social welfare. The first issue of its journal «Social work. Bulletin of Principesa Ileana school of social work» was released in the same year (until 1936 within the Romanian social institute and from 1936 to 1944 within the newly created Association for the progress of social work) presenting the curricula of the School of social work[2]. The teaching staff comprised sociologists, doctors and historians but also people trained in schools of social work from the United States (Mănoiu, Epureanu, 1996). Until 1952 the education of social workers continued at university level and from 1952 until 1969 the duration of study was reduced to three years, as a post-high-school/vocational training. From 1969 to 1989 the education in social work was banned, since in a socialist society the social workers do not have a role. The activities they provide were considered to deal with the flaws of the capitalist/western societies (e.g. poverty, unemployment), which are not to be found in a socialist society (Zamfir, 1999; 2006; Buzducea, 2009).

Social work education was re-established at university level in early 1990, with the creation of the Departments of social work, within the Faculties of sociology and social work[3] in Bucharest and Cluj and then in other universities too. The first generation of social workers graduated in 1994 (4 years study). Collaborations with other western (European and American) schools of social work contributed to the establishment and professionalization of social work education during this period (Walsh *et al.*, 2005; Crawford *et al.*, 2006). The number of universities with social work programs increases to 24 in 2006 (Zamfir, 2006) and to 23 in 2011 comprising public, private and religious-based facul-

[2] Recently, on the website of *Social work review* the *Social work archival project* has published scanned copies of the first issues of the journal since 1929-1930, www.swreview.ro/index.pl/social_work_archival_project_en.

[3] Sociology education was also banned during the communist rule in 1974.

ties (orthodox, catholic, baptist, advent, etc.). The Social work review (*revista de asistență social)* is re-established[4] in 2002 at University of Bucharest, Faculty of sociology and social work. Since 2005, as a result of the Bologna process, undergraduate education in social work decreases from four years to three years of study. Master programs in social work are available nationwide on various specialized fields (e.g. counseling and clinical social work, probation, gerontological social work, social work supervision, social services management, high-risk groups, child welfare, etc.), but doctoral studies are only possible in other social sciences, usually in sociology with a topic on social work. All undergraduate programs include supervised field placements in social work institutions in each semester and at the end of each year of study. There are no aggregate data on the total number of social work graduates at national level although there are 21 generations already. A national Association of schools of social work from Romania (Asswr[5]) was created in 2010 with the support of social work teachers from the main universities (Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi and Timisoara).

3. The socio-economic situation in post-socialist Romania

In December 1989 a violent uprising overthrown the communist regime and a transition from a centralised economy to a free market-based economy began. Since in the previous decade ('80s) Romania paid all external debts having even a surplus, shortly after the regime change these savings were used to compensate some of the public demands e.g. allowing imports, subsidised goods, compensations for those who participated in the revolution and former disidents of the regime, etc. (Zamfir, 1999). While in 1991 the external debt was merely 7.5% of Gdp, it reached 78% of Gdp in 2012 (MacroEconomyMeter, 2014), respectively 96.5 billion euros in January 2014 (National bank of Romania, 2014). The transition years

[4] The journal declares to continue the tradition of the journal «Social work. bulletin of Principesa Ileana school of social work» edited between 1929 and 1936, as mentioned above.

[5] See the website of the association: http://www.asswr.ro.

witnessed economic downturn and restructuring, unemployment (officially recognized in 1991), high levels of migration (1 million in Italy, 0.8 millions in Spain – see Sandu, Alexandru, 2009), demographic decline (from 23 millions inhabitants in 1990 (22.8 at the census from 1992) to 20.1 millions in 2011 – see the National institute of statistics, 2013 – census data), polarization/increasing inequalities (Gini coefficient from 23.31 in 1989 to 31.66 in 2004 and 27.4 in 2011, World bank[6]) and other negative social phenomenons.

Since 1989 the number of pensioners increased from around 2.5 millions to 5.2 millions in 2013 (out of which about half a million are farmer pensioners), while the number of employees decreased from about 8.5 millions in 1989 to 4.3 millions in 2013. In the first years after the 1989 revolution retirement was used as a measure to reduce the pressure on the labor market in the context of economic restructuring and lay offs/unemployment (8.2% of labor force in 1994 and 7% in 2013). Employment rate for those aged over 15 years old varied from 55% in 1991 to a peak of 62.7% in 1997 and 52.3% in 2012 – 45.4 for females and 59.8 for males (World bank, 2014[7]).

Social development disparities are to be found at regional level (most developed regions are Bucharest and regions from west and center of Romania – for instance gdp per capita expressed at purchasing power standard (pps) in Bucharest is more than the Eu average (122% of Eu average in 2011, while in north-east is 29% of Eu average) – but also between rural and urban areas (Rotariu, 2009). Unlike most Eu countries, almost half of Romania's population (46% in 2011) is living in rural areas (National institute of statistics, 2013).

Surveys on the living conditions at Eu level highlight the second highest percentage of relative poverty rate (22.2% in 2011) and of those at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (41.7% in 2012, 52.2% for children, almost double of the Eu28 average). In terms of social protection Romania is lagging behind most Eu countries, spending less than 20% from its gdp on social protection (16.3% in 2012, from 17.6 in 2011

[6] According to Eurostat, Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income (Silc, ilc_di12) was 33.2% in 2012 for Romania.

[7] Eurostat data report employment rate of those aged 20-64 and the percentage for 2012 is 63.8.

and 12.8 in 2004 and 2006), the Eu28 average being at 29%. Also, poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, where slums with extreme poverty are to be found instead (Preda, 2009).

4. Welfare policy in Romania after the fall of communism

Analyses on the Romanian welfare state are rare (Deacon, 1992; Zamfir, 1999; Lazar, 2000; Preda, 2002, 2009; Stanescu, 2013; Pop, 2013) and are usually country-specific. Shortly after the change of regime in Central and Eastern Europe, Bob Deacon (1992) included Romania in a hybrid «post-communist corporatist-conservative» type, with many features inherited from the previous regime. Over the years some of the factors considered relevant in the shaping of social policies in post-communist Romania became less important (e.g. trade unions mobilization in the first decade was important, but not anymore) and the other way around (e.g. the influence of external actors was less important at the beginning, but increased afterwards – see the increase in external debt and the process of Eu accession).

In an attempt to compare Romania with the main typologies of welfare states, Lazar (2000) concludes that Romanian welfare state is «looking for an identity», but with many similarities with the southern/latin rim model previously identified by Leibfried (1993) and Ferrera (1997) (e.g. clientelism, proclaimed social rights, implementation challenges for social policies, etc.) and moving towards the liberal welfare regime from Esping-Andersen's typology (1990). The trend towards the liberal welfare regime was also identified by Preda (2002), who characterizes the Romanian social policies as reflecting a «governmental culture of poverty».

In an analysis of Eu27 countries from the perspective of income level (expressed as Gdp at Ppp) and distribution, Cantillon (2011: 434), identifies four clusters, including Romania into a «poor inegalitarian», along with the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Portugal and Cyprus. Another study carried out by Kati Kuitto (2011) who analyses welfare expenditures in Eu28, considers Romania to be in a group of «developing Eastern European welfare states», along with the Baltic

States, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia, all sharing a low social spending (especially low on services).

4.1. Social insurances: pensions, health care, unemployment

Romania inherited from the communist regime a comprehensive welfare system, predominantly insurance based/work-related (pay-as-you-go pension system), following the logic of full-employment (Zamfir, 1999; Sotiropoulos, Pop, 2007). Variations in earnings were limited (the ratio between minimum/lowest and maximum/highest wage was 1 to 5), thus reducing inequalities. Farmers had a separate pension system, but pensions were significantly lower than state pensions (Marginean, 1999). With the growing number of pensioners the reform of the pension system started in 2001 (Law n.17/2000), with a first increase of the retirement age from 57 to 60 for women and from 62 to 65 for men; at the same time to determine the value of pension the entire working period was taken into consideration and related to average earnings (Pop, 2005). Since 2006 mandatory private pensions were introduced, to tackle the foreseeable crisis of the public pension system, while the voluntary private pensions are underrepresented (around 5% of the employees had a private voluntary pension in 2011).

The universal health care system (tax-based), though of poor quality, that existed in communist Romania has been replaced in 1997 with health social insurances (Vladescu *et al*., 2008). Romania is spending the least on health as a percentage of its Gdp among the Eu countries (around 5.5%, according to Eurostat), despite having poor performances in terms of health indicators (Vladescu *et al*., 2008; Popescu, 2009).

Before 1990 unemployment was not recognized, Catalin Zamfir (1999) suggesting the presence of «hidden unemployment» (state enterprises being «forced» to employ new staff although they did not need it and then, in shifts putting them «on hold», on unpaid/partially paid leave). Only in 1991 unemployment was officially recognized and an unemployment allowance was introduced (Law n.1/1991). In Romania official unemployment rate is rather low (7.3% in 2013, according to Eurostat) compared with the Eu28 average (10.9% in 2013), which is not matched by the spending on active labor measures (Preda, 2009).

Also the major migration wave after the 2007 Eu accession has lead many young people (or at least employment aged) to emigrate (National institute of statistics, 2013), reducing the pressure on the internal labor market. Unemployment benefits are established based on the minimum wage and are partially wage-related, the duration of entitlement varying between 6 (for newly graduates, at 75% of minimum wage) and 12 months (Law n.76/2002). Some incentives are available for employers hiring newly graduates, people over 45 years old, former convicts, people with disabilities or unemployed people.

4.2. Social assistance

As mentioned above, the social work system started to be gradually rebuilt after 1989. The first laws were aiming at improving the situation of people with disabilities (in 1992), followed by the poor (in 1995 a law on social welfare), children in need (1997) and eventually the social work system in general (2001). In the first decade after the revolution child protection was on top of the public agenda. Due to external pressures from international bodies (e.g. the European Union, the European commission, European parliament, Unicef, Usaid, Wb, etc.) and with major funding (e.g. Phare, Usaid, World learning etc.) the child protection system significantly improved over the last 25 years. Although many cash benefits were introduced (more for children), their value is rather low.

The second decade of the post-communist era is marked by the expansion of social assistance legislation to include previously neglected groups, such as: single-parent families (Ordinance n.105/2003), youth at risk of social exclusion and those who lived in special protection institutions/residential care (Law n.116/2002 on prevention of social marginalization), victims of domestic violence (Law n.217/2003), children whose parents migrated (Order n.219/2006), those with autistic spectrum disorders (Law n.151/2010), etc. Despite this legislative boom, the implementations were not always consistent and continuous (e.g. unclear or late norms of implementation, inadequate funding, etc.). Some groups continue to be poorly addressed by current programs (e.g. the elderly, drug users). Once Romania officially joined the Eu in 2007

most international donors (e.g. Usaid, World learning, Unaids, Unfpa, Unodc, the Global fund) left the country for other areas in greater need. At the same time the global economic crisis created the premise to carry out further adjustments, which seems to characterize the third decade after the regime change.

The main challenges of the social work system include (Zamfir, 1999, 2006; Arpinte, 2006; Buzducea, 2009): inadequate funding, staff, imbalances between services and benefits, disparities in the provision and institutional challenges.

5. Recent challenges

In July 2010 to comply with International monetary fund (Imf), Eu and Wb conditions for a 20 billion euros bailout, the government cut overall public spending by 25%. Several cash benefits for children and families were cut by 15% (e.g. child rearing indemnity for working mothers), for others the eligibility criteria were tightened (e.g. means-tested family allowances), while others have been dissolved (e.g. birth allowance, newborns trousseau). Even the universality of the child allowance was questioned only civil society pressures saving it. Wages of all public sector employees were cut by 25% between July 2010 and January 2011 and other work related benefits were abolished, further diminishing incomes. Around 100,000 civil servants were fired and new hiring frozen. Since January 2011 wages in the public sector increased by 15% and in June 2012 (just before local elections) another 8% were added still not achieving the previous level (before the cut).

In the field of social work a new law was issued in December 2011 (Law n. 292) and (with Wb support) a new reform strategy for 2011-2013 has been elaborated aiming, among others, at reducing public spending on social assistance by 0.8% of Gdp. Also the new legislative package is imposing more conditions on the beneficiaries of services and benefits, enhancing the individual responsibility and promoting a more active participation from the recipients of benefits. A preference is given to services over benefits, but no specific actions are mentioned to comply with this regulation. The same laxness is to be found in the provision that all administrative units «may have» social work services.

Also, contracting out services to private or non-profit providers is encouraged. In order to improve administration and reduce fraud and errors the social inspection is receiving a more important role in monitoring the compliance with the new regulations.

The general political discourse is stigmatizing towards those relying on benefits from the state (not only social assistance recipients, but also pensioners). A national control of the social inspection on the minimum income guaranteed scheme in 2010 revealed that 12% were illegal beneficiaries fueling this perspective. As a result of these measures some foster care families returned the children in care to public institutions and social workers and other professionals from child protection services with very low wages quit jobs to work abroad or in other domains. Also, some 1,500 people from public social work services were dismissed. All these lead to a worsening of the quality of social services provided. As a result of the new legislation the number of children receiving means-tested family allowance dropped 2.5 times (by 40%) from December 2010 to December 2011, the same ratio being also in terms of expenses.

6. Conclusion

Social work in Romania has a long-standing tradition. As elsewhere in the world the first initiatives to help the disadvantaged are to be found in the religious charity. Following a flourishing time in the interwar period that culminated with the creation of the first school of social work, the communist regime banned social work education and the profession. After the fall of the communism in December 1989, faculties of social work were quickly re-established (in 1990) and a (long) reconstruction process began. Historically, we identified four stages in the development of social work in Romania: 1) the early years of the charity era; 2) the development of social work; 3) the communist era when social work was dismantled and 4) the post-communist era witnessing the reconstruction of the profession. Re-started in 1990 social work education at university level continued to develop throughout the transition period coming to its maturity. Faculties of social work are well connected with international schools of social work, but doctoral

studies in social work are not yet available. The socio-economic hardships of the transition years marked the reconstruction of social work services and the welfare policies in general as in other former communist countries (Zavirsek, 2014). In a period of expanding welfare provisions, the global economic crisis from 2008 and the austerity measures adopted to respond to it hit also the social work system and welfare policies (Pop, 2013), with major external influences.

Romanian social policies are still looking for an identity, but social work continues its reconstruction after the communist blackout. At general level, the move toward minimalist welfare state seems to be accentuated under the neoliberal pressures (from internal and external actors). Major progresses were achieved in terms of services provided, quality of social work education and the recognition of social work profession, although there is room for improvement (e.g. services for certain categories, evidence-based practice and policies, doctoral studies in social work, adequate wages for social workers).

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5. Social problems and social work in Russia

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Index

Introduction; 1. Russian context; 2. Main social issue; 3. Economic sectors in social services; 4. Social policy; 5. Social service organization and legislation; 6. Recipients of social services; 7. Social work education and professional practice; 8. Conclusion; References

Keywords

Social work, vulnerable population, social services

Introduction

The current Russian Federation (Russia) has existed as a newly configured national political entity since 1991, following the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Ussr)[1]. General socio-economic conditions have been in a state of major flux and redefinition over recent decades. As a result the historical relationship between the state and its citizens has undergone marked changes. The pre-existing social problems (prior to 1991) have been amplified and extended by the social and economic conditions resulting from the pervasive adjustments in general socio-economic-political areas. These societal upheavals have significantly impacted on social policy and social services. There is a widespread agreement that social services must be

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planned and developed within the context of these general political and socio-economic conditions at national, regional and local levels.

The recognition of social work as a professional discipline, along with the implementation of social work training programs, usually within the newly founded Schools of sociology has resulted in efforts to define and develop social worker roles and functions within the evolving system of social services. This is a developmental effort since neither sociology nor social work were recognized or permitted to exist in the Ussr. Social work as a profession has been recognized only since the 1990s. This paper summarises many of the contemporary debates and areas of concern regarding the socio-economic-political factors affecting social policies, political priorities, and social services in the Russian Federation.

1. Russian context

Despite its diminished territorial size from the era of the Ussr, the Russian Federation remains the largest country in the world, with a geographic territory of over 17 million square km. It has boundaries with 14 other sovereign countries. Internally it consists of 83 federal entities (republics, territories, counties, regions, and cities of federal significance); each of these entities having its own government, resources, population, economy and social services opportunities, issues, and needs. The population of Russia is over 143 million people (143.5 - 2013), over 180 nationalities live in its territory, with 78% made up of ethnic Russians, followed by the Tatars at 3.9% (Federal service of state statistics. Demography annual of Russia, 2014). The balance is an aggregate of more limited ethnic or cultural sub-groups.

The Russian economy is heavily orientated toward development and exploitation of its natural resources. Development of a diversified industrial base is a national priority. It had a budget deficit of around 1.3% of Gross domestic product (Gdp) in 2013; in contrast to 3.3% for the European Union (Eu). Government debt amounts to 13% of the Gdp, compared to 87% for the Eu. Inflation in the country remains a problem. Current economic conditions have been negatively affected by the application of international sanctions due to the Ukraine crisis.

The effects of these sanctions, coupled with the global depression in petroleum prices have resulted in economic problems and the devaluation of the ruble. The labour market is relatively stable with the unemployment rate at around 5.4% (The Economist, 2014).

2. Main social issue

The Russian Federation inherited major social challenges from the Ussr era, e.g. increasing poverty; homelessness; juvenile delinquency; drug and alcohol abuse; mental health issues; and hiv/aids; with a complex, fractionated system of social security based on centralized state control. Small monetary transfers were irregularly paid to different social groups, e.g. people with disabilities, single mothers, large families, veterans; with more than 150 population categories in total (Iarskaia-Smirnova, Romanov, 2002). The Russian economic changes resulted in the transition towards a more democratic society, but they also increased «social stresses and amplified the need for improved social services (Oecd, 2001; Davidova, 2004; Manning, Tikhonova, 2009; Cain *et al*., 2005; World bank, 2005; Cerami, 2006; 2009).

The key social challenges faced by the federation are illustrated by the following areas and processes of significant concern: the sequence of presentation does not imply relative priority or importance.

Depopulation. Following the collapse of the Ussr, Russia had a significant immediate reduction in its population; losing about 900 thousand people per year; through death rate exceeding birth rate and outmigration due to political, economic and social crisis (Goscomstat of Russia, 2002). Some demographers projected that if the rate of depopulation continued, by 2050 Russia's population may decrease significantly (Zohoori, Gleiter, Popkin, 2002). As a result depopulation was considered a continuing social problem in Russia until 2013.

This trend appeared to be reversed with the population of Russia increasing to 143.5 million people by August of 2013. This is 0.08% more than in 2012 (Rosstat, 2013). The state believes its anti-depopulation social programs (including money for a third and following children, together with other benefits for families with children);

along with inward migration of migrants from the former Ussr republics which are the primary basis for this reversal.

Migration. After the disintegration of the Ussr, a wave of migration to Russia from the newly independent countries occurred. During the period 1992-2000 over 8,000,000 ethnic Russians returned to the Russian Federation. This did not completely compensate for the populations losses through out-migration and other influences, e.g. high mortality rates due to poor nutrition and other health factors. Consequently there was a temporary decrement in total population. Economic development in the period after 2000, resulted in a wave of immigration of migrant workers from mainly former Ussr republics such as Moldova, Kirgizstan, Tadgikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine. This influx contributed to the reversal of the population loss. To illustrate, in the first 9 months of 2013, Moscow and the Moscow region accounted for 3.3 million of migrants and St. Petersburg and Leningrad region, 2.5 million (Ria Novosti, 2013).

Life expectancy. Life expectancy in Russia is low, especially for men. According to the World health organization (Who, 2013) the life expectancy for Russian men is the lowest among European and Middle Asia countries (62.8 years for men, 73 for women).

Unemployment. The unemployment rate in September of 2013 was 5.27% and increased 0.04% compared to September 2012. The economically active population in September 2013 was 75,752,000 compared to the 2012 total of 76,172,000 (Rosstat, 2013).

The level of illegal employment in Russia is indicated by the fact that only 1.8 million of the 3.5 million foreign workers have legal work permits (Romodanovsky, 2013).

Poverty. Russia has one of the highest levels of wealth inequality in the world. The problem of wealth distribution is highlighted by the fact that thirty five percent (35%) of all private wealth in Russia is controlled by just 110 people. In the last decade poverty-reduction and middle-class growth in Russia have been a governmental priority. These efforts are directed toward stimulating growth in average incomes and consumption, along with wage growth and access to good, productive jobs (Hansl, 2014).

The subsistence (official poverty) threshold in Russia is 6,700 rubles per month (about 160 €). Thirty five per cent (35.8%) of this gross

amount is projected for food costs, 14.9% for non-food goods and medication, 41.8% for services, including housing and transportation and 7.5% for taxes and other obligatory payments and fees (Rosstat, 2013). According to official statistics, the poverty rate (the percentage of people with incomes below the survival minimum) in Russia is 11.2% (Rosstat, 2012). Applying this proration to the general population of Russia obtains a total of approximately 14,500.00 persons in poverty. Poverty is indicated when the income of a person/family is lower than the living wage, as calculated by the state.

The poor in Russia are primarily families with children, the unemployed, persons with disabilities, single elderly persons living alone, and women (especially single mothers and elderly). Homeless persons and refugees form an increasing group of the poor (Molchanov, 2010; Platonova, 2011). Migrants as a group represent a growing social burden in the society since they comprise such a major group of people in poverty. The largest sub-group of the working poor is families with children (approximately 60 percent of poor households have one or more children; with, single-parents and young families particularly at risk (Sidorenko, 2001; Razumov, 2009; Bogomolova, Tapilina, 2004**)**. Family size and composition, regional location, presence of an unemployed and/or disabled family member may be predictors of potential poverty. Poor and very poor families are usually larger in size.

In summary as with many countries, the rich are getting richer while the poor are staying the same or getting poorer in Russia. Problems of wealth distribution and the need to develop a major financially secure middle class are major issues.

Corruption. Russia scored 28, ranking 133 out of 176 countries, in the Transparency international annual corruption perception index; ranking with countries such as Honduras, Nigeria, and Uganda (Corruption, 2012). Administrative corruption is not the most damaging form of corruption effecting economic growth and private sector development in Russia. «Bribe frequency» (paying bribes «to get things done») has been customary in Russian culture since the soviet times.

While bureaucratic corruption appears to be slightly declining, over the past decade, perceptions of «state capture» by large corporates is worsening (Talagina, 2008; Popov, 2009). Administrative corruption distorts and impedes the «implementation» of laws and regulations,

while state capture favors select firms or officials. High-level government officials «capture» profitable private firms, allocating their assets or top management positions to political allies. This type of «crony capitalism» is a common element of problems with blurred boundaries between the private and public sectors. These practices encourage rent seeking, distort market competition, and undermine public trust in government and markets (Kizunko, Knack, 2013).

Health deterioration. After the collapse of the Ussr, free health care has *de facto* disappeared in Russia (Nazarova, 1998; Rimashevskaya, 2004). Relatively poor nutrition, together with factors such as shortages and high costs of medications (as well as fake medications) has led to a deterioration of health in a big segment of the general population. The lack of funds for basic health care, maintenance and rehabilitation has contributed to a vicious circle of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Existing programs of assistance to persons with disabilities, war disability pensioners, or atomic power accidents survivors do not provide all necessary services and medications. Life expectancy and the mortality rate are still not comparable with other developed countries (Human development index, 2013).

The health care system in Russia, as all social services, is in a transition period. Both compulsory and voluntary health insurance programs provide varying levels of medical care; which commonly does not cover all basic costs. General public medical care (compulsory) has limited provisions for early diagnosis and treatment and does not include payment for medication. Select groups of patients have the right to free medication, but the list of drugs and their quality are quite limited (Manning, Tikhonova, 2009).

Substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco, drugs). Consumption of alcohol and cigarettes in Russia is among the highest in the world. The roots of substance abuse in Russia, especially alcohol abuse, derives from cultural attributes, images, and representations (Ivanov, 2011). Over 30 thousand (30,000) Russians in the 20's age category, die as a result of drugs annually. Additionally 23.4% of all mortality in Russia is from alcohol related causes (Nemtsov, 2009) and about 2% of the population (nearly 3 million people) are registered as having alcohol problems (Koshkina, 2011). Rosstat (Russian statistics agency) states that the annual alcohol consumption in Russia is 11.5 litters of alcohol per capita

(2011), exceeded only by Germany (12.2), Czech Republic (15.3), and The Netherlands (15.9). According to Icd-10 (adopted by Russia in 1998) alcohol is considered to be neither a drug, nor a psychoactive, nor a toxic substance. Different categories of specialists (physicians, psychologists, teachers, social workers), together with police and parents deal with alcohol and drug abuse in schools (Altshuler, 2008; Ivanets, 2009; Koshkina, 2008; 2009; 2010; Sirota, Yaltonsky, 2004). Over 80% of adolescents in Moscow schools have tried or use alcohol (Alexandrov, Kotova, Rozanov, 2010; Fedulov, 2009). Two thirds (2/3) of high school boys and 50% of girls have experienced alcohol intoxication at least once (Alexandrov, 2008; Gurtovenko, 2009; Konstantinova, 2009). Beer was identified as an alcohol drink in Russia in 2011.

Approximately 30.9% of the population smoke; with a mortality rate of 300-500 thousand people annually of diseases associated with tobacco consumption, and about 80% of population are exposed to daily passive smoking (Shevyreva, 2011).

In the last decade the societal consequences of some forms of addiction have prompted laws to be adopted. Social policy action aimed at reducing addiction in the population (including discussions on increased excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco) were taken at the national governmental level. Local laws and ordinances regulating the sale of alcohol and tobacco have increased. Russia signed the International antismoking convention in 2007. One of the results of these actions is that alcohol and tobacco costs in Russia for consumers have significantly increased since September, 2014.

The Hiv-Aids infection rate in Russia has grown 7% in 2013, with an average infection rate of 35.7 cases per 100,000 people. The infection rate is more than one per 1,000 people in several regions of the Ural mountains and Siberia, including Kemerovo, Sverdlovsk, Tomsk and Novosibirsk. Drug addicts sharing needles remained the primary cause of infection accounting for 58% of all new cases followed by heterosexual transmission (The Moscow times, 2013). Medication for hiv patients in Russia is free of charge, but the quality and regularity of supply can be limited, especially in rural areas. So some patients fly to cities such as London, Uk to get a free supply for three months.

3. Economic sectors in social services

Russia considers itself to be a social welfare state. Decades after the fall of the Soviet Union the political system in Russia had been labelled a «defective democracy», especially in regard to the introduction of a capitalistic free market economic system in the Russian Federation. This has caused considerable hardships for the population (Hinterhuber, 2011).

Since 2005, Russia's central government has played a much more active and interventionist role in areas of social welfare. This included identifying national priority projects in health, education and housing; in addition to demographic policies (Cook, 2011). Local welfare solutions and innovations are possible only if the local key actors are willing to contribute to their development; particularly in small towns and the countryside (Kay, 2011; Kulmala, 2011).

Russia's welfare regime has undergone a major shift, from the liberalizing direction of Yeltsin years and first Putin administration toward one which is managed more actively by the state. These efforts include reforms of social service provisions to regions and municipalities, greater market mechanisms in health care and education, flexibility in labour markets, and elimination of subsidies and entitlements (Cook, 2011).

The orientation of civil society organizations in Russia towards social concerns is understandable within a historical context; as the Soviet social contract between the state and the citizen was based on the obligation of the state to provide care for its citizens (Colin-Lebedev, 2009; Phillips, 2008). Although this former social contract is no longer valid, Russian citizens still have expectations about state support. At present, the majority of Russians have a higher priority for social rights over civil or political rights (Henry, 2009). As a result of perceived failures by the state and other public structures to provide sufficient care and foster well-being for citizens, many services are being carried out through civil society entities using a strategy of mixing state and non-state efforts and resources (Gazing, 2011; Kulmala, 2011).

The social services economic models are based on three primary sectors: the state, the private sector market and the third sector (civil agencies and organizations). Within the state sector, social services are provided via the federal system of state enterprises and social services institutions. This comprises the largest sector of Russian social ser-

vices. State based agencies rely on commitments for long-term state fiscal support; paid staff and on municipal and regional funding. They may also receive grants or individual donations; as well as being able to apply for special grants. Most governmental agencies see their centers as stable enterprises.

In regard to the open market, commercial or private sector involvement in Russian social services is comparatively limited. It's not easy to achieve commercial profits in the existing social sphere under current market conditions. Social enterprises in this sector are few in number and cover primarily educational, nursing and recreational facilities. They specialize in training children with disabilities, care for elderly and specialty services such as hotel/travel business to serve disabled persons. Their services are usually very expensive and can be used only by wealthy people.

The third sector (civil agencies and organizations) is seen as filling gaps between the services provided by state and the private sector. They are viewed as complementary to, rather than competitive with other public or private services. The roles and service potential of civil agencies is currently being promoted nationally. All civil society organizations involved with the central state provisions are oriented towards social welfare. They complement and broaden the services officially provided by the state (Cook, Vinogradova, 2006; Kulmala, 2008), by providing services that do not officially fall under state aegis or to particular populations, e.g. persons who cannot obtain services during regular service hours. These joint projects may lead to increased permanent services achieved through the combinations of the public (the centre) and voluntary sectors (civil society). Such social organizations play an important role in spreading information about official social services availability and assisting in service access for the groups they represent. In addition to their remarkable role in substituting and filling the gaps of the public services, these civil society organizations promote social rights and advocate supports for various (vulnerable) groups as well as negotiate new identities in public arenas (Walker, Thomson, 2008). Thus they also perform more political activism function within the scope of their activities (Gazing, 2011).

Many Russian Non-governmental organizations (Ngos) have been heavily involved in reducing human rights abuses by law-enforcement

agencies and advocating for human services. However, the 2006 Ngo law increased the power of the Ministry of Justice to monitor Ngos, which is perceived as intending to control those seen as non-supportive of government policies (Johnson, Saarinen, 2011). The law increased the requirements for registration and requires Ngos to report on their foreign funding. In 2008, a presidential decree removed tax-exempt status for some ninety percent of foreign Ngos and foundations operating in Russia, especially those that focused on human rights (Orttung, 2009). Ngos in the social services field see themselves as advocating for social rights as part of welfare responses to social problems. They provide services for poor, neglected children, disadvantaged families, disabled persons, elderly, migrants, and marginalized groups of the population.

The service capacity of Ngos is limited by the lack of a broad, sustained long-term funding base. Even well intentioned Ngos find themselves on a grant-seeking treadmill, pursuing short-term and easily quantifiable projects, but undermining the long-term goal of creating a sustainable civil society (Hemment, 2004). Ngos are also more likely to rely on volunteer labor. Almost all Ngos have essential office equipment: a telephone, a computer, fax machine, and internet access, but approximately one third does not even have dedicated service or office space. The most common sources of funding for Ngos are international grants and individual donations, but some receive government funding either directly or through grants. Most Ngos see their centers as unstable due the previously noted lack of long-term commitments for fiscal support. Long-term viability depends upon the financing commitments, commitment of staff and volunteers and on a more supportive environment from authorities and other Ngos. During the latest economic crisis many Ngos experienced reduced financing and had to close. The service potential represented in charitable agencies and volunteerism in Russia remains underdeveloped and under-financed.

4. Social policy

The formulation of social service policy in Russia has been based on the provisions of law specified in Convention number 117, 1962, «Basic aims and standards of social policy». This document stipulates that state social policy should contribute to the welfare and development of the population. Policy enactment should encourage the pursuit of social progress, reflect the intent of the legislative constitution of the Russian Federation (Fundamental law) and be based on the provisions of this convention. Social policy is aimed at solving demographic problems, housing, employment issues, self-realization of citizens and ensuring their well-being. Resultant program authorizations must be funded from the state budget. The main sectors of the social welfare system in Russia encompass health care, education, culture and arts, and social protection.

Social policy development in the Russian Federation has been driven by a variety of socio-economic factors. Attempts at drastic restructuring of the welfare state involved all spheres of social protection; including the trends toward privatization of service provision, individualization of risks, monetization of access, and decentralization of management. These actions have taken the form of the re-introduction of the principle of social insurance within the social security system, privatization and differentiation of benefits in the pension sector, dissolution of previous health care models, establishment of a residual system of protection against unemployment, a basic safety net of social assistance with provisions for the poorest citizens, and the introduction of a private market entry in the education and housing sector. These are viewed as discrete steps toward the development of a more integrated, comprehensive social service system.

Social protection is carried out in two main areas: the protection of the economically active population and the recognition of needs of vulnerable groups of citizens. Protections and maintenance supports promoting the well-being of vulnerable segments of the population (including disabled people) through a system of guaranteed benefits. The system would permit the use of social security funds for social services development, and include taxation benefits.

The Russian Federation pension system is based on a combination of national social insurance and individual accounts. It covers employed citizens, self-employed persons, and independent farmers. Special provisions exist for civil servants, military personnel, police officers, war veterans and other specified groups. Financing is based on employee related contributions, but these are primarily paid by the employers, the state (in the case of deficits of the pension funds) or the self-employed. The government bears the responsibility of covering the total costs of social pensions and special pensions for specified groups, local governments may finance supplementary benefits out of their own budgets. The amount of pension is calculated on the basis of three components: 1) a basic flat-rate benefit according to different categories of beneficiaries; 2) a benefit based on the national account; 3) a benefit based on the value of the individual account (contributions plus interest) are paid from the beginning of 2013. There is no officially stated minimum or maximum monthly pension (Issa 2006; Ilo, 2008).

The family benefit sector of social protection is based on a combination of social insurance and social assistance principles (Gassmann, Notten, 2008). Coverage has been greatly reduced and family benefits now only cover children younger than age 16 (up to age 18 if a full-time student). Child allowances are payable to families with income below the locally determined minimum subsistence level. These allowances may vary according to geographic region.

5. Social service organization and legislation

Current systems of social care in Russia are characterized by a variety of service structures and practices within an administrative system which is commonly territorially based, with various categories of target populations. Regional, urban and district structures of social assistance work within federal, provincial and regional social authorizations but with consideration of the uniqueness of the region and its socio-cultural traditions.

The main principles underlying the development of social services are systematicity, prevention, competence and effectiveness. The first involves the forms, methods, service philosophies, and social work

technologies contributing to an integrated process of promoting quality of life with social inclusion. Competence is demonstrated by the application of knowledge and skills in providing the whole complex of assistance and support to needy individuals and groups. Prevention is determined by measures for economic, social, legal or other measures to ensure a minimum level of state-guaranteed social protection. Prevention may be illustrated by wellness programs to preclude development of health problems, or public education programs to reduce smoking. Effectiveness is demonstrated by the achievement of common goals, principles and activities; combining historical experience and traditions with modern practices of help and support. The system of social services has two functions: essence-activity function (prevention, social rehabilitation, adaptation, security and protection, and social patronage) and a moral and humanistic function (personal-humanistic, and social-humanistic).

There are two main types of social services in Russia: 1) institutions and centers of social care; 2) services of emergency social help. Site or center based options may include: shelters, consultation centers, social rehabilitation centers, centers of social care, helpline, and nursing homes. Based on the characteristics of the target population, basic services and specializations may be focused on children, elderly, disabled, veterans, migrants, homeless, as dictated by age and condition appropriateness. In urban areas there is a division into state and municipal social services. Most institutional social services are time limited, i.e. service periods are limited to one to three months, with only very small number providing an unlimited stay.

The following agencies and organizations illustrate the types of social service institutions for vulnerable populations: complex social service centers; local centers of social assistance to families and children; social service centers, social rehabilitation centers for minors; care centers for children without parental care; social shelters for children and adolescents; centers for psychological and educational assistance; centers of emergency psychological help over the phone; centers (departments) of social assistance at home; shelters for homeless, special nursing home for the lone elderly, stationary social service institutions (homes for the elderly and disabled, mental hospitals, orphanages, homes for mentally retarded children, homes for children with physical

disabilities); gerontological centers; some other institutions that provide social services; crisis centers for women in critical situation; centers for minor mothers; houses for profoundly mentally retarded children; psycho-neurological institutions for adults with mental retardation, dementia, other mental diseases which do not need psychiatric care; and nursing homes.

The real availability of these institutions and services to people in need differs from region to region. In large urban areas there usually are all of the listed agencies, but in small towns and in rural areas the services for vulnerable groups may suffer from fragmentation and limitation of the number of services and staff. Multiple services may be combined in one institution or center (e.g. for children and adults; for people with disabilities and elderly, crisis center for minor mothers and social shelters for children and adolescents). The services may be provided by the state, or Ngos, or have joint responsibilities for the development of an integrated service network.

The Constitution of the Russian Federation is the base for laws and legislative enactments, and generally recognizes the principles and norms of international legal frameworks in regulating the field of social services in Russia. Its provisions are further defined by the federal law on the «Provision of social services» (1995). This law and one specific to the volunteer movement were in debate by the Russian parliament and are submitted for action in January 2015. There are additional amendments to the laws defining the rights and provisions of social services to different segments and vulnerable groups of population which are also in a state of flux.

Social rights are viewed by many as the most important element of citizenship for Russians, over political or civil rights. The right to education, health care, housing, pensions, and other social benefits is seen as a positive aspect of the Soviet legacy. The rights to employment, health care, and housing clustered near the top of priorities for the list of important rights and freedoms identified by Russian citizens (Henry, 2009). Violations of social rights are more likely to motivate a complaint or stimulate political activism than the violation of political rights. Citizens generally see the state as having primary responsibility for recognizing these rights (Henry, 2009). The social contract in Rus-

sia has been characterized as «sausages in exchange for freedom» (Medvedev, 2009).

6. Recipients of social services

Recipients of social services are considered to be citizens and (or) families, who are in situations of need requiring the assistance and support. Difficult life situation is defined as a circumstance (or a number of circumstances), that objectively contravenes or may damage the livelihood of a citizen (family), and may involve life/health.

The services provided for these groups of individuals are based on state standards for money aids, staff involvement and clients' load per staff member. Highly educated specialists in social work are very rare in social centers and institutions away from cosmopolitan areas, so the quality of services highly depends on the region and type of facilities. There is a big shortage of qualified staff for social services in the country due to the fact that graduates of social work university programs choose other occupations because of low wages and low prestige of the profession.

7. Social work education and professional practice

The Russian government officially established the occupation of «social worker», «social pedagogue» and «social work specialist» in the public sector in the early 1990s. The «social work specialist» classification required a university degree (Iarskaia-Smirnova, Rasell, 2014). Establishing the identity and credibility of social work as a profession was been a necessary element of development. Defining the roles and functions of social workers has been a priority. A number of professional associations include experts in social work within their organizations and activities: The interregional association of social workers, the Association of universities and schools of social work are examples of these organizations.

Since March 1993, the Council of educational-methodical Union of the Russian Federation universities in the field of social work has func-

tioned as a professional collective. The main objectives of the council are: coordination of public activities of educators and researchers, development of state standards in accordance with the Education Act, long-term perspective educational planning, textbooks and teaching aids, ensuring the integration of the Russian higher schools into the world academic community.

Russian education provides for several levels of training: 1) pre-professional training in special courses, high schools, and lyceums. Graduates with this type of training provide services for patients, the elderly, and singles, those who cannot care for themselves; 2) education in specialized technical schools. Graduates of these programs may work as supervisors in offices servicing patients living alone, the elderly, they can also work as social teachers; 3) training at universities or academies provides for three distinct levels of degree programs: bachelor (4 years), professional (5 years) and master (2 years). Master graduates have the right to participate in educational and research work and may be candidates for phd training; with possible advancement to doctor of science degree programs. This latter program requires substantial scientific research. Currently there are 2,543 universities and institutions, including their branches in Russia, offering professions in a great number of fields, but the quality of graduates is considered to need improvement.

The system of training, retraining, advanced training, and professional development of social workers began to emerge in Russia only since the 1990s. Since 1991 the network of higher education institutions embarking on the training and retraining of specialists in social work has been expanding. In the 1990-91 academic year there were eight schools training social workers. In March 2009 among institutions engaged in training and retraining for the social care system, there were 82 public universities, 10 state academies, 11 public institutions, 500 non-governmental institutions and universities, and more than 60 branches of universities in almost 80 regions of Russia. In training social workers there are also 12 secondary institutions, including six technical schools, five colleges, and one lyceum. Preparation of social work professionals presents complex problems of not only mastering theoretical knowledge, but – above all – developing practical skills, plus development of a number of personal qualities of students essen-

tial for effective work (mental stability, public awareness, high social motivation).

Most of the involved universities provide training leading to qualification of professional organizers, managers of social outreach. Some universities train experts in employment services, specialists in social work with families, youth, children, elderly and disabled people. Other universities may train specialists in medical and social care fields. Social workers education is tailored to the specific type of activity, which the specialists may be engaged in the comprehensive planning, as well as serving in specific social service agencies or authorities of the social sphere.

Due to limited availability of trained personnel, social service agencies have to accept employees with a degree in another subjects or graduates from short courses or secondary schools, who are called «social workers» and provide basic necessities for populations in need. The level of qualification in social work is reflected in their position and wage levels.

Short courses for such positions may be organized by local welfare ministries, providing in-house training within social services or Ngos, and non-degree education in technical colleges and vocational schools. Many Russian social services also have «methodological departments» that provide input on procedures and interventions that is used by practitioners (Iarskaia-Smirnova, Rasell, 2014). Graduates with university diplomas are called «specialists in social work» and work as managers, programs developers, supervisors, and administration.

8. Conclusion

The dissolution of the Ussr and the re-configuring of the Russian Federation resulted in changes in all elements of Russian society, i.e., politically, economically and socially. Movements toward democratic governance and privatization in economic areas have been labored and progress has been achieved with difficulty. For example the redistribution of wealth commonly occurring in such conditions of chaos has led to the aggressive oligarchs capturing a high percentage of the national wealth. There was little downward redistribution to the middle

and lower classes of citizens. In areas of governance and civil participation Russia is viewed, at best, as a «democratic work in process». Both social and civil rights appear to be in processes of continuing redefinition.

Russia's social problems and issues are largely consistent with any developed or complex country, e.g., relative poverty, disease and disability, disenfranchised minorities, and self-imposed vulnerabilities such as drug use, teen pregnancies, smoking or alcoholism. Russia's geographic immensity and its cultural and ethnic diversity amplify many issues as a matter of scale. Its responses to these conditions, issues and needs appear to require uncommon responses to common needs; as appropriate to its societal culture and multiple sub-cultures. Russia has the potential to develop a broadly conceived and integrated system of social services. This suggests it is a matter of political will and social policy commitment.

Problems and issues basic to the development of social services are inter-related and responsive to state economics, policy initiatives, altered organizational structures and shifting political priorities. Social services with primarily state control and funding continue as the main fiscal supports for social work organizations. The civil organizations are slowly filling the gaps of state supported social services and volunteerism is gaining strength and spreading its influence within communities. International collaboration in the field of social work provides opportunities for exchanging methodologies; leading to modelling and implementing of best practices. Further work is needed to establish funding priorities for social work services; with problems related to further increase of wages, lack of professional status, shortages of qualified faculty and staff to be considered. Private sector involvement in provision of social services has been selective and relatively limited. Underdevelopment of the third sector, as well as an inability of the state based organizations to cooperate fully with Ngos and lack of provision for increased tax incentives to them continue as major issues.

Social work has experienced 15 years of relatively intensive development since the 1990s. These efforts have been basic and fundamental to creating and credentialing the profession of social work within a very fluid social services environment. In one sense this fluidity may constitute an advantage since bureaucratic systems are more accessible dur-

ing periods of chaos; rather than after they have been re-institutionalized.

The reconceptualization and re-structuring of an evolving social services system with altered fiscal support procedures has been concomitant with the development of the roles and functions of social workers within the social service system. The policy setting, administrative planning, training program design, curricular development and faculty staffing of professional social work training programs in institutions of higher education has been a significant national effort. Such preparation programs may consider three levels or areas of training foci: 1) direct service, intervention and support; 2) program management and evaluation; 3) leaderships, social activism and advocacy. The absence of a pool of professional social workers for staffing of these training programs has been a national concern. Foreign recruitment has been difficult due to low salary levels. The participation of these faculties in national and international organizations and forums has contributed significantly to professional development efforts and training program design.

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6. Trabajo social en España. De los recortes sociales a la arena pública

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Miguel-Ángel Mateo-Pérez[*]

Indice

Introducción; 1. Situación económica y social actual; 2. Las políticas públicas de austeridad son denunciadas como un atentado contra los derechos humanos; 3. Respuestas de la sociedad civil; 4. Respuestas desde el trabajo social; 5. Conclusione; Referencias bibliográficas

Palabras clave
Derechos humanos, políticas, trabajadores sociales, sociedad civil, España

Introducción

En España, desde 2008 hasta la actualidad, estamos atravesando una grave crisis económica, financiera, social y política (Cavero, 2013)[1].

Los rescates a la banca multiplicaron la deuda pública poniendo al País en una difícil situación de recesión a lo que hay que añadir el endeudamiento previo de la administración pública, especialmente en el caso de varias comunidades autónomas y ayuntamientos. Las denominadas políticas de austeridad exigidas por las instituciones financieras internacionales se han utilizado como excusa para aplicar

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[1] *Reconocimientos* - La investigación que lleva a estos resultados ha recibido financiación por el People programme (Marie Curie Actions) del European Union's seventh framework programme Fp7/2007-2013 bajo el acuerdo Rea de subvención n.318938.

un cambio ideológico. El gobierno considera que las dificultades que encuentra la persona, excepto las carencias muy graves, ya no son de responsabilidad pública. Se ha retrocedido desde la consideración de una responsabilidad pública y social colectiva a la consideración de que no hay tal, que la responsabilidad es individual/familiar. Desde esta perspectiva política, el gasto social se considera una carga económica que se puede y debe eliminar.

Las consecuencias de estas políticas son una acumulación de obstáculos para ejercer los derechos reconocidos en la legislación española y ante las reclamaciones de la población, la solución política está siendo su desestimación o la modificación de la legislación para disminuir los derechos adquiridos. Gran parte de la población rechaza estas políticas porque las considera injustas y manifiestan en la calle su rechazo a los recortes de derechos en educación, salud, empleo, protección social, servicios sociales, pensiones. Las repetidas protestas son algo nuevo que reproduce algo viejo: las manifestaciones del final del franquismo reivindicando democracia y reconocimiento de derechos políticos, económicos y sociales. En estas manifestaciones, llama la atención la heterogeneidad de grupos sociales y la visible participación de personas ahora mayores que contribuyeron a la instauración de la democracia.

Se describe y analiza la situación económica y social, la respuesta de la sociedad civil y del trabajo social y se realizan propuestas desde la perspectiva de la educación teórica y práctica de trabajadores sociales.

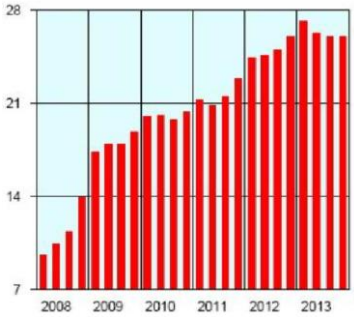
1. Situación económica y social actual

En el ámbito estatal, ha habido una drástica reducción del gasto público en salud, educación, servicios sociales, protección social, prestaciones de desempleo y políticas activas de inserción laboral (Navarro, Torres, Garzón, 2011). Todo ello se ha acompañado de un incremento de la presión fiscal excepto para las rentas más altas, flexibilidad del mercado de trabajo, disminución de ingresos, endurecimiento en el acceso a pensión de jubilación con prolongación de la vida laboral y disminución de sus cuantías.

Según el barómetro del Centro de investigaciones sociológicas de enero de 2014, la mayor preocupación de los españoles es el paro (70%), siendo la segunda preocupación la corrupción (37,6%). Las siguientes preocupaciones destacadas por las personas encuestadas son los problemas económicos; los políticos; los problemas sociales y la educación (Centro de investigaciones sociológicas, 2014).

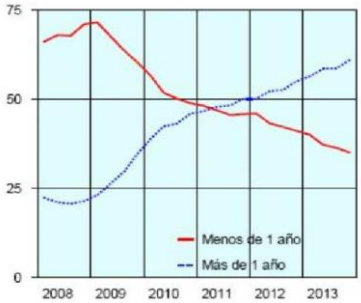
Estas preocupaciones son fundadas. La tasa de paro en el 4° trimestre de 2013 era el 26,03%, la más alta en la Unión Europea (Instituto nacional de estadística, 2014). La gravedad de la situación difiere entre comunidades autónomas, por ejemplo, la Comunidad autónoma del País vasco tiene la tasa más baja de desempleo, 15,76%, mientras la tasa más alta, 36,32%, corresponde a Andalucía.

Figura 1 - Tasa de paro. Porcentaje de la población activa



Fuente: Ine (Epa).

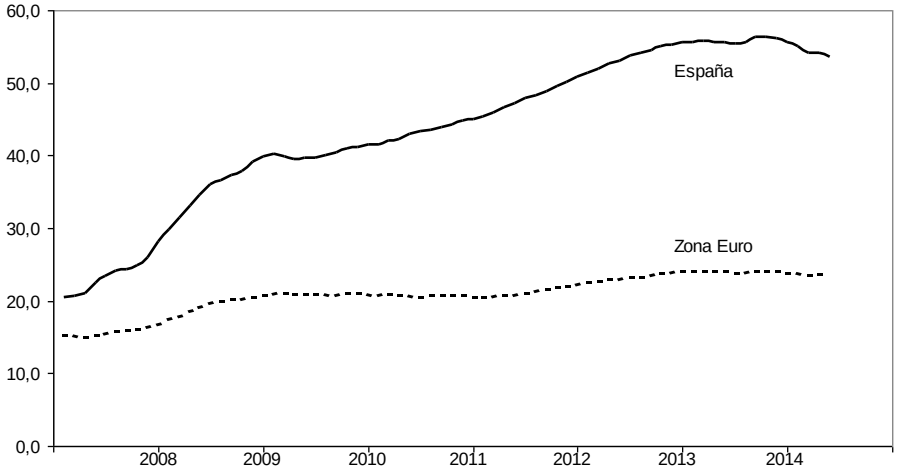
Figura 2 - Paro de larga duración. Porcentaje variaciones anuales



Fuente: Ine (Epa).

Los empleos son cada vez más precarios, de corta duración, bajos salarios e incremento de horas de trabajo. Las personas en situación de desempleo de larga duración tienen alto riesgo de entrar en un círculo vicioso: desempleo, empleo «no decente» (según la terminología de la Organización internacional del trabajo), trabajadores pobres, desempleo. En España, los jóvenes son el grupo social más afectado por el paro (Moscoso, 2013).

Figura 3 - Tasa de desempleo juvenil (menos de 25 años)



Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de Eurostat, 2014.

Otro grupo social en desventaja, es el de las mujeres. Tienen menos oportunidades laborales que los hombres porque dedican más tiempo a cuidar de las personas dependientes de la familia y esto obliga a la búsqueda de empleos a tiempo parcial.

Tabla 1 - Tasa de desempleo

	Euro área	**España**
Hombres	11,8	24,8
Mujeres	12,0	26,6
Total	11,9	25,6

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de Eurostat, 2014.

Tabla 2 - Tasa de desempleo juvenil (- 25 años)

	Euro área	**España**
Hombres	23,5	53,6
Mujeres	23,7	53,9
Total	23,5	53,6

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de Eurostat, 2014.

La vivienda es otro gran problema (Sánchez, 2013). El desempleo o el trabajo precario y los créditos a muy largo plazo concedidos por los bancos en un mercado inmobiliario de altos precios, están causando que muchas personas pierdan su vivienda por impagos tanto de alquileres como de hipotecas. Hay un gran número de personas afectadas por desahucios, con situaciones dramáticas e incluso suicidios. Según el Consejo general del poder judicial, en 2013, hubo 63.189 desahucios iniciados por los juzgados por impagos de préstamos hipotecarios.

La sanidad ha sufrido importantes recortes con tendencia a la privatización (Legido-Quigley, Otero, La-Parra, Alvarez-Dardet, Martin-Moreno, McKee, 2013). Por una parte la salud física y mental ha empeorado. Por otra, se ha eliminado la universalización de la asistencia sanitaria limitando el acceso a las personas inmigrantes y las personas españolas que han emigrado. El gasto farmacéutico ha sufrido recortes que afectan gravemente a la salud de las personas. Como consecuencia de la implantación del co-pago, muchas personas con enfermedades crónicas han abandonado sus tratamientos. Esto afecta especialmente a personas mayores, personas con enfermedades crónicas y con enfermedades mentales.

En educación, los recortes se han aplicado a ayudas para comedor, transporte, libros, atención a alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales y programas de refuerzo escolar. La ratio de alumno/profesor se ha incrementado y se han eliminado puestos de trabajo de profesorado y personal auxiliar de cuidados (Laparra, Pérez Eransus, 2012).

El descenso de población y la tendencia al envejecimiento demográfico, tienen serias consecuencias en la necesidad de prestación de cuidados de larga duración y la sostenibilidad del sistema de pensiones. Sin embargo, se han realizado recortes drásticos en

prestaciones y servicios reconocidos por la ley n.39/2006 de 14 de diciembre de *Autonomía personal y atención a las personas en situación de dependencia* (Sánchez, 2014). Se están incumpliendo los pagos de las prestaciones, se han endurecido las condiciones de acceso de nuevas personas y se están revisando las prestaciones ya concedidas para valorarlas por debajo de lo reconocido con la consiguiente disminución de ayuda o anulación del derecho ya adquirido. Además, se ha revocado la ayuda a cuidadores no profesionales que permitía a las mujeres cuidadoras de sus familiares dependientes obtener una pequeña ayuda económica y, lo que es más importante, la cotización a la seguridad social. Muchas mujeres dejaron sus trabajos fuera del hogar y con la crisis no tienen oportunidad de regresar al mercado laboral. Los recortes también han afectado a las medidas para la conciliación entre vida laboral y familiar entre cuyas consecuencias podemos señalar la disminución de la natalidad y el incremento del riesgo de pobreza de las mujeres en su vejez. Se está llevando a cabo un retroceso en las políticas de igualdad entre hombres y mujeres.

En relación a la pobreza y la exclusión social, la población en riesgo se ha incrementado (Lorenzo, 2014). Hay una gran demanda de productos básicos de alimentación y comedores sociales con un nuevo perfil de personas usuarias que incluyen a la clase media y también a trabajadores sociales. En 2012, la tasa de personas en riesgo de pobreza fue el 21%, sólo menor que Bulgaria (22,3%) y Rumania (22,2%) con un incremento en el caso de las personas entre 16 y 64 años. Una de cada cuatro personas menores de 16 años estaba por debajo del umbral de la pobreza (Instituto nacional de estadística, 2012).

En 2013, los resultados provisionales de la encuesta de condiciones de vida indican que un 21,6% de la población estaba en riesgo de pobreza[2]. Esta tasa se incrementa al 28% según el indicador agregado de riesgo de pobreza o exclusión social (Instituto nacional de estadística, 2013).

[2] La tasa Arope se define como el porcentaje de la población en al menos una de las tres condiciones siguientes: 1) en riesgo de pobreza, es decir, por debajo del umbral de la pobreza, 2) en una situación de privación material grave, 3) que viven en hogares con intensidad de trabajo muy baja.

Tabla 3 - Evolución de la tasa de riesgo de pobreza o exclusión social por edad y sexo (2004-2013)

	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**[3]
Total	24,5	24,5	26,7	27,7	28,2	28
Menos de 16 años	30	29,8	32,1	32,3	32,8	32,3
De 16 a 64 años	22,5	23,3	26,7	28,2	30,1	30,6
De 65 y más años	27,7	24,3	21,4	20,9	16,6	14
Hombres						
Total	23,4	23,5	26	27,3	28,4	28,5
Menos de 16 años	29,7	29,3	30,4	31,7	32,4	32,5
De 16 a 64 años	21,6	22,4	26,3	27,8	30,3	31,2
De 65 y más años	24,9	22,3	19,3	19,7	15,3	12,4
Mujeres						
Total	25,7	25,4	27,5	28	28,1	27,5
Menos de 16 años	30,4	30,3	33,9	33,1	33,3	32,1
De 16 a 64 años	23,4	24,2	27,2	28,6	29,9	30
De 65 y más años	29,9	25,7	23,1	21,9	17,6	15,3

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de encuesta condiciones de vida, 2013.

En este contexto, también se ha aplicado la política de ajuste a la financiación de los servicios sociales (Aguilar, 2013) que prestan atención a los grupos sociales antes citados, por lo que se han reducido prestaciones, servicios y ayudas económicas (Ministerio de sanidad, servicios sociales e igualdad, 2013). Estos servicios deberían ser la red básica de protección, sin embargo, la respuesta al incremento de necesidades y problemas sociales está siendo la disminución de su

[3] Provisional.

financiación y una nueva ley por la que estos servicios básicos ya no son competencia de los ayuntamientos. Según esta ley, ley n.27/2013 de 27 de diciembre, de racionalización y sostenibilidad, la única competencia propia de los ayuntamientos en servicios sociales será «evaluación e información de situaciones de necesidad social y la atención inmediata a personas en situación o riesgo de exclusión social» (art.25.e). Se considera prioritario reducir el déficit público antes que continuar prestando atención con la infraestructura de servicios sociales municipales que se ha estado desarrollando desde 1988.

2. Las políticas públicas de austeridad son denunciadas como un atentado contra los derechos humanos

Las políticas de austeridad tienen alternativas (EuroMemo, 2014). Sin embargo, se están adoptando ajustes sin salvaguardar la protección a los grupos más vulnerables (Cáritas, 2013). Por ejemplo, como consecuencia de la aplicación del citado co-pago en centros y servicios para personas con graves discapacidades, muchas familias han dejado de utilizar los servicios porque la pensión de la persona con discapacidad es el único ingreso del hogar. Por otra parte, la mayoría de estos servicios se han estado prestando por organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro, por delegación de la administración pública. Para ello recibían financiación pública que ha disminuido drásticamente y en muchos casos, se ha dejado de pagar. Las consecuencias son la merma de la calidad de los servicios, trabajadores sin percibir sus salarios o cierres de entidades.

Importantes organizaciones coinciden en valorar como muy negativas las políticas de austeridad porque atentan contra los derechos humanos y ponen en riesgo la cohesión social. En España, el Consejo económico y social, considera que las políticas no están siendo las adecuadas como muestran el incremento de las desigualdades, el desempleo y la exclusión de los jóvenes así como el peso de los gastos de la vivienda en el total de gastos de los hogares (Consejo económico y social, 2013). Las organizaciones sociales denuncian que, las políticas de los últimos años, habían conseguido mejorar las

condiciones de vida de grupos sociales como, por ejemplo, personas con discapacidades, mujeres o el pueblo gitano quienes ahora están de nuevo en peligro de exclusión social (Fundación secretariado gitano, 2014). Y que los derechos que con mucho esfuerzo hemos alcanzado en los últimos treinta años en educación, sanidad, empleo, vivienda, prestaciones económicas de protección social, servicios sociales, pensiones y justicia, han sufrido un rapidísimo retroceso, incrementando la desigualdad e inequidad esfuerzo (Soto, 2013; Amnistía internacional, 2013; Cáritas española, 2013; European antipoverty network-España, 2013). Las organizaciones de mujeres denuncian que están pagando un alto costo (European women's lobby, 2012) y también lo hacen las organizaciones de personas con discapacidades (Consorcio europeo de fundaciones sobre derechos humanos y discapacidad, 2012).

Otras organizaciones internacionales y europeas también están alertando ante la gravedad de la situación. Por ejemplo, según la Organización para la cooperación y desarrollo económicos (Ocde), la tasa española de individuos llamados Neet (jóvenes que no trabajan, estudian o siguen una formación) es la quinta más alta de la Ocde**.** Además, una cantidad creciente de jóvenes ha emigrado. Save the children denuncia que niños y niñas son afectados por las medidas de austeridad que adoptan todas las administraciones públicas en España ya que la situación familiar condiciona las oportunidades de desarrollo de los menores (Save the children-España, 2014).

Así mismo, el Comisionado para los derechos humanos del Consejo de Europa, tras visitar España, publicó un duro informe destacando la gravedad del impacto en los menores y en las personas con discapacidades, así como las medidas adoptadas que recortan la libertad de expresión. Y que la crisis no justifica la desprotección social, especialmente, en el caso de los grupos sociales más vulnerables. Entre las recomendaciones que se realizan al gobierno español, se propone seguir como guía de las políticas la actual Carta europea de los derechos sociales con el fin de no limitar el ejercicio de los derechos económicos y sociales (Council of Europe, 2013).

3. Respuestas de la sociedad civil

La sociedad civil está expresando de diversas formas su rechazo a las políticas actuales, por ejemplo, con manifestaciones en las calles, huelgas, protestas ante los edificios de la administración pública, protestas en los bancos por los desahucios, elevación de quejas ante el defensor del pueblo (y también ante los defensores de cada Comunidad autónoma). Las protestas indican el descontento de la población con los políticos y sus políticas porque no tienen en cuenta a la ciudadanía. Las repetidas manifestaciones son algo nuevo que reproduce algo que se creía superado: las reivindicaciones de las manifestaciones del final del franquismo. En ellas, llama la atención la heterogeneidad de grupos sociales y la visible participación de personas mayores que contribuyeron a la instauración de la democracia. Se han creado plataformas como por ejemplo, la plataforma en defensa de los derechos legalmente reconocidos a las personas con graves discapacidades o la plataforma para defender el derecho a la vivienda luchando contra los desahucios.

Estas manifestaciones son semejantes a otras que están ocurriendo en todo el mundo y han sido documentadas en un reciente estudio (Ortiz *et al*., 2013). Respecto a España, dicho estudio destaca la sucesión de protestas contra las políticas de austeridad, por considerar que castigan y hacen recaer en la ciudadanía las consecuencias de una crisis que no han causado. Los autores de este estudio señalan que resulta llamativo el gran número de protestas por déficits de democracia y falta de representación política y que el perfil de quienes protestan no es el tradicional, es nuevo, muy heterogéneo, abarcando desde jóvenes hasta mayores, incluyendo a las clases medias. No son problemas individuales sino sociales y por ello las personas se unen y, entre otros modos, expresan en la calle su desacuerdo con las políticas consideradas injustas y que no tienen en cuenta los derechos humanos y la participación social. Y cuando se reclaman los derechos incumplidos, la respuesta política está siendo la negación de esos derechos, la negación de los incumplimientos y las trabas a la ciudadanía que critica las actuales políticas pidiendo participación en las decisiones políticas y en su control (Martínez-Román, Domenech López, 2014). Los efectos negativos de estas políticas perdurarán décadas (Caritas Europe, 2014).

Además de las denuncias formales y todo tipo de protestas, la desprotección del estado está siendo asumida por las familias y la sociedad civil. Las familias ayudan a sus hijos de múltiples formas: en primer lugar, ayudan a que los hijos no pierdan su vivienda comprando alimentos básicos; pagando parte del alquiler o hipoteca de la vivienda; pagando otros gastos como luz, agua, energía. En muchos casos, estos gastos se hacen con pensiones de jubilación o de discapacidad que están siendo la red de seguridad ante la falta de protección social. Cuando esto no es suficiente, los hijos adultos vuelven a casa de sus padres acompañados de los hijos y su esposa o compañera. Pero las familias que ayudan se encuentran al límite, especialmente las mujeres.

La ciudadanía está demostrando empatía con las personas que tienen dificultades para satisfacer sus necesidades básicas de supervivencia y están surgiendo iniciativas con diferente enfoque. En unos casos, la solidaridad promueve iniciativas sociales pero dejando claro que no suplantan la responsabilidad del Estado. Sin embargo, en otros casos, hay un retorno a antiguas prácticas de iniciativas benéficas, promovidas por el gobierno y alentadas por los medios de comunicación, en las que se apela al sentimiento para donar, por ejemplo, dinero o alimentos. En esta línea se está utilizando el voluntariado social para suplantar puestos de trabajo profesionales.

4. Respuestas desde el trabajo social

En cuanto al trabajo social, hay actuaciones promovidas desde el ámbito profesional, desde la práctica cotidiana, desde el ámbito educativo y desde el ámbito político.

Los actuales estudios de trabajo social en España, anteriormente denominados Asistencia Social, tienen reconocimiento universitario desde 1981. Desde la reforma de la educación superior en España en 2010, hay tres niveles de educación en trabajo social: grado en trabajo social (240 Ects, 4 años), postgrado o master (60 Ects, 1 año) y doctorado. El nivel de grado, incluye prácticas en entidades sociales públicas o privadas y un trabajo de fin de grado. Cabe destacar que en las universidades, en la rama de Ciencias sociales, hay un área de conocimiento científico específica que se denomina Trabajo social y

servicios sociales, en la que se integra el profesorado de trabajo social. También hay Departamentos de trabajo social y servicios sociales. En cuanto al contenido de la educación teórica y práctica, los estudios universitarios comparten una regulación legal común a todo el sistema educativo de educación superior, pero es una regulación muy general debido a la autonomía que tienen las Comunidades autónomas (gobiernos regionales) y las propias universidades. Si bien es preceptiva la acreditación de los estudios por el Ministerio de educación y la comunidad autónoma correspondiente, la consecuencia de la autonomía es que hay diferencias entre universidades en el número de créditos asignados a las diferentes materias y a las prácticas así como los recursos disponibles.

Las personas con el título de grado en trabajo social pueden desempeñar actividades profesionales como trabajadores sociales en los diferentes niveles de la administración pública (estatal, autonómica y local), en organizaciones sociales sin ánimo de lucro, en entidades mercantiles o en el ejercicio libre de la profesión. Se prestan servicios de salud, educación, vivienda, servicios sociales, justicia, socio-laborales, cultura, voluntariado, tiempo libre y otros. El Consejo general del trabajo social es la organización profesional que representa a las/os trabajadores sociales de los 37 colegios profesionales cuyo código deontológico señala la obligación de promover políticas de justicia social (Consejo general del trabajo social, 2012).

Desde el comienzo de la crisis, el Consejo general del trabajo social ha promovido y liderado numerosas actuaciones de denuncia, situándose junto a las personas con dificultades y estableciendo lobby con otras organizaciones sociales que denuncian las consecuencias de las injustas políticas públicas. El consejo está luchado contra los cambios de la política social, denunciando sus consecuencias en la ciudadanía y en la profesión. Como ejemplos de acciones para tratar de influir en las políticas podemos citar, entre otros, la Alianza para la defensa del sistema público de servicios sociales, la integración en la Marea naranja o la Cumbre social. Todas estas acciones se planifican y realizan con organizaciones sociales, sindicatos y los colegios profesionales de trabajadoras sociales de toda España. Además, se han realizado manifiestos sobre la crisis, la incidencia de las políticas sociales, el rechazo a la reforma de la administración local, la campaña

Hasta aquí! o la campaña pro modificación de la constitución para que se incluya el derecho fundamental de la ciudadanía a la cobertura del sistema público de servicios sociales. Hay que destacar la creación de las oficinas de intermediación hipotecarias, que son una acción conjunta del Consejo general del trabajo social y el Consejo general de la abogacía española ante la gravedad de los desahucios (Consejo general del trabajo social, 2014).

Analizando el conjunto de actuaciones del Consejo general del trabajo social desde el comienzo de la crisis, observamos el desarrollo de una estrategia de incidencia en las políticas basada, por una parte, en el trabajo en red (con la ciudadanía, otras profesiones sociales, partidos políticos, sindicatos y otros) que incluye el ámbito europeo (International federation of social workers Europe y Comisión Europea). Por otra parte, como complemento al trabajo en red, se está promoviendo la visibilidad en los medios de comunicación de las acciones de denuncia de políticas injustas y de las propuestas de alternativas a otras más justas.

En relación a la práctica cotidiana, el trabajo social en primera línea está incidiendo en las políticas que se consideran injustas, tratando de promover el ejercicio de los derechos de las personas. Sin embargo, el desempleo está afectando a las trabajadoras sociales como al resto de la población (Martínez-Román, 2013). Se han cerrado entidades sociales por impago de la administración pública, se han destruido puestos de trabajo, las condiciones laborales han empeorado e, incluso, hay trabajadoras sociales que no han percibido sus salarios desde hace meses pero siguen trabajando para no abandonar a las personas usuarias de los servicios sociales.

Las universidades también han hecho público el desacuerdo con las políticas públicas integrándose en las citadas actuaciones del Consejo general del trabajo social junto con las organizaciones profesionales y otros grupos sociales. La Conferencia española de decanos y decanas y directores y directoras de centros y departamentos universitarios de trabajo social, ha hecho público un comunicado de rechazo al Real decreto ley n.14/2012 de 20 de abril de medidas urgentes de racionalización del gasto público en el ámbito educativo. Ha habido facultades de trabajo social que han publicado manifiestos de repulsa a las políticas actuales por considerarlas injustas. Las universidades

tienen la responsabilidad de incluir en sus planes de estudio los estándares de calidad establecidos para la educación en trabajo social (International federation of social workers, 2005), la educación sobre los derechos humanos (International federation of social workers Europe, 2012), la Agenda global del trabajo social (International federation of social workers, International association of schools of social work, International council on social welfare, 2012) y la formación necesaria para incidir en las políticas desde la propia práctica profesional (Martínez Román, 2013).

Y en el ámbito de la política, hay trabajadores sociales en diferentes partidos políticos que ejercen como diputadas en las cortes o senadoras en el senado. Esta presencia en el ámbito político, se inició al final del franquismo. A lo largo de estos años, han influido en las políticas sociales siendo destacable la relevancia de su intervención en los años 80-90, durante el primer gobierno socialista. Realizan contribuciones muy importantes en el ámbito de la denuncia social, apoyando las demandas de colectivos sociales y del Consejo general del trabajo social.

5. Conclusiones

Los aspectos descritos en el texto muestran una situación que es resultado de procesos más amplios en el tiempo (Tabla 4). Es muy difícil separar cómo se han construido los sistemas públicos (y privados) de protección social en España sin hacer referencia a tres aspectos clave en los procesos de cambio social: 1) el modelo productivo español (centrado en actividades como el turismo, la construcción o los servicios) en un contexto de flexibilización del empleo y de globalización de la economía; 2) cambios rapidísimos en la esfera sociodemográfica y cultura (envejecimiento de la población, incremento de la esperanza de vida y de las personas en situación de dependencia, la migración y los cambios en la composición étnico-cultural y religiosa, los cambios en las estructuras de los hogares y de las familias); 3) los déficits de inclusividad y flexibilidad del Estado de Bienestar que se remontan a sus orígenes.

Es posible, entonces, entender el fortísimo impacto de la actual crisis económica, política y social en un contexto ya de por sí vulnerable.

Tabla 4 - Franquismo, democracia y crisis económica, política y social

Franquismo 1939-1975	**Democracia 1980-2007**	**Crisis económica e ideológica 2008-2013**
Pobreza. País en desarrollo.	Disminución de pobreza económica.	Incremento pobreza económica, incluida la clase media. Incremento desigualdades. País desarrollado en retroceso.
Baja calidad de vida. Pequeña clase media.	Clase media. Hay situaciones de vulnerabilidad.	Incremento vulnerabilidad incluida clase media.
Baja protección pública solo para personas sin familia. La familia obligada a prestar protección.	Proceso universalidad educación y sanidad. Servicios sociales.	Retroceso de la protección social y de la universalidad en educación y sanidad. Primacía entidades mercantiles.
Legislación: sin derecho personal a protección social. Siempre supeditado a demostración de ingresos de todo el hogar.	Incremento de igualdad oportunidades mujeres/ hombres y de personas con discapacidades.	Incremento de la desigualdad de oportunidades mujeres/hombres y personas con discapacidades.
Protagonismo Iglesia Católica. Estado confesional.	Separación Iglesia Católica-Estado.	Sociedad civil suple al Estado: Iglesia Católica, otras Iglesias, Cruz Roja, iniciativas ciudadanas.

Fuente: elaboración de los autores.

En estos momentos, la discusión sobre hacia adónde vamos en la reconfiguración de los sistemas públicos de protección social, está sobre la mesa. La sociedad civil está tomando cartas en el asunto a

través del tercer sector de acción social y de la propia acción social colectiva. Desde el trabajo social, también se dan respuestas (Díaz, 2012; Martínez-Román, 2013), haciendo especial hincapié en los derechos sociales, económicos y culturales, el papel de las políticas públicas y la incidencia de la propia práctica profesional en las políticas. Nuevamente, el régimen de bienestar español se encuentra ante una encrucijada en la que es complicado ser optimistas a medio plazo.

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7. Social work in the United States of America

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Index

Introduction;1. Social work definition and values; 2. Social work education; 3. Qualification: lincensure; 4. The role of clinical social work among other helping profession; 5. Social work workforce; 6. Future practice for American social worker; References

Key words
Social work education, social work in the United States, social work practice

Introduction

Social work practice in the United States is based in unique history, population, culture, and values. This article will discuss the diverse influences on social work practice in the United States through the following: introduction, social work definition and values, social work education, qualifications: licensure, the role of clinical social work among other helping professions, social work workforce, and future practice for American social workers.

A federal republic, the United States consists of 50 states, the federal district of Washington, Dc (the nation's capital), and several territories in the Pacific and in the Caribbean (Adams, Strother-Adams, Pearlie, 2001). Forty-eight states and Washington, Dc are connected and located in North America between Canada and Mexico. The other two states are located far from the lower 48 states: Alaska is located in the north-

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west of North America, just west of Canada, and Hawaii is located in the Pacific ocean.

The United States is comparatively large geographically, spanning approximately 9.8 million square kilometers (The world factbook, 2013). In total land area and population, the Us is the third largest country. One of the world's most ethnically and culturally diverse nations, the United States contains approximately 316 million people, a vast majority of whom live in urban or suburban areas (The world factbook, 2013). Large waves of immigration from many countries have contributed to the vast multicultural landscape of the United States, while the physical landscape reflects a similar diversity. Geography and climate varies within the country, ranging from arid deserts to plains, fertile prairies, and coasts, to forests, mountains, and tundra, playing host to a wide variety of plant and animal species (The world factbook, 2013).

According to the 2010 national census, the people of the United States are 73% white, 13% Black, 5% Asian, 1% American Indian, 3% multiracial, and 16% Hispanic or Latino. The country is near evenly split with regard to gender, as it is 51% female and 49% male (Us census bureau, 2011). Undocumented immigrants represent 11 million people (Camarota, Jensenius, 2008). Although the country has no official language, 80% of its residents speak english exclusively (The world factbook, 2013). The country has no official religious affiliation, and even specifies a separation of church and state within its constitution (The pew forum on religion & public life, 2008). However, many of the nation's founders were protestant Christians, and a large percentage of its current residents today identify as Christian, with 51% of Americans identifying as Protestant and 23.9% identifying as Catholic (The pew forum on religion & public life, 2008). Approximately 3.8% of Americans identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Gates, 2011).

Primary issues for social work in the United States include the persistence of poverty, violence, mental illness and addiction, inadequate housing, health care, chronic illness, particularly hiv/aids, educational inequalities, immigration, and the aging of the population. Many of these issues are interconnected, a concept which has been critical to the practice of social work in the Us.

Despite having many of the highest incomes in the world, poverty persists as an important social problem in the United States. Moreover, issues related to poverty are intricately tied to gender and race, both separately and in combination. According to the most recent census data, 16% of Americans, or 48.5 million people, live in poverty – an increase of 3% since 2008 (Us census bureau, 2010). Children are overrepresented in America's poor, as 22% of children live in poverty. Poverty rates include 14% of those ages 18 to 64 and 9% of those 65 and older. Non-hispanic whites have lower poverty rates than any other racial group, comprising 10% of those in poverty. While 14% of males live in poverty, 16% of females have been shown to live in poverty (Us census bureau, 2010). World governments use either relative or absolute measures to determine poverty among their populations. Relative measures, employed by many European nations, measure poverty in relation to the standard of living within a particular country. In contrast, the United States uses an absolute measure that sets the poverty line at a fixed amount of income. In both scenarios, individuals falling below a pre-determined poverty line qualify for public assistance programs (Couch, Pirog, 2010). In 1996, the Clinton administration ushered in dramatic reforms to the welfare (public assistance) system in America with the passing of the Personal responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation act, or Prwora. This act was designed to motivate individuals and families away from public assistance and, instead, toward work, providing a system of incentives in combination with strict requirements for welfare recipients. Within this legislation are separate programs designed to provide services to individuals and are grouped as either means-tested or social insurance programs. Means-tested programs require that participants meet certain income or other resource-related qualifications. Examples of means-tested programs would be Temporary assistance to needy families (Tanf) and Supplemental nutrition assistance program (Snap). Tanf is a program providing cash benefits to very poor families with children as well as resources to help adult recipients gain and maintain employment. Provisions of this program are more stringent than in the past programs as recipients can only receive federal benefits for 60 or less months in their lifetime. The Snap program has recently become the nation's largest income support program (Klerman, Danielson, 2011). Snap provides support to families

via a debit card that can be used to purchase food at participating stores. This program was designed to provide families with children access to necessary living provisions. In addition to the aforementioned programs, there are many other income-based programs that provide assistance to families and individuals within the United States. Such examples would be the Women, infant, and children (Wic) program and the School breakfast and lunch program. Social insurance programs are not means tested and were created to smooth income over the life cycle, for example during times of disability or unemployment through no fault of the individual. Social security is the nation's largest social insurance program, accounting for 29 percent of federal government revenues and 20 percent of expenditures (Aaron, 2011). The Social security program provides cash benefits to individuals that are retired, disabled, or survivors after the death of a qualifying family member. The program has come under fire in recent years for the threat of insolvency and disincentive for work among recipients. Despite massive overhaul of the Prwora legislation, along with the work of social workers, legislators, and the general public, poverty remains a significant issue in America. Poverty continues to disproportionately affect women and persons of color in the United States, and income inequalities are still growing.

Violence also presents a significant issue for social work in America. Though violent crime had decreased 4% since 2010, 386 violent crimes had still been reported per 100,000 people in 2011. Aggravated assault was most common among these violent crimes, representing 62% of the violent crime in 2011, followed by robbery (29%), rape (7%), and murder (1.2%). Though murder represented only 1.2% of violent crimes in the United States, homicide represented the leading cause of death and injury in young people aged 10-24 (Fbi, 2012).

In all categories of violent crime, firearm use was high, though also down from the previous year. Given the role that firearms plays in violent crimes in America, gun ownership and use remains a controversial topic in the United States. Current estimated totals for civilian gun ownership in the United States, both legal and illicit, range from approximately 270 to 310 million, which, as of 2012, are distributed among 34.4% of American households. While many Americans oppose firearms or favor stricter measures of gun control, others cite the im-

portance of the second amendment to the Us constitution, or what is commonly known as «The right to bear arms» (Cornell university law school, 2013). Like many other policies in the United States, state-by-state legislation further complicates this issue. While local, state, and federal legislation places restrictions on gun ownership through factors such as age and history of domestic violence, along with varying background checks to hold a gun license, these restrictions vary by jurisdiction. This remains an important issue that not only influences social work in violent communities, but also continues to be an important debate in American politics as a whole.

Hiv/aids also remains a health problem of significant concern for the United States. While the United States has made great strides to address issues related to hiv/aids since the 1980s, as of 2010, more than 1.1 million Americans were estimated to have been living with hiv, with approximately 56,000 new infections occurring each year (White house, 2010). Widespread awareness of information regarding prevention, diagnosis, and treatment in America has driven the decline of transmission rates as well as public perception of the problem's urgency, yet 43% of Americans reported in 2009 that they know someone living with hiv (White house, 2010). Moreover, much like other social issues in the United States, hiv disproportionately affects some groups more than others, often only furthering stigma associated with the disease. The «National hiv/aids strategy for the United States», a policy initiative put forth by the Obama administration, reports that hiv/aids is of particular interest in communities such as: «gay and bisexual men of all races and ethnicities, Black men and women, Latinos and Latinas, people struggling with addiction, including injection drug users, and people in geographic hot spots, including the United States south and northeast, as well as Puerto Rico and the Us Virgin islands» (White house, 2010).

Mental illness and addiction also represents an important, yet also stigmatized, issue in the United States. With the passing of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental health parity and addiction equity Act in 2008, and subsequent release of rules for implementation in 2013, Us federal law officially recognized mental illness and substance use disorders as equal to physical illnesses. However, there is still much more work to be done. Only 13% of Americans received inpatient, out-

patient and/or medication treatment for mental or emotional problems. Of those with a serious mental illness, 40% do not receive treatment. Meanwhile, about half (50%) of children with mental disorders do not receive treatment. Though the reasons for these gaps in treatment are several and complex, part of the issue likely stems from the issue of health care in the United States.

Healthcare in the Us is provided by a mix of private and public organizations and payers. Recent issues include rapidly rising costs and challenges across the population with access to needed healthcare. Total expenditures on health have been estimated at 17.9% of gdp and $8,608 per capita in 2011 (World health organization, 2014). Costs are among the most expensive in the world, and yet the United States does not yield the best outcomes. One of the most significant drivers of these costs, representing 75% of expenditures, is chronic illness, due to longer life spans and lifestyle choices. Administrative costs also play a role in expenditures, including the costs of a fragmented system, such as duplicated services, gaps in quality and safety, and profits, for example. Technology and prescription drugs also drive these costs. Moreover, 26% of Americans reported in 2010 to have experienced at least 1 month without health insurance coverage. Largely in response to these high costs and gaps in coverage, healthcare reform became a critical issue in the United States in recent years. The Affordable care act of 2010 (Aca) sought to address these issues through legislation that mandated health insurance coverage for all Americans, among other health care provisions. This piece of legislature contained the most significant changes to the Us health care system since the establishment of Medicare in 1965. The goal of the Aca was to expand insurance access to more than 32 million uninsured Americans, increase consumer protections, emphasize prevention and wellness, and improve both quality and performance of health care systems (Ncsl, 2011). As of January 1, 2014, the Aca required most Americans to have some form of health insurance. Citizens could access and acquire health insurance through newly created state-based American health benefit exchanges. These exchanges offered insurance plans based on income levels and provided premium and cost-sharing benefits to individuals/families with incomes between 133-400% of the federal poverty level (the poverty level was $19,350 for a family of three in 2013). Citizens that failed to purchase

health coverage were required to pay a tax penalty of the greater of $695 per year up to a maximum of three times that amount ($2,085) per family or 2.5% of household income (Kff, 2013). In addition to expanding access to insurance, the Aca also expanded Medicaid to all non-medicare individuals under age 65 with incomes up to 133% of the federal poverty level. All the newly eligible individuals would be guaranteed a benefit package that would meet the essential health coverage requirements of the Aca. The most widely spread debate about the Aca involved the role of government in the execution of the program. Many politicians questioned the constitutionality of the bill and argued that the federal government did not have the right to require health care coverage for Americans. On June 28, 2012 the Supreme court of the United States upheld the Aca stating that its requirement that most Americans obtain insurance was authorized by congress's power to levy taxes. Additionally, the Supreme court agreed that congress has exceeded its constitutional authority in the expansion of the Medicaid program (Liptak, 2012). Individual states were now in charge of deciding if the Medicaid expansion would be offered to their citizens.

Social workers confront many other issues and problems that affect disenfranchised populations in the Us. Many of these issues are increasingly global and require global solutions, such as poverty, environmental degradation, and unemployment caused by downsizing/relocation. Within the Us as elsewhere, social issues are defined as problems whose solutions reflect the context of American culture and ideology, which is securely rooted in democracy, capitalism, and individual responsibility. While family is important to many Americans, extended family is typically considered less important than the immediate family. That said, many Americans still look toward the individual or the immediate family as the primary providers of help rather than the government.

Hard work is highly revered and is seen as a critical part of achievement of the American dream. Hard work cannot be underestimated in the American ethos: there is no legal mandate for vacation time in the United States, and 23% of Americans have no paid vacation or sick days (Ray, Sanes, Schmitt, 2013). Independence and autonomy are seen as major strengths, and as a result, hard work represents a highly valued way to retain one's freedom. In contrast, government assistance, commonly known as «welfare», is often viewed as demoraliz-

ing, creating unwanted dependency and defying the American values of independence and hard work. Many of these beliefs originated in the Elizabethan era, and by extension, American colonial poor laws. These early poor laws shaped the values of America, which, in turn contributed to the moral foundations of American social work. Many of these poor laws were designed to uphold the responsibility of the individual and to differentiate the deserving poor from the undeserving poor, which still persists in much of American social policy today.

For example, although most Americans are covered by private insurance through their employers or purchased on the individual market, many have health plans through the assistance of the government. Medicare is one such program, which is a social insurance program that provides assistance to adults who previously made contributions during their working years (e.g., older adults). Medicare consists of four parts, each covering different benefits. Part A, also known as the Hospital insurance (Hi) program, covers inpatient hospital services, skilled nursing facility, home health, and hospice care. It is funded by a tax of 2.9 percent of earning paid by employers and workers. Part B, the Supplementary medical insurance (Smi) program, helps pay for physician, outpatient, home health, and preventative care. Part B is funded by general revenues and beneficiary premiums. Part C, known as the Medicare advantage program, allows beneficiaries to enroll in a private plan, such as health maintenance organization, preferred provider organization, or private fee-for-service plan, as an alternative to the tradition fee-for-service program. Lastly, Part D, the outpatient prescription drug benefit, was created by the Medicare modernization act of 2003, and launched in 2006. Individuals who sign up for a Part D plan typically pay a monthly premium. Part D is funded by general revenues, beneficiary premiums, and state payments (Kff, 2010). In contrast, Medicaid is a program for the poor and, as a result, is means tested. Medicare recipients are often seen as «deserving» of the benefit as everyone who paid into the program during their working years receives the benefit. No moral judgment or stigma is attached to these benefits, as older adults are often viewed as having worked hard their whole lives and worthy of benefits. By contrast, Medicaid, considered a public assistance programs, remains more controversial. Since it is for the poor, Medicaid is means tested, and only available to individuals who quali-

fy. Medicaid provides health care insurance coverage to low-income people, especially those with complex health needs, women, and children. Funding for Medicaid is shared between federal and state governments. Enrollment requirements vary between states but the federal government requires certain core groups always receive coverage. The federal core groups that states must cover are pregnant women, children, parents, elderly individuals, and individuals with disabilities, with income below specified minimum levels. As of 2013, Medicaid covered an estimated 62 million Americans and was the largest source of health insurance for children (Kff, 2013). In contrast to Medicare, Medicaid assistance comes with a great deal of stigma, as its recipients are often viewed as undeserving, criticized by many in the American public as not working hard enough. In this case, many Americans compare Medicaid recipients to themselves, citing the ethos of upward mobility as a basis of criticism, regardless of their comparative social privilege.

Increasingly, the United States maintains a neo-liberal world view that is known as «conservative individualism». This is highly predicated on the privatization of services and the importance of personal choice, valuing the private market as more efficient and suggesting that less government is better. For the most part, individuals in America utilize a free market system in which they can select and purchase services. This, in turn, creates a market-driven commodification of services, producing an increase in the for-profit sector. Subsequently, Americans favor a decrease in regulation, which supports a decrease in taxes paid by the American public.

American social workers are employed in both private and public sectors, and as a result, are subject to the effects of individualism, a free market system, and the American approach to public aid. American social work practice is strongly predicated on these systems and ideologies, while also being influenced by the unique geographical and multicultural landscape of its people and the problems they face.

1. Social work definition and values

Social work in the United States mirrors the diversity of its geography and people, offering a wide range of possibilities for practice uni-

fied by a shared adherence to a set of professional values, principles, and techniques with the purposes of helping individuals, groups, and communities. Social workers utilize a number of pathways toward this goal, connecting clients to services, providing psychotherapy and counseling, and taking part in processes of legislation (Nasw, 2013). In order to perform these functions, social workers in the United States need to have an integrated knowledge base in the areas of human development, human behavior, and institutional systems at social, economic, and cultural levels (Nasw, 2013). Thus, social workers in the United States must not only be able to work with people but also are trained to identify systems of accountability. This wide scope of professional roles and duties, however, only further complicates the problem in creating a clear definition for American social work. Not only is it a challenge to define a singular social work practice, but no agreed-upon definition of social work exists in the United States (Nasw, 2013).

Despite these challenges, the United States maintains the largest primary social work practice organization in the world: the National association of social workers, or Nasw. According to the Nasw, this organization, «…works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies» (Nasw, 2013). Created in 1955, the Nasw supports all domains of practice through a body of 145,000 members who are organized at the local level through state chapters. Primary functions of the organization include maintenance of the integrity of the profession, political advocacy, and a code of ethics that sets ethical practice standards. The Nasw supports these goals by recognizing the value of social work and its licensure, providing brand protection, offering malpractice insurance for independent practitioners, taking a stand on issues, and supporting professional education. By working together with the government through policy and program development, the Nasw also provides opportunities, improves social conditions, and targets injustice.

From its inception, Us social work as a profession has been grounded in concepts of social values, which have grown and changed throughout its 100+ year history. As a part of this commitment to ethics, the Nasw identifies six core values of social work in its code of ethics: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance

of human relationships, integrity, and competence (Nasw, 1999). Residual concepts such as «morality» and «character», though they may sound antiquated, remain a key feature of social work practice today. This is most notable in terms of licensure standards, but can also be seen within many social policies which are a manifestation of collective national values.

Social work values in the United States, both explicit and implicit, reflect the unique changing socio-historical climates that have shaped them. Several sources point to large-scale early 20th century social movements in the United States as major influences on the profession (Murdach, 2010, Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008). During the early years of social work, progressive era ideals shaped the belief that society was able to change for the better (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008, Murdach, 2010), while temperance movement values suggested a moral focus (Murdach, 2009; Murdach, 2010). As a result, major tenets of these early 20th century movements had a profound effect on the development of social work as a profession. Not only did social work embrace the concept of change during its early years, but its principles were also guided by ethical standards with some function of social control (Murdach, 2010).

Much to their credit, early social work groups offered novel, much-needed scientific and creative interventions for America's quickly-expanding urban communities; however, these organizations often also approached these interventions through a moral lens (Murdach, 2010). Aligned with the rapidly growing health and sanitation needs of the time, particularly as a result of overcrowded, poor urban environments, progressive-era organizations approached need from a perspective of «mental hygiene» Though moralistic in tone, mental hygiene interventions did acknowledge the impact of the environment on the individual, laying some of the groundwork of future social work practice that continues today, while the concept of metal hygiene itself persisted well into the middle of the 20th century, and many of its moralistic undertones are consistent with social work practice values today.

As the progressive era came to a close and the first world war began, changing social values began to seek solutions founded in the growing scientific understanding. The publication of the Flexner report in 1915

was a key turning point for social work and other health providers of the time, spurring social work to create a more professional identity, revealing the need for social work to create and define its own distinct knowledge base (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008). In it, dr. Abraham Flexner, a professional educator, performed a study of medical education in the United States, and claimed social work was not a true profession, citing a lack of a theoretical knowledge base and scientific method (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008). This, in turn, inspired many in the field to substantiate their practices through scientific evidence, seeking to legitimize social work – an influence which has maintained a longstanding legacy within the field since that time (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008; Wheeler, Gibbons, 1992).

Shortly after the Flexner report's release, Mary Richmond, an early charitable organization society member, published her revolutionary text, Social diagnosis, ushering in a new, diagnostic paradigm of social justice, geared toward fixing individual ills through more research-based methods (Danto, 2009). With these influences, social work interventions became predominantly oriented toward the practice of psychoanalysis and diagnosis into the 1920s and beyond (Danto, 2009; Goldstein, 2009). These early defining moments of American social work ushered in a greater emphasis on the professional application of social work theory and methods to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of psychosocial dysfunction, disability, or impairment, including emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders.

With this ethically-guided base and attention to the environment, coupled with the influence of more scientific methods, diagnosis, and treatment, social work was among the first to address a broad base of human needs (Danto, 2009). Not only do social workers offer support for a variety of issues, such as mental disorders, behavioral disturbances, and life transitions, but they also do so for many different client types, such as individuals, families, couples, and groups. Moreover, since its inception, the social work profession has tempered this approach to individuals by providing services to environments, communities, and other social systems, utilizing what has since been described as an ecological or systems framework and person-in-environment perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Goldstein, 2009; Karls, Wandrei, 1992). Today, while a large portion of social work practice in the

United States focuses upon counseling and psychotherapeutic services, it also addresses a number of other components, such as the role of the community, other environmental or systemic impact on individuals and groups, goals of social justice, policy, and leadership-oriented interventions (Whitaker, Weismiller, Clark, 2006). An emphasis on the person's reciprocal relationship to the environment is a critical feature of social work practice on all levels. Although this person-in-environment perspective is growing within other similar fields, such as counseling psychology or psychiatry, its role within social work practice is a particularly distinguishing feature of the profession.

Social work in the United States maintains a holistic, client-centered approach, and offers practitioners a number of routes through which to intervene. The client, which can be an individual, group, or community, is always considered in the context of their environment at all stages of the therapeutic relationship. Treatment planning also includes ongoing assessment of risk and protective factors, such as client vulnerability, strength, and resilience. Social workers are known to address mental, behavioral, or emotional health through crisis intervention and brief or long-term psychotherapy, but they may also fulfill a role of advocacy, evaluation, or consulting. Social workers are found in a number of settings in the United States, including but not limited to: hospitals, schools, health and mental health care centers, private practices, non-profit organizations, employee assistance settings, colleges and universities, centers for specific populations (e.g older adults, Lgbtq, survivors of various trauma), government and child welfare agencies, and substance use treatment centers. Though social work maintains a particular emphasis on helping disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as children, the poor, and the homeless, social work practice is performed among all ages and socio-economic groups.

Along with other helping professionals, clinical social workers in the United States can provide differential diagnosis and are often among the first to intervene (Nasw, 2005). This is largely due to the fact that licensed clinical social workers comprise the largest group of mental health service providers in the United States (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008). The professional application of social work goals, ethics, and principles with individuals, groups, couples, and families is typically described as «clinical social work», a term which emerged in the 1960s

as the profession began to establish and individuate itself by its unique training and education as well as its newly-developed state licensing standards. In contrast to its early title of «psychiatric social work,» the term «clinical social work» speaks to the nature of the profession, which incorporates an understanding of larger systems which affect smaller groups and individuals (Nasw, 2005; Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008; Whitaker *et al*., 2006). As a result, clinical social work practice primarily focuses upon mental, emotional, and behavioral health interventions, but does not necessarily always indicate direct therapeutic practice.

Drawing from several sources, Eda Goldstein identifies several specific features of social work practice that are critical to the definition of clinical social work. Though Goldstein acknowledges not all practitioners may implement all of these features, she suggests that, together, these methods together comprise the core practices of clinical social work: «the importance of person-in-situation in assessment; an emphasis on genuineness and realness in relationship and the use of the clinician's self as core to the treatment process; being where the client is; respect for the client's self determination; the need for self-awareness about the impact of the clinician's personality, values, and background on the treatment process; engagement and treatment as a collaborative process; the importance of reaching out to «hard to reach» or so-called «difficult» patients; respect for cultural and other types of diversity; a commitment to working with those who are the targets of discrimination and oppression; the mobilization of a client's strengths, the development of insight, the creation of reparative experiences, and the fostering of new learning and behavioral change; an appreciation of the impact of and work with the social environment, including advocacy; a commitment to social justice» (Goldstein, 2009).

With this essential role in so many different sectors of the workforce, clinical social workers follow a set of twelve professional standards as defined by the Nasw (Nasw, 2005): ethics and values, specialized practice skills and intervention, referrals, accessibility to clients, privacy and confidentiality, supervision and consultation, professional environment and procedures, documentation, independent practice, cultural competence, professional development, and technology.

2. Social work education

Formal social work education began first at a summer training course at Columbia University given by the Charity organization society of New York in 1888, but a formal accrediting body for social work education was not established until 1952 (Feldman, Kamerman, 2001; Haynes, 1999). Professional social work education takes place in colleges in universities, accredited by one of six regional accrediting agencies, representing all of Us higher education: public/private, faith based, urban/rural, historically black colleges and universities, and Hispanic research institutions. Only one organization, the Council on social work education, or Cswe, serves as the accrediting body for social work education in the United States, as recognized by the Council for higher education accreditation (Cswe, 2012). The Cswe consists of a partnership between educational and professional institutions, social welfare agencies, and private citizens and is a nonprofit national organization (Cswe, 2012). Since its foundation in 1952, the Cswe has grown to represent 2,500 individuals and 685 undergraduate and graduate social work education programs (Cswe, 2012). Not only does the Cswe set forth accreditation standards for programs at the baccalaureate and master's levels, but it also ensures these standards and social work values are upheld and fostered (Cswe, 2012).

The Cswe maintains a competency-based approach toward its standards to best prepare social workers entering the field to be proficient practitioners. Social work education has a longstanding history dedicated to the integration of social work values in keeping with the goal that social work professionals would internalize these values prior to entering the field (Haynes, 1999). The 2008 Educational policy and accreditation standards published by Cswe outlined ten key competencies for social work curricula that included knowledge, values, and skills necessary for effective social work practice (Cswe, 2012). These core competencies are stated as: 1) «identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly»; 2) «apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice»; 3) «apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments»; 4) «engage diversity and difference in practice»; 5) «advance human rights and social and economic justice»; 6) «engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed re-

search»; 7) «apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment»; 8) «engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services»; 9) «respond to contexts that shape practice», and 10) «engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities» (Cswe, 2012).

With these competencies in place, social work education promotes a unique skillset and knowledge base. In doing so, social work education maintains foundational values of the profession, such as social justice, while continuing to be responsive to current political and social climates. Particularly in light of recent trends toward a more globalized community, the Cswe is also working to develop standards to maintain and establish proficiencies among United States social workers within the international arena (Cswe, 2012).

As a national nonprofit organization, the Cswe offers professional development of social work faculty, research, advocacy, and international collaboration, and also hosts a wide range of individuals and institutions in its membership (Cswe, 2012). In addition to setting accreditation standards, the Cswe also continues to review its current standards and the programs that follow them through its commission on accreditation (Cswe, 2012). An additional body within the Cswe, the Commission on educational policy (Coep), reviews and adapts social work education policy every 7 years, which, in turn, affects accreditation standards (Cswe, 2012). In this way, social work education is not only designed to uphold the original mission set forth by the Cswe, but since its inception, has strived to remain socially relevant and responsible in response to trends in the workforce and needs of the field (Cswe, 2012).

While social work values and its code of ethics provide a seemingly clear framework for social work practice, and presumably social work education, some aspects of social work education have received criticism regarding their adherence to these values and ethics. For example, though the origins of social work practice hold firm roots in the alleviation of poverty, and subsequently, social work ethics deliberately emphasize providing aid to the poor, very few schools in the United States offer formal coursework dedicated to this topic (Krumer-Nevo, Weiss-Gal, Monnickendam, 2009). Meanwhile, other studies cite concerns

such as self-compassion (Ying, 2009), student anxiety (Deal, Hyde, 2004), and multicultural knowledge (Deal, Hyde, 2004) as important, yet oft-overlooked, indicators of student competencies. Though formal social work education standards have been in place in the United States for over half a century, the development of standards that best address the evolving needs of the profession continues to grow (Cswe, 2012). Moreover, professional competencies that guide these standards are also evolving, as they vary from state to state and work together with the qualifications required for social work licensure.

3. Qualifications: licensure

Many regulations within the United States are determined at the state level, largely to offer power to the states and diminish federal control. In the United States, individual states offer professional licensing to set standards and define the scope of practice for various professional fields, to include social work, law, medicine, and real estate brokerage. Like these professions, licensure qualifications for social work practice are determined at the state level (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). All 50 states have standards for licensure. Though these standards are often somewhat similar, they are each determined state by state. Because of this, licensure qualifications vary nationwide, and ultimately result in a lack of consistent national standards (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Due in part to this lack of consistency, an organization known as the Association of social work boards (Aswb) was established to protect the interests of the public who use social work services. Incorporated in 1979, this organization is comprised of jurisdictional boards that regulate the practice of social work. The Aswb also provides policy and licensing exam guidance to state licensure boards.

Many state licensing standards make some distinction between a licensed social worker and a licensed clinical social worker, most notably between the lengths of time spent working professionally in the field with supervision (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Again, this qualification varies from state to state. Even the licensure titles vary as well; the more basic licensed title is typically «licensed social worker», and usually requires, at minimum, a graduate degree in social work or some

number of years of professional experience (often three years). The more advanced licensed title is denoted by the words clinical, independent, or independent clinical, such as in licensed clinical social worker, or licensed independent social worker, or even licensed independent clinical social worker. Though a licensed social worker can indicate anything from a baccalaureate level social worker to a master's level graduation, the primary difference between a licensed social worker and the same title with the addition of clinical and/or independent is the ability to practice privately or independently.

Again, the qualifications for these independent or clinical licenses vary by state. For example, in Illinois, a licensed social worker must have a minimum of 3,000 hours of supervised clinical professional experience (approximately two years) prior to applying to become a licensed clinical social worker (Nasw, 2005). Some states, such as New York state, Colorado, and Pennsylvania, require even more hours, ranging from 3,360 hours (Colorado) (Naswco, 2013), up to about three years (New York and Pennsylvania) (Naswnys, 2013; Pscsw, 2013). Other requirements include specific coursework or continued education, age requirements, or specialized training, such as child abuse identification training. In addition, most states maintain an emphasis on «good moral character», which is seldom clearly defined, but presumably indicative of the historical moralistic roots of the profession, combined with the ethical standards set forth by the Nasw and Cswe. All states in the United States require at least a bachelor's or master's degree in social work from a program accredited by the Cswe (Whitaker *et al*., 2006).

In addition to these requirements, candidates for licensure must also take a licensing exam specific to the state in which they hope to practice and receive a passing score. Typically, a social worker can apply for licensure in another state if they have achieved the requirements; that is, a social worker in one state is not prohibited from obtaining licensure in another state if they did not complete their clinical hours within that state. Many Americans relocate from one state to another, often to follow better job opportunities or return to their home state after completing their degree in another region of the country.

Independent or clinical social work licensure allows Us social workers to provide services without physician or psychologist oversight, and

also allows them to bill to third-party payers, which, in the United States, are typically insurance companies (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008). Non-clinical or direct service social workers are found practicing in varied work environments throughout the United States. These practitioners handle connecting clients with services, intake and initial screening, and limited counseling. The majority of direct service social workers have experience providing medication to clients, consulting on case management, and aiding in daily living goals. Limited in the ability to counsel, direct service social workers are not allowed to perform psychotherapy or conduct counseling with patients that have a diagnosable mental condition (Swl, 2014). Social work practice is largely private in the United States, in so far as that most social workers do not work in government settings. This reflects the American ideological focus on the individual, who is often determined as self-responsible even with regard to their utilization of services. This further demonstrates a general attitude of tolerance toward high income inequality and narrow government accountability for the good of the public in the United States (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008).

4. The role of clinical social work among other helping professions

According to a recent nationwide study by the Nasw, a majority of Us social workers overwhelmingly identify mental health as their primary area of practice (Whitaker, Weismiller, Clark, 2006). Though this represents a current trend within social work practice, the evolution of this practice focus requires further exploration, particularly in comparison and contrast with the roots of social work practice and many of its macro or community level (as opposed to micro or individual level) origins (Murdach, 2010). In addition, some authors argue that social work practice has also begun to trend toward a bias of service provision to more middle-class and urban populations, leaving a gap within lower socioeconomic status and rural communities (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006).

Also, despite some difference in history or explicitly stated professional values, the distinction between social work practice and other similar fields can be difficult to ascertain at face level. Because licensed clinical social workers can practice independently, bill to insur-

ance payers, and represent the largest group of mental health providers in the nation, it can be very difficult for the general public to distinguish between a social worker who provides psychotherapy and a psychiatrist or counseling psychologist. Typically, psychiatry treats organic illness (pathology) with medication and intrapersonal and internal dynamics, while psychology focuses on the mind and individual behavior. Both of these professions have firm roots in the scientific method as well, which social work began to adapt in the early and mid-20th century as medical and diagnostic models gained prominence.

Despite the benefits of aligning social work with medical practices – particularly with regard to insurance systems in the United States that provide much-needed payers for social work practice – this approach has come under fire for a couple reasons. First, the medical model does not share the same person-in-environment foundational principles upon which social work was established (Goldstein, 2009). Second, some authors cite the drive to «legitimize» social work practice as misguided; after all, social work practice maintains a distinct and rich century-long history that, though acknowledging of its interaction with other systems, easily stands on its own (Goldstein, 2009). This struggle is mirrored in the current trend toward what is called evidence-based or research-based practices, largely in response to billing requirements dictated by insurance billing and Medicaid public funding requirements, but also in an effort to remain relevant in the mental health field alongside clinical psychology (Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, 2008; Morago, 2006).

Moreover, colloquial conceptions of the role of the social worker means that this title is often also extended (albeit erroneously) toward those who perform social work services without a social work degree (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004). This only further complicates this issue. Even with licensing standards, the term «social worker» itself remains a point of contention. Only those who have fulfilled certain requirements may refer to themselves with the title of «social worker»; however, depending on in which state the person is licensed, these individuals can include a range of educational backgrounds, from bachelor's to master's to doctoral degrees in the field (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006).

Though all social workers within the Us share common core values and education standards, the qualifications for licensure still vary by

state (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Most licensed social workers within the United States enter the workforce with a master of social work degree (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). However, because there is no nationwide licensing standard, some states even offer an additional licensed title for social workers with a bachelor's degree (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Particularly with regard to policy changes in health care and subsequent changes in insurance billing, and also as other mental health disciplines grow to adopt a more person-in-environment perspective, it is becoming all the more crucial for social workers to distinguish themselves from other fields and assert social work in the United States as an important and needed profession (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004; Murdach, 2010; Whitaker *et al*., 2006).

Though the literature acknowledges social work values to be a distinguishing feature throughout all aspects of the profession (Haynes, 1999; Stewart, 2013), many sources struggle to identify a singular definition of what social work is (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Part of this concern has been due to the overlap between other helping professions and the many different aspects of social work theory and practice (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004; Murdach, 2010; Whitaker *et al*., 2006). In response to this issue, some sources identify the value of social justice (Stewart, 2013) and support for human rights (Healy, 2008) as major defining characteristics of social work practice. While many sources urge the social work profession to align itself with one particular value, theory, or practice, others still point to the search for identity itself as a source of the confusion (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004; Wheeler , Gibbons, 1992).

Ironically, while the social work profession has set itself apart since its inception by employing a strength-based perspective, many still define the social work profession itself not by its diverse strengths, but by narrowly-focused attempts to define social work simply by values, practices, or theory. Historically, the social work field has struggled to legitimize itself by appealing to desirable traits of other professions rather than asserting its own multi-faceted strengths. These values were not formally articulated until well after the early years of the profession, largely due to the formation of larger organizing not having occurred until the middle of the 20th century (Haynes, 1999).

More succinctly, Barker identified clinical social work as, «the professional application of social work theory and methods to the diagno-

sis, treatment, and prevention of psychosocial dysfunction, disability, or impairment, including emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders» (Barker, 2003). Licensure may add to the difficulty that arises when trying to delineate the boundaries of the social work profession, as licensed social workers may work to receive their «clinical» licensed independent or clinical social worker license. However, not all licensed clinical social workers necessarily work in private practice or even with individuals and smaller groups doing «clinical» work.

5. Social work workforce

A national study performed by the Nasw demonstrates some important considerations of current workforce demographics in the social work field (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). According to the study, there are currently about 310,000 licensed social workers in Us, with a ratio of 101 social workers per 100,000 people across the Us (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). Social workers are also employed in a wide range of practice settings, from for-profit, to private nonprofit, to local government sectors (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). Within the for-profit sector, 57% of social workers are in private practice and 8% in for-profit hospital or medical centers (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). Within the private nonprofit sector, 19% of social workers are employed in hospitals and medical centers, 17% in social service agencies, and 17% are in behavioral health clinics (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). In local government, 22% of social workers are employed in social service agencies, and 32% are employed in schools (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006).

Respondents to the Nasw survey overwhelmingly cited mental health as their specialization, accounting for approximately 37% of the workforce (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). The next largest specializations were health and child welfare/family, both at 13% each (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, the smallest areas of practice with which social workers identified were occupational social work, homeless/displaced persons, criminal justice – each at 1% – and income assistance and community development, both at 0% (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006). An overwhelming number of social workers – 96% – tend to spend the majority of their time providing direct services, and spend more than half their time on four tasks: indi-

vidual counseling (29%), psychotherapy (25%), case management (12%), and screening/assessment (10%) (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). These figures may not be surprising, but their implications are significant: though the roots of social work practice were often more oriented toward macro- and meso-level practices, current workforce trends demonstrate that direct services and therapy provision represent the most common practice areas today (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Consultation and administration are also among the most common services social workers provide, representing 73% and 69% of the workforce, respectively (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Interestingly, only 9% of social workers spend time in research, highlighting a strong segment of need for Us social workers. Through social work research, the profession can develop better screening and assessment tools and interventions, evaluate the relative effectiveness of social work services, and demonstrate relative costs and benefits of social work services. Additional research could also help social workers better understand expected and unexpected impacts of policy on the clients they serve and also offer clinicians the opportunity to bill health care payers for evidence-based practices.

However, public opinion of what social workers do does not reflect these trends. A 2004 study by LeCroy and Stinson conducted a phone survey to identify public opinion of the social work profession and revealed several divergent themes. Though respondents appeared to have a strong general sense of what social workers do, identifying social workers as effective in the areas of child welfare and homelessness, they were also largely unaware of the vast range of possibilities of the field beyond direct social work practice, notably neglecting community organization and advocacy, as well as private practice and psychotherapy services (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004). Moreover, a majority of respondents recognized the value of social work as a needed profession, but placed that value behind the community need for nurses (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004). This study highlights several gaps between social work practice, public perception, and the individuals and communities they serve. Currently, the social work workforce in the United States is disproportionately female. Women comprise 81% of the social work workforce, whereas the overall Us population is 51% female (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Licensed social workers also tend toward larger metropolitan areas of the country, as 84% of mental health social workers are located in metropolitan areas,

while 2% are located in rural areas (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Despite the population density of major cities within the United States, this presents a huge area of need, as the overwhelming geographical majority of the United States is comprised of rural and suburban communities (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). This results in major gaps within rural areas, and prohibits needed access to services (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Additionally, licensed social workers show less racial and ethnic diversity when compared to the Us population overall. An overwhelming majority of social workers identify as white and non-hispanic, and are also generally older overall than the Us. civilian labor force (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). Among the respondents surveyed, 41% reported that over half of their caseloads belong to non-white minority populations (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). At the very least, this demonstrates a need to cultivate stronger cultural competencies in social work education, but also suggests a need for greater diversity among social workers, not only as it relates to the overall Us population, but also as it pertains to the diverse communities which social workers serve (Whitaker *et al*., 2006).

6. Future practice for American social workers

From the end of the 20th century to today, social work in the United States has continued to uphold its tradition of responding to social, cultural, and political needs of its time. Not unlike a century ago, social work in the new millennium faces the needs of America's poor, while also addressing concerns for a new wave of immigrants, underserved populations in urban communities, and, particularly in light of America's recently passed Affordable care act, needs related to health care. However, these issues are compounded by an ever-growing community of older adults, as well as advances in technology, and a developing global and environmental consciousness.

The recent trend in social work toward evidence-based practice highlights the growing similarities between social work and other research-oriented helping professions, particularly psychology (Arnd-Caddigan, Pozzuto, 2009). Moreover, these similarities are not only due to changes within the social work field alone; rather, recent trends in psychology and other more medically-focused fields have also begun to

adopt the focus on the environment that has always been an integral and even defining feature of social work. As a result, the field of social work and other helping professions have begun to converge at some of the very points that once defined them as separate. These similarities, coupled with general public confusion on the role of social workers, underscore the need for social work to differentiate itself as a profession. Rather than consider these similarities a liability, social work must take ownership of the theory base it shares with other professions, while maintaining its own unique identity (LeCroy, Stinson, 2004; Wheeler , Gibbons, 1992).

Amidst the challenges facing social work over more than a century of change, social work has sustained the unique, multi-faceted role it has played in helping individuals, groups, and communities throughout its history. As America already enters its second century of social work practice, the profession must adapt to necessary changes while continuing to uphold its values and mission. With the changing nature of the structures that support intervention, transdisciplinary research and practice is needed in ways that it has never been before. In response to these changes, the Nasw recently identified several important issues facing social work in the United States, based on current concerns and future projections; these include: the replacement of retiring social workers, recruitment of new social workers, and retention of the current social work labor force (Whitaker *et al*., 2006). This is particularly relevant as workforce demands are projected to increase 25% per year (Whitaker *et al*., 2006).

However, these are only a handful of the critical needs facing the professional workforce in the United States. Major societal changes in the 21st century are going to have a dramatic impact that challenges accepted norms of social work ideologies and practices (Reisch, Jarman-Rohde, 2000). Environmental needs, such as climate change and man-made disasters, are also contributing to the scope of social work in new ways. Political, environmental, and global changes surrounding social work in the United States suggest many more areas of need for the profession, such as: meeting the needs of economic globalization, changing political climate, growing use of technology, demographic shifts and their impact, changing nature of social service agencies, and changes in American universities (Reisch, Jarman-Rohde, 2000).

These demographic changes are of particular interest for the United States, as many communities are projected to grow dramatically, such as veterans, older adults, and latino communities, while others remain underserved and in need of further recognition and assistance, such as the Lgbtqi and immigrant groups. Moreover, social and economic inequality in the United States has become higher than any other industrialized nation, demonstrating the need for social workers to address these issues as well as learn how to adapt to them using a global perspective (Office of economic cooperation and development, 1995, Reisch, Jarman-Rohde, 2000). Response to these issues require flexible, holistically-mindedthinkers who are trained to think critically, adapt readily, and are grounded in an ethical system that does not favor any one particular population.

With these new facets of justice in mind, social workers are also in a position to advocate for a return to preventive care rather than the prevailing reactive model, highlighting the great return on investment potential of social work services. Current trends within the field are also leaning toward interventions that are quick, cost-effective, and evidence-based, rather than comprehensive, long-term case management (Reisch, Jarman-Rohde, 2000). Though some recent changes within social policy, such as the Affordable care act, have bolstered this approach, it still remains contentious in the overall political climate within the United States. Particularly as medical care in the United States moves toward an electronic standard, American social workers will also need to acknowledge the benefits and detriments of technology as a means of record-keeping, as a care delivery system, its effects on clients, its impact on social work education (i.e. distance-learning), and its role amidst globalization (Reisch, Jarman-Rohde, 2000).

In addition to becoming more conscious of these responsibilities, American social workers are also becoming more cognizant of their role within a global context. Fortunately, the global agenda as determined by the International federation of social workers (Ifsw), International association of schools of social work (Iassw), and International council on social welfare (Icsw) echo many of the core values already present in American social work practice. This global agenda addresses four primary themes, described as: «Social and economic inequalities within countries and between regions, Dignity and worth

of the person, Environmental sustainability, and Importance of human relationships» (Ifsw, 2012). Though many of these concepts are central to social work practice in the United States, the growing need for a more global understanding reinforces the need for social workers to better identify their roles and clarify the major tenets of their practice.

As America embarks upon the 21st century, social work must continue to forge its identity as a profession, continuing its focus on the person-in-environment while responding to cultural, political, and ideological shifts facing populations in need. Moreover, as our world becomes increasingly more globalized and technologically advanced at a rapid rate of change, the social work field in the United States must make adjustments on a more fast-paced, larger scale than ever before. Historically, the United States maintains a proud tradition as a melting pot of diversity; as social workers look toward the future, the profession must work to reflect the growing diversity of the United States, adjusting to the varied needs of the individuals and communities it serves. Social work in the United States must continue to create a socially conscious, globally aware, and technologically and culturally competent workforce, bolstered by a strong professional identity, to carry the profession into the 21st century and beyond.

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8. Brazilian social work

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Introduction; 1. Brazil: Country of contrasts; 2. Brazilian social work; 3. Challenges for social work today; References

Key words
Social work, Brazil, training policies for professional

Introduction

This study[1] aims to analyse three aspects of Brazilian social work: first, we provide a general overview of Brazil, a country marked by extreme inequality that permeates the economic and social relationships of its population, including rapid economic growth and the preservation of inequality; second, we examine the main challenges faced by the country's social workers; third, explore whether Brazil's undergraduate and graduate programs are oriented toward training that is centred on a critical, creative, and purposeful perspective. This paper is a review article that is constructed with the intent of outlining the main features of the profession in a country marked by contradictions: Brazil is the 7th

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largest economy in the world, 3rd in social inequality, and 85th on the human development index.

1. Brazil: Country of contrasts

Brazil has an area of 8,547,403 km^2 and is located in eastern South America. In 2013, its estimated population was 201,009,622 (Us census bureau, 2013), and it is the fifth most populous country in the world[2]. Brazil is also one of the most economically unequal countries in the world. In 2012, 40% of the Brazilian population was poor and earned only 11% of the national wealth (Instituto brasileiro de geografia e estatística, 2013). This inequality is highlighted by race and gender. Data from the Instituto brasileiro de geografia e estatística (Ibge) show that 22.4% of the Brazilian population was vulnerable in 2011 according to social and/or income criteria. However, this inequality is also expressed differently by region: 40% of the population was vulnerable in the north and 40.1% in the northeast, but only 11.3% in the south (Instituto brasileiro de geografia e estatística, 2013).

Brazil reduced extreme poverty from 25.6% of the population in 1990 to 4.8% in 2008. Still, 8.9 million Brazilians lived on a household income of less than Us$ 1.25 per day in 2008. The 2013 report of the United Nations millennium development goals (Un, 2013) indicates that the number of families living in favelas (slums) decreased from 32% to 27%. Based on data from the National household sample survey (Pesquisa nacional por amostras de domicílios, 2012), the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Instituto de pesquisas econômicas aplicadas) shows that the proportion of people living under the official extreme poverty line fell from 4.2% in 2011 to 3.6% in 2012, i.e., 6.5 million people were still in this situation in 2012 (Instituto de pesquisas econômicas aplicadas, 2013).

In 2012 the estimated life expectancy at birth was 74.6 years, 71 years for men and 78.3 years for women (Instituto brasileiro de geografia e estatística, 2013). In the same year the fertility rate was esti-

[2] The population is concentrated in the southeast and northeast regions (70.1%), while the south, north, and central-west regions contain 29.9% of the population.

mated at 1.76 children. These indicators demonstrate the aging process that the Brazilian population has experienced in recent decades. Between 1980 and 2010, the population under 14 years of age fell from 38.24% to 25.58% of the total population, while the population aged over 60 increased from 5.93% to 9.98%[3]. The rising proportion of elderly in the total population will require new pension commitments, either by reaffirming the current rules for contribution periods and the retirement age, which would have to be accompanied by a guarantee of new sources of financing, or by modifying the current criteria for access (Marques, 2012). Currently, the aging process has not only resulted in a decrease of the population under 14 years of age and an increase in the elderly but also in an extremely important increase in the working age contingent. Thus, the population aged between 15 and 59 years, which represented 27.51% of the total in 1980, increased to 64.44%. Data from the Ibge show that between 2010 and 2020, between 67% and 70% of Brazil's population will be between 15 and 64 years of age.

Regarding the labour market, the unemployment rate in 2012 was 5.5%, compared with 11.7% in 2002. Informal work also decreased consistently and reached its lowest level in 2012, at 39.3% (in 2002, it was 51.2%) (Instituto de pesquisas econômicas aplicadas, 2013).

While there is still a large contingent without job security, the situation for children also requires significant action. The National household sample survey (Brazilian institute of geography and statistics, 2011) indicates that 3.7 million children and adolescents aged 5-17 years old were working in the country in 2011 (8.6%). The lack of protection for children is also demonstrated in the infant mortality rate. According to the *State of the world's children report 2013*, the rate of deaths per 1,000 children under five years old in Brazil fell from 19 in 2010 to 16 in 2011 (Unicef, 2013). Although the country reached its millennium goals, it is still well below the averages in Uruguay, Cuba, and Canada (7, 6, and 5, respectively)[4].

[3] The latter population group was defined according to Law 10.741 from October 1, 2003, called the Elderly statute (Estatuto do idoso), which considers the beginning of the third age to be after 60 years of age.

[4] All of these indicators hide the unequal situation between the regions of Brazil (the worst rates are in the north and northeast regions).

Boschetti (2007: 92) states that «Brazilian capitalism implemented (in the 1930s) a model of social security predominantly sustained by the logic of insurance», with a contributory character that was focused on the protection of workers in the formal market. Only with the Federal Constitution of 1988 was the system of social security reorganised under new principles and guidelines. However, the process of constructing a social protection system in Brazil was always sector-specific; each sector had its own distinct conceptions, inclusion criteria, managers, and forms of management and funding. As a result, today there are fragmented social protection policies – health care is universal; social security is a right associated with formal work/contributions; and welfare is for those who need it, but most of the programs are focused on extreme poverty (the growth in financial support from the Ministry of social development was given to focused programs such as the Continuous cash benefit (*Benefício de prestação continuada*)[5] and the Family grant program (*Programa bolsa família*)[6].

It is in this scenario of inequality and social injustice that the Brazilian social workers[7] defined the expressions of the social issue as their

[5] The Continuous cash benefit is an individual, non-transferable benefit, but not a lifetime benefit, which ensures the monthly transfer of one minimum wage to the elderly aged 65 years or older and to a disabled person of any age with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinderfull and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In both cases, recipients must prove that they do not have other means of ensuring their own livelihood, including having it provided by family. Per capita monthly household income must be less than one-fourth of the existing minimum wage (Brazil, 2013).

[6] The Family grant program involves a direct income transfer for families in poverty and extreme poverty across the country. The Family grant (*Bolsa família*) program integrates with the Brazil without poverty plan (*Plano Brasil sem miséria*), which focuses on the situation of 16 million Brazilians with per capita household incomes below R$ 70 per month and is based on ensuring income, productive inclusion, and access to public services. Data from 2013 from the Ministry of social development indicate that the Family grant program serves more than 13.7 million households across the country. Depending on family income per person (limited to R$ 140) and the number and age of children, the value of the benefit received per family can vary from R$ 32 to R$ 306.

[7] Social services in Brazil emerged in the 1930s, tied to the Catholic Church. The creation of the first School for social services occurred in 1936 (in the city of São Paulo)

object of intervention. For Iamamoto (1997: 14), «social workers work with the social issue in its varied everyday expressions, such as how individuals experience them at work, within the family, in housing, health, public social assistance, etc. The social issue of inequality is also rebellious, as it involves subjects who experience inequality and resist and oppose it. It is in this tension between producing inequality and producing rebellion and resistance that social workers work, situated in this space driven by different social interests, and it is not possible to disregard them or flee from them because they make up life in society».

For the Brazilian federal council for the social services (Conselho federal de serviço social - Cfess), a «Sw (Social worker) acts in the multiple refractions of social issues shaped in the contemporary social order. Its technical procedures are instruments tied to an intentionality that goes beyond institutional requisition, whose demand is placed without theoretical and ethical-political polishing» (Conselho federal de serviço social, 2012: 30). However, the road to this point was not easy. It has been a process of fighting and disputes between antagonistic positions. Thus, it is fitting here to review the trajectory of this profession in Brazil over the last almost 80 years.

2. Brazilian social work

The first schools of social work in Brazil emerged at the end of the 1930s with the introduction of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in the country. In the 1940s and 1950s, the country began to recognise the importance of the profession and started regulating it in 1957 (Law n.3252).

Professional training for Brazilian social work underwent important changes after the so-called social work reconceptualisation movement in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Netto (2001), after the 1960s, traditional social work experienced an international crisis. This crisis was tied to the depletion of the post-war capitalist development standards, which had a crisis of their own in the 1960s, creating

to be formed from the «girls of society» who were devoted to social apostolate and was initially guided by the European theoretical framework (Iamamoto, Carvalho, 1985).

a «favourable framework for the mobilisation of subaltern social classes in defence of their immediate interests[...]» (Netto, 2001: 143).

Political organisation materialised in the sparkle of social movements (among blacks, women, youth, and urbanites) that at the time ('60s) questioned the rationality of the bourgeois state. Within the profession, the bourgeois order created an answer regarding the professional practice of traditional social work (Netto, 2001). Questioning this social work was «inscribed in the dynamic of breaking imperialist moorings, the fight for national freedom and transformations in the exclusionary, concentrated, and exploitative capitalist structure» (Faleiros, 1987: 51).

The so-called social work reconceptualisation movement, which occurred in Latin America beginning in approximately 1965, was an expression of the process of questioning traditional social work. In this environment, social workers questioned the appropriateness of their professional roles and procedures considering the manifestations of the «social issues» and the regional and national realities, thereby «questioning the effectiveness of professional actions and the efficiency and legitimacy of their representations [...]» (Netto, 2001: 146).

For this author (Netto), two elements should be highlighted in the context of the social work reconceptualisation movement in Latin America. First, for the first time in the profession's trajectory, there was an approximation to the Marxist tradition, even though the approximation was not made based on the original sources of Marxian theory. Second, the professionals pursued coordination in a continental plan because the Movement enabled a debate about issues regarding Latin American particularities.

In Brazil, Netto (2001) states that in the '60s and '70s, there was a renovation process in social work[8] that was intimately linked to the period of bourgeois autocracy. This process was initiated because in the

[8] The author defines renovation as «the set of new characteristics, within the constrictions of bourgeois autocracy, that social work articulated based on rearranging traditions and assuming contributions from contemporary social thought trends, seeking to invest itself as a professional institution endowed with practical legitimacy through responses to social demands and through its systematization and theoretical validation through remission of social theories and disciplines» (Netto, 2001: 131).

‘70s, the military governments[9] tended to request to validate the actions of traditional social work. However, the state’s actions contributed to the renovation process of social work, especially regarding two aspects: practice and professional training.

With regard to practice, the «conservative modernisation» process (tied to heavy industrialisation in the context of development) generated an expansion of the labour market for social workers because of growth in the expression of «social issues» and the treatment of these expressions through the social policies of the dictatorial government.

With regard to training, the renovation involved a diversified theoretical-methodological debate, especially after the ‘70s. Institutionalised professional training (that is conducted within the universities) ended up forming a theoretical vanguard that debated questions beyond «pragmatic jobs» (professional work). The teaching frameworks began allowing theoretical-methodological discussions that questioned the bourgeois autocracy (Netto, 2001).

In this context, three main theoretical-methodological lines developed in Brazilian social work that characterised the renovation that developed differentially, both in chronological and theoretical terms. The first direction is called the «Modernising perspective» by Netto (2001). Based on structural functionalism, this theoretical approach valued technical and instrumental rationality in which social work professionals should formulate and plan social policies as a way of contributing to development. The perspective was an attempt to adapt social work as an interventionist instrument based on social techniques that should be operationalised within a capitalist development faced with the political and social demands of the post-1964 period (Netto, 2001).

The second strand is called the «Re-updating of conservatism» by Netto (2001). The predominant theoretical guideline was phenomenology. In general, the re-updating of conservatism should be «to deter and revert the erosion of the traditional professional ethos and all of its socio-technical implications while also configuring itself as an alternative

[9] Living under a period of military dictatorship (1964-1984), Brazil experienced intense and increasing manifestations of expressions of social issues resulting from numerous economic and political crises. This situation required a clear position from the profession in critiquing professional conservatism.

able to neutralise new influences that come from reference frameworks peculiar to the Marxist inspiration [...]» (Netto, 2001: 203, italics from author).

The third strand of Brazilian social work's renovation movement, called «rupture intention», is characterised by a critique of traditional social work. It represented the attempt to break with the legacy of conservative theoretical-methodological thought (the positivist tradition). It rescued the critical trends from the pre-1964 period that were positioned against the country's social and political situation. This perspective used the Marxist tradition and had its primary theoretical incursion through the elaboration of the Belo Horizonte method.

This strand was confronted with the bourgeois autocracy at the theoretical-cultural level. At the professional level, its goals clashed with the requirements that professionals respond to the demands of «conservative modernisation» and, at the political level, the corporate project opposed the dictatorship's project. Netto (2001: 248) states that a central element of this theoretical perspective was that it «always had an ineradicable «character of opposition» in the face of the bourgeois autocracy, and this not only distinguished it – as a strand of the renovation process of social work in Brazil – from other professional currents but also responded or its trajectory» (Netto, 2001: 248, italics from author).

The theoretical debate developed during the Brazilian social work renovation period was reflected in professional training at the undergraduate and graduate levels[10], and the Rupture intention strand gained strength at the end of the 1980s regarding the theoretical-methodological direction of social work.

In historical terms, the III Brazilian conference on social work (*III Congresso brasileiro de serviço social*) in São Paulo in 1979, which was known as the «Turning point conference» (*Congresso da virada*), reflected the renovation of Brazilian social work, notably the approximation of social work to critical social thought with a Marxist basis[11].

[10] The first graduate programs in social work were created after the 1970s (Master's from Puc-Rj and Puc-Sp, in 1972, and Ufrj in 1976 (Capes, 2010).

[11] According to Abramides and Cabral (2001: 39, our translation), «The III Cbas should be understood within the socio-historical framework of the period, namely within the large worker protests and the working class' fight for classist unions, the

Developed in a time of strong opposition to the military regime, the debates from the Conference expressed, according to Netto (2009), the political struggles surrounding Brazilian democratisation articulated through an anti-capitalist conflict. The author states: «Here, the novelty and rupture with conservative tradition, the 'turning point', in short: through the III Conference, social work entered the political scene and did so «against the dictatorial order». Within the professional vanguard that implemented this entry, there are not only democratic segments – there are also groups that combine the fight for democracy with the anti-capitalist struggle» (Netto, 2009: 31, italics from author).

The «Turning point conference» corresponded to a moment of strengthened and deepened critical social thought in Brazilian social work that was anchored in the strand called «Rupture intention» (Netto, 2001) and that expressed the approximation of social work to Marxist thought in the 1980s and 1990s. According to the same author, this strand influenced theoretical teaching (undergraduate and graduate[12]) in the universities, broadening the subjects of study with a dialogue with social sciences and revealing an intellectual majority in Brazilian social work[13].

Following the changes in critical thought, the so-called Ethical-political project of social work was developed in the '90s. Netto (2006) shows that the roots of this project were in the transition from the '70s to the '80s at a time when there was a critique and rejection of professional conservatism, as noted above, in the context of the fight for democracy in Brazilian society, providing for the emergence of a new professional project.

«The fight against the dictatorship and conquest of political democracy enabled the opening, within the professional body, of the dispute between different corporate projects, which were confronted in the movements of the social classes. The democratic and popular aspira-

organization of the popular movement, and the politicalunion reorganization of social workers ata regional and national scope».

[12] The first programs for a Phd in social work were created in the 1990s in Brazil.

[13] The book by Marilda Villela Iamamoto and Raul de Carvalho, *Relações sociais e serviço social no Brasil: esboço de uma interpretação teórico metodológica* (Social relations and social work in Brazil: outline of a methodological theoretical interpretation), published in the '80s, was an important milestone in the production and intellectual strengthening of Brazilian social work based on Marxist thought.

tions, radiated from the workers' interests, were incorporated and intensified by vanguards of social work. For the first time, within the professional body, corporate projects reverberated, which were different from those that responded to the interests of the dominant classes and sectors [...]» (Netto, 2006: 11).

In general, the core of this professional project consisted of the recognition of freedom as a central value, which was understood as the possibility of choosing between concrete alternatives and being committed to the emancipation and autonomy of individuals[14] and the defence of human rights (Netto, 2006). The project had a clear political dimension that signified the fight for equity and social justice, the universalisation of access to public goods and social services, and the defence of citizenship and human rights for the working classes. The project valued political participation of a democratic nature, and its adherents were in favour of socialising wealth that was socially produced. It required a commitment to ability based on the intellectual improvement of social workers through an investigative approach that valued skilled professional training along with theoretical-methodological assumptions that enabled a concrete reading of social reality.

In the wake of the '90s – and entering the 21st century – the professional entities of Brazilian social workers (especially the Brazilian association for teaching and research in social work (*Associação brasileira de ensino e pesquisa em serviço social* - Abepss[15]) and the Cfess strove (and have been striving) to ensure the professional training of social workers based on the ethical-political project for social work. The curricular guidelines organised by Abepss (1996), which have permeated the professional training of social workers, focus on two fundamental categories: the social issues and the work. These guidelines indicate three elements in professional training that should be ar-

[14] In this respect, «this professional project is tied to a corporate project that proposes the construction of a new social order, without exploitation/domination of a class, ethnicity, and gender» (Netto, 2006, p.15, italics from author).

[15] This organisation was created in 1946 as the Brazilian association for social work schools a decade after the implementation of the first program for Social work in Brazil. This important academic-scientific entity completed 66 years in existence in 2012 (Abepss, 2013).

ticulated: the theoretical-methodological, ethical-political, and technical-operative dimensions[16].

Curriculum guidelines are approved by the Ministry of education and aim to provide orientation or guidance for the pedagogy policy project in Brazilian universities. They define how a professional in the area of social work should teach regarding the expression «social issues». This is in accordance with the formulation and implementation of proposals which aim to address social issues thorough public social policies, entrepreneurs of civil society organizations and social movements. They also define that it is necessary for a professional to have a generally critical formation both intellectually and culturally. They must also show that they have the competence for practicing their profession, creative ability to propose new interventions, in the context of social relations and the labour market. It is important to take note that these guidelines define that this professional practice should be articulated and compromised with respect to the values and principles that are constitutive of the Code of ethics of social work in Brazil, as established in 1999.

With respect to competence and abilities, the education of social worker professionals should teach them on the basis of three articulated dimensions. These dimensions are as follows: theoretical/methodological, ethics/policy and technical/practical. These aim to provide a critical learning of the elements of social life from an overall perspective or a totality. Thus, these curricular guidelines are designed to provide an orientation for the education of a professional which will have the following three integrated core fundamentals.

The first is the core of theoretical/methodological fundamentals of social life, which implies the articulation of these fundamentals with ethics policy, which takes into account the understanding of social beings within an historical totality and the comprehension of bourgeois society and its contradictory movement.

[16] It is important to note that the guidelines for professional Brazilian social workers have been an area for exchange between researchers involved in undergraduate and graduate programs and social workers who are involved in the implementation of public and private policies. The subjects of the Congresses and their Findings between 2000 and 2013 demonstrate a critical perspective of Brazilian social work.

The second is with respect to the core of fundamentals regarding the social historical formation of Brazilian society, which aims to present the historical particulars of this society. This is presented by taking into account the formation and urban and rural development in its regional and local diversity. In this aspect we are proposing to analyse the meaning of the profession of social work. This should be done by recognizing its contradictory character, given the nature of its insertion in the relations between classes and that of the state, and therefore incorporating the institutional dynamics in both the public and private spheres.

The third is the fundamental core of professional work, which encompasses the aspects which constitute social work as a specialization of work. This includes «its historical, theoretical, methodological and technical trajectory, and the ethical components which involve the exercise of the profession, research, planning and the administration of social work and the internship period» (Brazil 1999: 11).

Therefore, the three core fundamentals present: «[...] an innovative logic which goes beyond the fragmentations of the process of teaching and learning, opening up new paths for the construction of knowledge as concrete experience attained through the practice and formation of a professional. This is not to be seen as a system of classification nor autonomy and as a consequence the relations between the three fundamental cores express, on the contrary different levels of learning the social and professional reality, subsidizing the intervention of social work. In addition, there is a set of inseparable knowledge, which is attained from the learning of origins, the manifestations and addressing the social question, the fundamental basis of the profession and articulator of the content of professional formation» (Brazil, 1999: 11).

In these terms, Iamamoto (2012: 4) argues: «Contemporary Brazilian social work shows a renovated academic-professional and social feature, focused on the defence of labour and workers, with broad access to land for producing livelihood and a commitment to affirming democracy, liberty, equality, and social justice in the field of history. In this social direction, the fight for affirming the rights of citizenship, that recognises the effective necessities and interests of social subjects, is now crucial as a part of the process of accumulating strength for inclusive social development for all social individuals».

At the same time that the professional entities tried to establish a critical social direction in professional training and practice, the advance of neoliberalism and the pattern of capitalist accumulation have been an obstacle to the realisation of the ethical-political project for social work. The decrease in Federal government spending for social and public policies has represented a setback in the realisation of rights and has greatly reduced the ability of social workers to defend rights.

Accompanying the transformations in Brazilian society, the profession has also undergone changes that required new regulations: law 8662/93. Also in 1993, social workers instituted a new ethics code that expresses a contemporary professional project dedicated to democracy and universal access to social, civil, and political rights.

Professional practice is also guided by the principles and rights established in the Constitution of 1988 and complementary legislation regarding social policies and the rights of the population. There cannot be any type of discrimination in professional care.

According to the Federal council of social work, there are currently approximately 120,000 professionals in Brazil registered with the Regional councils for social work (Cress). Brazil is second in the world in number of social workers, trailing only the United States.

As for the profession's profile, it is mainly composed of women (just over 90%). The study confirms the trend of integrating social work into institutions with a public nature, with almost 80% of the active category working in this sector. Health, welfare, and social security are the areas that employ the most professionals. Although social work is a «liberal profession», its work «is tensioned by the sale and purchase ratio of its skilled work force. The condition of the salaried worker-whether in public institutions or in 'non-profit' private and business areas – makes the professionals not have control over the working conditions and resources at their disposal in the institutional space» (Raichellis, 2011: 428). The author notes that similar to other sectors, the social work sector experiences temporary outsourcing of social workers providing services to governments and non-governmental organisations.

The social work profession has been challenged with the following question: how to ensure social rights in the face of the actions of a ne-

oliberal state, the global capital crisis, structural unemployment, and the complexity of the «social issues»?

Within social work, a debate has developed regarding the difficulty faced by social workers in articulating the rational theoretical construct based on the Marxian dialectical method while managing the demands of professional practice. Santos (2010) indicates that both the conservative and vanguard segments of the profession have found that the Marxian theoretical formulation has not advanced the instrumentalisation of the practice, which again raises the issue that «in practice, theory is different». Starting from the assertion of a lack of clarity regarding the tools and techniques of social work professionals because of an erroneous incorporation of the relationship between theory and practice in the conception of historical-dialectical materialism, Santos states (2010: 2):

«In fact, what such verbal and written statements express is the difficulty of understanding the relationship between theory and practice and, consequently, the relationship between theoretical-methodological, ethical-political, and technical-operational dimensions of professional intervention. This results in faulty expectations regarding the potential of these tools and techniques, sometimes overvaluing them and sometimes ignoring them. Therefore, it is a problem that cannot be ignored or masked and directly involves professional training».

It is worth noting that Abepss has recently been dedicated to the discussion of a supervised internship in the field of professional training due to the advancement of the commercialisation process of higher education in Brazil, especially distance learning[17]. In 2005, Brazil had 146 programs, and this number increased to 446 in 2013 (427 classroom courses and 19 distance courses) (Brasil, 2013).

The central issue in the discussion is that the distance learning method hinders quality training with academic rigor. Cfess and Abepss (2010: 3) note that «unlike core countries, where information and communication technologies add new pedagogical possibilities, in peripheral countries, the use of these technologies has meant technological substitution. A poor higher education policy for poor people, since

[17] Abepss is dedicated to the construction of a national internship policy as a way to strategically protect the project of professional training (Abepss, 2013).

reportedly distance learning (Ensino a distância - Ead)) is associated with the provision of education to the most impoverished segments, was stated in the national education plan approved by the Fernando H. Cardoso administration» (and maintained in the Lula and Dilma administrations). In 2009, while in-person courses (in public or private schools) offered 34,287 seats, the distance courses offered 107,440 (Associação brasileira de ensino e pesquisa em serviço social, 2011). That is, for every three seats in Ead, there was one seat offered for classroom teaching.

One impact on professional training is the difficulty of placing students from distance learning in a supervised internship. The National internship policy proposed by Abepss argues that the internship should provide critical analysis and intervening, purposeful, and investigative ability to the student, enabling an understanding of the concrete elements of the social reality in the capitalist order and its contradictions. Such an internship would enable professional intervention in the varied «social issues» (Associação brasileira de ensino e pesquisa em serviço social, 2013).

Accordingly, in recent years, both old and new challenges are posed for undergraduate training in social work in Brazil. The first challenge refers to the coordination of the theoretical-methodological, ethical-political, and technical-operational dimensions in professional training. This coordination requires an appreciation of teaching the fundamentals (the theoretical-methodological dimension) to ensure an understanding of the totality of social life, including the new structures and formats of capital accumulation and neoliberalism and the structure of the capitalist state and its historic forms, in which the continuity of market forces and caring for parts of the dominant class has taken precedence to the detriment of the rights of the vast majority of workers.

In terms of postgraduate programs, Brazil currently has 32 Programs (14 with Master's and Phd and 18 with only Master's); of these, approximately 20% were created in the last three years. Between 2004 and 2012, 625 phd theses and 2,563 Master's dissertations were defended[18]. As the number of Master's dissertations increased (from 652 between 2004 and 2006 to 1,076 between 2010 and 2012), the number

[18] In Brazil, all Master's programs in social work are academic.

of theses decreased (220 between 2004 and 2006 and 199 between 2010 and 2012). The number of students enrolled between 2010 and 2012 was 2,875 in Master's programs and 1,357 in Phd programs (Coordenação de aperfeiçoamento de pessoal de nível superior, 2013). These figures indicate that an increase in theses should appear for the next triennial reviews of the Coordination for the improvement of higher education personnel (*Coordenação de aperfeiçoamento de pessoal de nível superior - Capes*), the body responsible for the accreditation and evaluation of this level of education.

The challenges are two-fold for training human resources for teaching and academic production that is directed at the interpretation of the manifestations of the «social questions». We believe that understanding the fundamentals of social work and conducting academic research should support skilled professional intervention (the technical-operational dimension), which will in turn contribute to the struggle to realise workers' social rights, although the socio-occupational spaces are increasingly constrained by the logic and implementation of public policies guided by neoliberalism.

A major challenge relates to the organisation of professional social workers at the national and regional levels. The debates developed by Abepss and the Cfess/Cress represent a key channel for theoretical articulation and for political forces that cause social workers to advance the set of political demonstrations by workers in defence of civil, political, and social rights. Undoubtedly, these entities, by combining research with critical thought and professionals involved in practice with students in training, constitute a privileged space for affirming the Ethical-political project for Brazilian social work in defence of workers.

3. Challenges for social work today

The professional practice of social work is affected by the relationships between the social classes and «interferes in processes related to the social reproduction of life in multiple dimensions (material, spiritual, subjective), developing professional actions in different social situations that affect living conditions of the general population and particularly the most impoverished sectors of society» (Yazbek, 2012). We

currently face selective, targeted policies on the one hand, and on the other, increased demand for public policies. We live with unemployment, lack of work (and little prospect of getting a job), criminalisation of social movements, high rates of violence (of all kinds), and hunger and malnutrition in a country that produces enough food for domestic consumption and exportation. The resulting injustice of the current Brazilian «social question» is unacceptable.

Understanding this question requires «deciphering the logic of capital, and its predatory, limitless expansion» because «the more we are able to explain and understand, the more conditions we will have for intervening, elaborating skilled professional responses from a theoretical, political, ethical and technical point of view» (Yazbek, 2012). We agree with this author when she states that «theoretical knowledge is the first tool for the work of a social worker».

In addition to a theoretical framework that allows us to reveal reality, we also need to construct mediations to confront the daily questions that arise in the day-to-day affairs of the profession. People experiencing long waits to access social services do not always have access to a right enshrined in the national constitution. With the increasing urbanisation of Brazil, the right to come and go, urban mobility, and access to leisure, health, and educational services for the working and poor classes are a big problem in our cities. Despite the increase in Brazil's road network, bus fleet, and subways, these services are expensive and of poor quality. Currently, in Brazil and across the world, we are witnessing demonstrations against reforms implemented worldwide that resulted in the loss of rights. We believe the process of building rights is not a legal or technical question but a political one, a place of contradictions, resistance, and many struggles. As noted by Yazbek (2012), it is an issue to be politicised as a strategy that can break, or start to break, the closed circle of domination.

Ultimately, «the struggle for the affirmation of rights is currently a struggle against capital, part of a process of accumulating forces for a form of social development, which may include the development of each and every social individual» (Iamamoto, 2009: 16). This is the path of Brazilian social work's struggle.

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9. La educación del trabajo social en Chile: hacia un siglo de historia

*Paula Vidal Molina**

Index

1. Los orígenes del trabajo social chileno; 2. Procesos de cambios del trabajo social en Chile entre 1960 y 1973; 3. Neoliberalismo y contradicciones del trabajo social chileno entre 1973 y 2013; 4. Palabras finales; Referencias bibliográficas

Palabras claves

Trabajo social, Historia de Chile, Formación académica, Universidad de Chile

1. Los orígenes del trabajo social chileno

Adentrarnos en los cambios ocurridos en noventa años de historia del trabajo social chileno, significa comprenderlo al interior de la historia social del País. En ese sentido, la profesión nació ligada a los desafíos sociales, culturales y políticos de principios del siglo XX chileno.

La historiografía de la profesión, concuerda con el origen secular de esta, pues la primera escuela de servicio social «dr. Alejandro del Río» (pionera en Chile y América latina) se abrió en 1925 y estuvo vinculada a la atención sanitaria, a través de la Junta nacional de beneficencia (hoy Ministerio de salud), con un carácter científico y de progreso, propio de la época. En ese sentido, la influencia positivista moderna[1],

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[1] «Es dentro de este vasto dominio donde se coloca el servicio social, quien se contrapone a la caridad y la filantropía y se distingue en la asistencia por su carácter

se expresaba en la formación para ejercer un quehacer profesional distinto al de uno con orientación caritativa y moral. Bien se expresa en la *Revista de servicio social* del año 1928; «el concepto de caridad, que tanto daño y atraso social ha llevado a la sociedad chilena, el que ha permitido que las mayores estigmatizaciones de su juventud, de sus mujeres, de sus niños, de sus trabajadores, de las familias de escasos recursos económicos, de sus obreros, se hayan expandido y muchas veces ramificado; no entrará jamás en el vocabulario del servicio social, ya que éste lucha por su contrario, por una asistencia organizada y justa que le devuelva a cada ser humano su propio valor» (Cardenas, 1928 en Matus *et al*., 2004: 39). Prontamente, en 1929, se abrió la segunda escuela – «Elvira Matte» – ligada a la Pontificia universidad católica de Chile, y de carácter religioso. Con la llegada al gobierno del Frente popular[2], el presidente Pedro Aguirre Cerda, dictó en 1940, un decreto supremo, que permitió organizar las escuelas de servicio social de Santiago, Concepción y Temuco. estas dependieron del Ministerio de educación pública y en 1948 fueron incorporadas a la Universidad de Chile. Su fundador y primer director general fue Lucio Córdova (Alvariño; 1965: 11), nombre con el cual será bautizada posteriormente, la Escuela de servicio social de la Universidad de Chile, con sede en Santiago.

En 1945, la Universidad de Chile fundó también la escuela de servicio social en la ciudad de Valparaíso, y en otras ciudades, como Antofagasta, Osorno, Arica. Todo lo cual hizo que para el año 1971, de las 11 escuelas de servicio social existentes en Chile, 6 de estas dependían de la Universidad de Chile. Por lo tanto, el origen y carácter secular del trabajo social chileno, se debió a la influencia y magnitud de escuelas ligadas al carácter laico, pluralista y público de la Universidad de Chile.

científico y sistemático, por su cuidado en la investigación de las causas, por la extensión de su campo de estudio y de acción» (Sand, 1927 en Matus *et al*., 2004: 46).

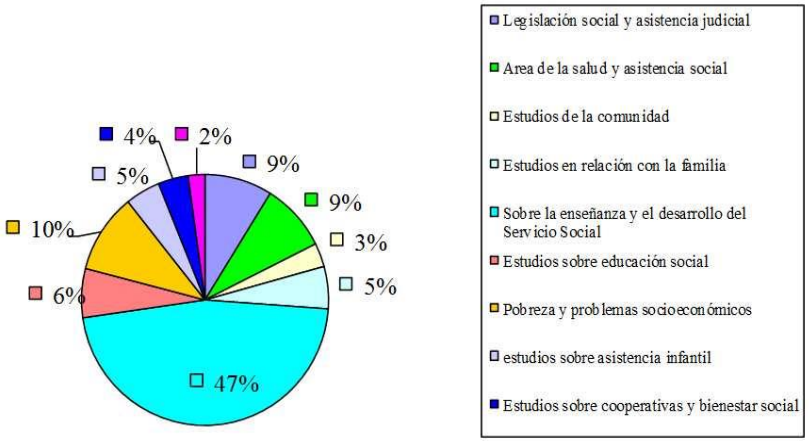
[2] El Frente popular es una coalición de partidos políticos chilenos, de centro izquierda, que ganan las elecciones en 1938, y generan un programa de gobierno democrático y popular. Entre los partidos políticos que encarnan esa alianza, se encuentran el Partido radical, el Partido socialista y el Partido comunista. (Milos, 2008).

La formación profesional, desde su origen y hasta comienzos de la década de 1960, expresaba no solo el predominio «femenino» en el estudiantado, sino también la influencia de la sociología positiva y la medicina práctica.

Entre los cursos impartidos, estaban: educación cívica, psicología y economía social, higiene y puericultura, atención de enfermos, alimentación y dietética generales, técnica de oficina y estadística, moral, legislación de higiene y beneficencia, legislación del trabajo y de protección a la infancia, puericultura, atención de heridos, alimentación y dietética especial, contabilidad, organización de la beneficencia pública y «el servicio social en sus diversas especializaciones» (Illanes, 2007: 278).

En paralelo, desde el comienzo de la formación profesional hasta 1950, los ámbitos de intervención en los que se desarrolló el servicio social chileno, fueron los de: salud, infancia, educación, campo (ruralidad), ciudad, catástrofes, laboral y seguridad social. Lo anterior se observa en el gráfico 1, a través de los contenidos de las tesis (1140 tesis), elaboradas por los/las estudiantes de servicio social entre 1929 y 1950.

Gráfico 1 - Contenidos de las tesis sobre trabajo social en Chile hasta 1950



Fuente: Matus et al., La reinvención de la memoria, 2004.

2. Procesos de cambios del trabajo social en Chile en 1960-1973

A partir de 1950 hasta 1964, las escuelas de servicio social, dependientes de la Universidad de Chile, se organizaron en la Dirección general de las escuelas de servicio social de la Universidad de Chile, que dependía de la Dirección de la escuela «Lucio Córdova», sede Santiago. Ello marcó la influencia de esta, no solo en las escuelas dependientes de la Universidad de Chile, sino también la relación con la más antigua, la escuela «dr. Alejandro del Rio», ya que las memorias y tesis de sus estudiantes debían ser certificados, por la dirección de la escuela Lucio Córdova[3].

Durante ese mismo período se realizaron algunos cambios en las escuelas de servicio social de la Universidad de Chile. En un comienzo la formación correspondió a tres años, aunque desde 1964, los años de estudios académicos consistieron en cuatro, destinados al cumplimiento de planes y programas de estudios teóricos y prácticos. Se sumaba a ello, el quinto año destinado a desarrollar una investigación para una memoria, conducente al examen de grado y a la obtención del título de asistente social (Editorial, 1966: 8).

Al año 1962, estas escuelas impartían cursos cuyo énfasis estaba puesto en las áreas de salud, salud mental, derecho y legislación, investigación «práctica» y métodos de intervención[4]. En ese sentido, especialmente los métodos de intervención de caso, grupo y

[3] Recordemos que para fines de 1960, las escuelas dr. Alejandro del Río y Lucio Córdova, terminan fusionándose, en la escuela de servicio social de la Universidad de Chile.

[4] Ejemplo de ello, fueron los cursos de higiene, psicología general, higiene mental, nociones generales de patología, enfermería primeros auxilios, alimentación (teórica), alimentación (práctica), puericultura (teórica), puericultura (práctica), psicología del niño y adolescente, educación sanitaria, psicología de la personalidad, servicio social de colaboración médica, nociones generales de derecho, derecho social, derecho procesal, práctica legal, sociología, conocimientos del medio social, doctrinas sociales contemporáneas, estadística, investigación social (teoría), investigaciones sociales prácticas, nociones de servicio social, método de servicio social de casos, método de servicio social de grupo, método de servicio social de organización de comunidades, visitas a instituciones, normas de trabajo práctico, servicio social en campos de aplicación, organización y administración de servicios, ética profesional (Anales de la Facultad de ciencias jurídicas y sociales, 1962).

comunidad[5] se mantuvieron durante toda la década de los años 60, más allá de las modificaciones curriculares que ocurrieron desde 1963. Ello es coherente también con las políticas de promoción popular, de reforma agraria e iniciativas en el área de la salud, entre otras, impulsadas con fuerza por el gobierno demócratacristano de Eduardo Frei (1964-1970), en coherencia también con las indicaciones de la Alianza para el progreso emanada desde Estados unidos, con el fin de limitar los procesos revolucionarios influenciados por la revolución cubana.

Las instituciones con las cuales, la escuela Lucio Córdova estableció convenios para que los estudiantes realizaran sus prácticas de formación profesional, durante la década de 1960, fueron organismos vinculados al estado y a la empresa privada. Asimismo, la necesidad de investigar acerca de la realidad social en la que intervenían los asistentes sociales, fue también parte central del énfasis de la formación. El intercambio a nivel internacional (visitas, capacitaciones, pasantías al y desde el extranjero) fue importante y realizado por algunos académicos, con el fin no solo de conocer experiencias, sino también para apoyar la formación de su cuerpo académico, mediante becas obtenidas en organismos internacionales, como visitas desde el extranjero.

Todas estas acciones fueron confluyendo para el cuestionamiento del plan de estudios y la entrada en vigencia de uno nuevo en 1963. Este mostró un giro a favor de la formación con énfasis en las ciencias sociales y la «enseñanza de la metodología profesional», también considerada característica de la profesión del servicio social (Alvariño, Pilar *et al.*, 1965: 11). Por primera vez, aparece en el curriculum un curso de políticas sociales, aunque el quehacer profesional – desde su origen – se vinculó con este campo. Las materias que incluyó el nuevo plan de estudios fueron «antropología, economía y desarrollo, teoría y técnicas administrativas, cooperativismo, política social y planificación de grupo. La enseñanza práctica (servicio social plicado), concede especial importancia al conocimiento de la realidad social a través de

[5] Recordemos que el término desarrollo de la comunidad, fue incorporado y posteriormente impulsado desde comienzos de los años 50 por las Naciones Unidas, pero va a ser en 1956 que se acuerda una definición al respecto en esta instancia.

unidades de investigación de áreas fundamentales como el campo de la salud, del trabajo y salario, de la vivienda, etc.» (Editorial, 1966).

Estos cambios se enfrentaron al proceso que, desde 1966, en la Universidad de Chile se comenzó a gestar, conocido en 1968, como la reforma universitaria. En un ambiente de creciente movilización social, y bajo un gobierno – que a través de políticas sociales – promovió la participación social y el desarrollo comunitario, las universidades chilenas comenzaron a problematizar la situación social, económica y política del País.

Los diagnósticos en la época, acerca de la situación de la universidad, daban cuenta de una crítica situación social del País y de la universidad en particular. Problemas de modernización, de eficiencia, democratización y elitización eran algunos de los que se mencionaban y se exigía resolver (Garretón y Martínez, 1985: 11-31). Este proceso adquirió mayor conflictividad en relación también al proceso político y social vivido en el País, para fines de los Sesenta y principios de los Setenta con la llegada al gobierno de la Unidad popular, con Salvador Allende como presidente de la República.

Los profesionales del servicio social en América Latina, desde mediados de la década de 1960, comenzaron a problematizar la profesión y la formación. En Chile, este movimiento cristalizó a partir de 1968. Las críticas que emergieron señalaban que los profesionales trabajaban con problemas locales, pero el nivel de análisis de estos y de sus causas, estaba lejos de ser macrosocial, como también, la intervención se reducía a una dimensión asistencial. Dentro del quehacer profesional, los problemas eran concebidos ligados a las personas, los grupos o a la comunidad. En ese sentido, en la medida que estos sujetos enfrentaban y superaban los problemas, sería posible que ellos se reintegraran a la sociedad. Otras críticas realizadas por los estudiantes de servicio social desde fines de los años Sesenta, eran en función de los métodos para la intervención, que usaba la profesión.

Un tipo de argumentos decía que estos métodos (caso, grupo y desarrollo de la comunidad), habían sido importados de «Países desarrollados» sin realizar las adecuaciones y reflexiones pertinentes para el contexto latinoamericano, especialmente acerca de las necesidades y exigencias que la sociedad chilena requería, «los objetivos de la técnica de caso se encuentran conceptos contrarios al

cambio como: “reajustar” al individuo al medio y que éste sea el propio agente directo de su “adaptación”. Junto a esto se observa que fundamentalmente el caso social está determinado por conflictos o problemas de personalidad que se traducen en un determinado comportamiento o por factores culturales o sociales de la realidad social. En general en esta técnica se ha enfatizado la importancia del primer elemento, excluyendo el análisis de las causas que generan una situación problema y que derivan especialmente de las deficiencias en la estructura social» (Allende *et al*., 1969: 291). Asimismo, la crítica al método de grupo (concebido como un proceso socio-educativo cuyo objetivo es el desarrollo de la personalidad y la adaptación social de los individuos a través de asociaciones voluntarias que se constituyen en medios para alcanzar fines socialmente deseables) «se traza en relación a su insuficiencia para lograr efectiva participación popular, centrándose en un conjunto de individuos en sí mismos, a su personalidad y grupo, desarticulada de la política nacional» (*Idem*: 292).

Era una crítica que afectaba a la ideología, la teoría y metodología de la profesión. A partir de esta situación, en aquellos años, adquirió relevancia la noción de práctica o praxis social, sustentada desde una orientación marxista, para fundamentar un nuevo tipo de servicio social.

Por otro lado, la crítica también se expresó hacia los lugares u organismos de práctica existentes para la formación de los estudiantes. Aquí, se afirmaba que estas instituciones – principalmente gubernamentales – poseían límites claros para el quehacer profesional porque respondían a las orientaciones de las políticas sociales de los gobiernos de turno. Por lo tanto, desde esta perspectiva, la capacidad de los asistentes sociales, de constituirse en agentes de cambio social, se veía absolutamente limitada. Es decir, consideraban que las prácticas institucionales, muchas veces ligadas a las orientaciones de la política social impulsada desde el gobierno de la democracia cristiana, jugaban en contra de los nuevos objetivos que la profesión (reconceptualizada) se propuso: la transformación de las estructuras de la sociedad.

Con la llegada del gobierno de la unidad popular, desde la propia profesión fue tensionada esta crítica institucional, porque – con el nuevo cambio social y político – el gobierno, sus dependencias y organismos, eran un pilar importante para avanzar en el proceso de

transformación social que Chile requería y que la unidad popular encabezaba[6].

La dimensión de la participación social, y la organización de la comunidad, junto al rol que poseía el asistente social como concientizador del pueblo y de las masas desposeídas – para transformar las estructuras sociales –, dejaba en evidencia que el asistente social se posicionaba desde un lugar diferente al que marcó la preocupación del método de comunidad, propio de los años Sesenta.

Es sabido que el gobierno de la unidad popular, definía las características estructurales de la economía chilena como de carácter dependiente y monopólico. Así, a partir de la llegada al gobierno de Salvador Allende a fines de 1970, la unidad popular comenzó un camino de transformación económica de Chile. Para ello, la creación de una política destinada a constituir un área estatal dominante, dentro de lo que normalmente era definido como mundo empresarial e industrial, era prioridad para el gobierno de Salvador Allende.

La lucha por desplazar al imperialismo, los monopolios y el latifundio de los centros de poder y de la decisión económica, tenía una importancia decisiva en la lucha general por el poder en Chile. En el desarrollo de esta batalla, para el gobierno era fundamental la creación de un área social dominante[7], capaz de dirigir la economía en su conjunto aumentando la producción de bienes y el control de aparato productivo.

La creación del área social de las empresas, es decir, empresas en manos del estado y de los trabajadores, era considerado un instrumento decisivo en la transición hacia la construcción socialista. Por lo tanto, la

[6] «Situados en el marco de referencia que da la ascensión al poder de un gobierno popular, se estima que la escuela no puede permanecer al margen de esta perspectiva de cambio básico de estructuras que se abre al País. El compromiso de la disciplina con los cambios será real, en la medida en que ella participe activamente – desde el punto de vista de su quehacer – en todas aquellas medidas y acciones que el gobierno popular impulse para llevar a cabo sus tareas, aportando todos aquellos elementos necesarios que contribuyan a la realización y el éxito de ellas» (Mendez *et al*., 1970: 84).

[7] El gobierno de la up propuso dividir la economía en tres áreas: social, donde las empresas de interés social pasaban a ser propiedad del estado; mixta, en la que el estado sería el principal accionista, y privada, conformada por pequeñas empresas que operaban con bajos capitales.

tarea imprescindible era generar una amplia participación de los trabajadores en este proceso, porque permitía – como se señalaba en la época – experimentar formas de democracia proletaria.

La participación de los trabajadores implicaba su incorporación en la toma de decisiones. En este contexto, el asistente social, podía ayudar al proceso de participación de los trabajadores en las empresas del área social. Así, algunas de las tesis y memorias realizadas por los estudiantes en estas empresas, estaban entrelazadas a los desafíos políticos y económicos que el gobierno de la unidad popular definía. A modo de ejemplo, sus estudios, alertaban acerca de los procesos de burocratización de los organismos de participación de los trabajadores al interior de estas empresas, y problematizaban las normas básicas de participación impulsadas por el gobierno. En ese sentido, las investigaciones de los estudiantes de servicio social, tensionaban críticamente las acciones del gobierno para favorecer la participación real y política de los trabajadores en las empresas del área social.

Entre 1970 y 1973, los estudiantes de servicio social (especialmente de la Universidad de Chile) planteaban que las funciones que la profesión aportaba para construir el proyecto histórico de la unidad popular, estaban dirigidas a los sectores populares con el fin de que estos pudieran participar en el poder político y de los beneficios de la sociedad. Identificaban claramente que la función fundamental del profesional era la educativa. Con ello se podía crear conciencia crítica en cada persona, para enfrentar sus problemas. Es decir, crear la necesidad de cambiar la situación social problemática, prepararlos para este proceso de participación en su comunidad, y así avanzar en «construir un hombre nuevo».

3. Neoliberalismo y contradicciones del trabajo social chileno entre 1973 y 2013

El golpe de estado, el 11 de septiembre de 1973, cambió radicalmente la historia de Chile. Los muertos, exiliados, desaparecidos, hicieron de esta, una de las dictaduras más sangrientas del cono sur de América Latina. Pero también la dictadura, permitió que Chile fuera el laboratorio del neoliberalismo en el mundo. A las

políticas represivas, de exterminio de la izquierda chilena y de la organización colectiva, se sumaron políticas económicas y sociales, que devastaron derechos sociales alcanzados con las luchas de décadas, de las masas populares. Los cambios fueron estructurales, la privatización de la salud, la educación, la vivienda, los recursos naturales, la focalización de las políticas sociales en la extrema pobreza, etc., fueron amparados bajo una nueva constitución, elegida mediante un plebiscito – que a ojos de todo el mundo – era absolutamente ilegítimo. Ella delineó el estado subsidiario como el sello del modelo de sociedad a construir y que prima hasta el día de hoy. Por lo tanto, las políticas sociales que emergieron después de 1973, además del gran recorte presupuestario que sufrieron, su orientación hacia los sectores sociales de extrema pobreza, dejaron de plantearse desde la universalidad, desde la promoción y participación social y adquirieron una orientación e implementación más individualista-asistencial.

Trabajo social sufrió los golpes de la dictadura, no sólo con la sangre de más de una decena de estudiantes de la profesión, detenidos desaparecidos y prisioneros políticos, sino también con el cierre de la escuela de servicio social de la Universidad de Chile, «dr, Lucio Córdova» (comenzado en 1973 y realizado efectivamente en 1980), la eliminación de las sedes regionales de la universidad, la transformación de las mallas curriculares, exoneración de profesores, expulsión de estudiantes, entre otras cosas.

En la orientación de las mallas curriculares de las escuelas de trabajo social, pasan a tener prioridad la formación tecnológica, desideologizada, el énfasis asistencialista y paternalista. En la intervención, la atención individual fue prioritaria, en desmedro de los grupos y comunidades. Lo cual impactó en el quehacer profesional, al interior de las instituciones del estado. Sin embargo, en paralelo, se gestó desde fuera de las instancias del estado, un colectivo de asistentes sociales que comenzaron a construir un trabajo social ligado a la defensa de los derechos humanos, la promoción de la participación social, la democratización de la sociedad. Este colectivo de trabajo social, nació en los años 80, ligado tanto al trabajo que desarrollaban las Organizaciones no gubernamentales (Ongs), la Iglesia católica, como al movimiento de pobladores. Aquí, este tipo de trabajo social – fuera del estado – no solo intervenía poniendo énfasis en la denuncia de

violación de los derechos humanos, su protección y promoción, sino también reflexionaba acerca de la profesión y las experiencias concretas que se impulsaban en los sectores populares. Sin duda, que la labor del colectivo de trabajo social, cristalizó un gran sector profesional que defendió y luchó junto a los sectores populares, por la democracia en Chile.

La lucha y movilización social contra la dictadura militar de Pinochet, alcanzada desde mediados de la década de 1980 permitió que – para fines de esa década – se pactara el plebiscito de 1988, donde se obtuvo el triunfo del "No", ligado al grupo opositor de la dictadura. Es así que desde 1990 hasta el 2009 estuvo en el gobierno, la concertación de partidos por la democracia[8], que mantuvieron el modelo económico neoliberal implantado por la dictadura, pero sumaron – entre otras cosas – la preocupación por la superación de la pobreza y la equidad social, propia de los lineamientos de la Comisión económica para América Latina (Cepal) dependiente de las Naciones Unidas. Así, las políticas sociales que se impulsan desde los años Noventa en adelante, mantienen la lógica de la focalización y la preocupación por la extrema pobreza, pero cambian respecto del período anterior debido, por ejemplo, a que asumen la incorporación de nuevos sujetos de intervención, la promoción social, el desarrollo local y comunitario, entre otros temas.

En este contexto, la formación de trabajo social[9] asume estos lineamientos, es decir, para impulsar y consolidar la superación de la pobreza, la ampliación de la focalización hacia otros sujetos sociales, la participación social de la comunidad en la definición de sus problemáticas, etc. Para comienzos de la década de 1990 existía en Chile solo una universidad privada que impartía la carrera de trabajo social. Sin embargo, en 25 años, la proliferación de la educación

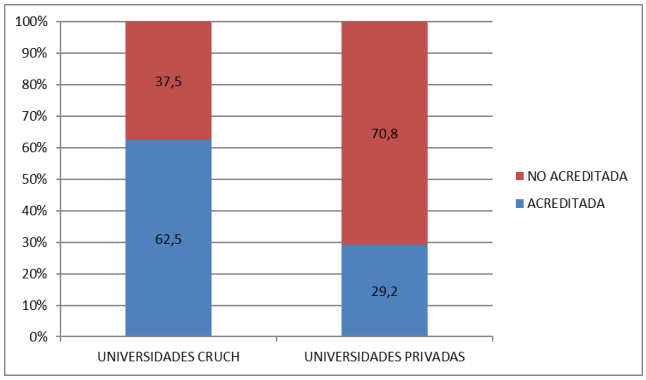
[8] Esta coalición estaba conformada principalmente por la Alianza demócratacristiana y socialista, después del abandono de parte de los socialistas, del marxismo y su orientación de los años Setenta.

[9] A partir de los años Ochenta, las escuelas de servicio social en Chile, comienzan a cuestionar la propia denominación de asistente o servicio social por considerarlo con un peso asistencialista. Por ello, la denominación de trabajo social, además de la influencia de las escuelas norteamericanas, respondía a una visión de la profesión menos asistencialista.

privada avanzó a tal nivel, que superó la oferta entregada por las universidades públicas o del Consejo de rectores (Cruch), sin considerar la reapertura de la histórica escuela de trabajo social de la Universidad de Chile, «dr. Lucio Córdova». En otras palabras, la formación profesional actualmente en el País, la imparten 16 universidades públicas y 24 universidades privadas, con sedes en regiones a lo largo del País, las que en su totalidad ofrecen más de 200 programas de formación. Las mallas curriculares son diversas, y está muy lejos de problematizarse a nivel nacional la dificultad derivada de la excesiva diferenciación de programas de formación universitaria. Hoy se calcula la existencia de más de 10 mil profesionales[10] formados a nivel nacional, y en los próximos años, se incrementará rápidamente en más de 20 mil, lo cual muestra un campo potencialmente importante, de demanda para la formación teórica e investigativa en el área disciplinaria. Actualmente, las vacantes correspondientes a la oferta formativa a nivel superior en trabajo social, para el año 2013, es de aproximadamente 21.000 cupos, incluyendo universidades e institutos de formación profesional. La calidad de estos programas son evaluados por agencias de acreditación, lo cual permite afirmar que las escuelas de trabajo social pertenecientes a una universidad pública, se encuentran acreditadas en mayor cantidad que las escuelas de universidades privadas. El Gráfico 2 lo expresa.

[10] El Colegio de asistentes sociales de Chile cuenta a la fecha con 10.000 colegiados desde su creación (El 11 de octubre de 1955 se publica en el Diario oficial la ley n.11934 que crea el Colegio de asistentes sociales de Chile).

Gráfico 2 - Escuelas de trabajo social acreditadas en Chile



Fuente: Documento interno Universidad de Chile, basado en datos de la Comisión nacional de acreditación Chile, 2013.

Además del aumento de instituciones que imparten la formación inicial o de grado en trabajo social, desde la década de 2000, se inicia en el País la formación de postgrado, especialmente a nivel de magíster en trabajo social, asociado al proceso de expansión de la oferta educacional que ya hemos mencionado. Lo anterior se vincula también a la expansión de espacios de desempeño profesional en instituciones del estado, tercer sector (Ongs, Fundaciones sin fines de lucro, etc.) y empresas.

Dicho escenario, sin embargo, no se condice con la escasa disponibilidad o acceso a espacios de formación académica de postgrado ofrecidos en Chile desde 1990 a esta parte. Actualmente existen 10 instancias para la formación académica de postgrado en el País que apuntan a reflexionar acerca de temáticas o áreas vinculadas a la profesión, es decir, desde un énfasis profesionalizante. Esto, en relación a la preponderancia que dicho énfasis ha tenido en las últimas décadas con el fin de articular formación y empleabilidad.

La oferta se orienta a mejorar competencias en temáticas específicas, como en superación de la pobreza, intervención social en drogas, familia, jóvenes, adultos mayores, mujeres, en comunidades, con énfasis en intercultutalidad, gestión, medicación, etc., pero ninguna estableciendo los puentes con un desarrollo reflexivo y riguroso desde un debate disciplinario del trabajo social para con esas temáticas. Ello como un campo de reflexión, en donde se observe la capacidad de

articular conocimiento con líneas de acción en la perspectiva de que trabajo social no se constituya en un mero ejecutor o «técnico» de lo que plantean los diseñadores de políticas.

4. Palabras finales

Hasta aquí lo que hemos relatado ha sido el devenir de la formación profesional en Chile, primer País en América latina, en aceptar y definir un área específica de formación profesional. Dicho devenir no estuvo ajeno a las influencias políticas y sociales desarrolladas a nivel nacional durante el siglo XX-XXI. En este sentido, la profesión siguió los vaivenes y desafíos puestos por los gobiernos y por el movimiento social de cada época.

Sin embargo, la actualidad en relación al desarrollo económico, político y social chileno, pone al trabajo social y al énfasis de formación que ofrecen la diversidad de escuelas a nivel País, en una disyuntiva que se divide en mantenerse en el horizonte hasta ahora heredado de la dictadura o avanzar y profundizar las demandas del movimiento social que ha levantado a partir del 2011, una agenda social que exige, por ejemplo en el área de educación, el recobrarla como un derecho social, y fuera de la lógica del lucro.

En definitiva, hoy la urgencia del debate al interior de la formación profesional en Chile se impone también por la urgencia de trasformar y avanzar hacia una estructura social más igualitaria en lo económico, social, político y cultural que exigen sectores sociales como los estudiantes, mapuches, trabajadores, pescadores, mujeres, etc. que en los últimos tres años han tenido la claridad y fuerza para decir que el experimento neoliberal en Chile, fue un fracaso. Las escuelas de trabajo social en Chile, por lo tanto, deberán ponerse a tono con los nuevos tiempos a través de una formación que permita a sus estudiantes y futuros profesionales posicionarse reflexivamente y a favor de cambios estructurales de la sociedad en su conjunto frente a este nuevo escenario social.

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10. Educación, producción de conocimiento y trabajo profesional en Costa Rica

Maria Lorena Molina[*]

Index

Introducción; 1. Breve esbozo de las mediaciones históricas constituyentes del trabajo social en la particularidad costarricense; 2. La formación profesional en trabajo social en la Universidad de Costa Rica; 3. La producción de conocimiento en la escuela de trabajo social; 4. El trabajo profesional social en el terreno de la ejecución y gestión de la política social; 5. Consideraciones finales; Referencias bibliográficas

Palabras clave

Trabajo social; educación universitaria; ejercicio profesional

Introducción

Este ensayointenta colocar la comprensión del trabajo social en los procesos histórico-sociales en Costa Rica[1], procesos que configuran una sociedad cuyas condiciones económicas sociales y políticas

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[1] Costa Rica se ubica en Centroamérica. La conformación del estado nacional y la visión de los liberales del siglo XIX colocaron la educación como una importante acción de impulso estatal desde la época republicana. Las luchas sociales del siglo XX hicieron un terreno fecundo para construir un proyecto de sociedad democrático-burguesa, que progresivamente desarrolla una importante política social de protección al trabajo e inversión social. La abolición del ejército – desde 1948 – es quizás, uno de los rasgos singulares que permitió una expansión de la política social mediadora de la cuestión social de la época y que requirió de profesionales, de allí la creación de la Universidad de Costa Rica con un perfil de formación de profesionales requeridos por el estado, entre ellos: trabajo social.

corresponden con la reproducción del capitalismo monopólico periférico y dependiente. Tales procesos explican el origen de la profesión denominada servicio social, como se le llamó durante las primeras tres décadas de su desarrollo (1942-1972) en el caso costarricense.

El eje del texto que aquí se presenta refiere al trabajo social en sus tres dimensiones constitutivas: la formación profesional de carácter universitario, la producción de conocimiento y el trabajo profesional en el ámbito de la ejecución-gestión de la política social.

1. Breve esbozo de las mediaciones históricas constituyentes del trabajo social en la particularidad costarricense

La comprensión del trabajo social en Costa Rica situada en la historia del País nos conduce a comprender los procesos socio-políticos del estado liberal y del estado interventor en la particularidad costarricense y los rasgos que adquiere la reproducción del capitalismo en la periferia latinoamericana y su singularidad local. Esto supone comprender las características de la política social en tres grandes períodos.

El primero corresponde con las acciones preventivo-reguladoras del estado liberal del siglo XIX y primeras tres décadas del siglo XX que coexistieron con proto-formasde ayuda social – por tanto no de carácter profesional – sino expresiones caritativo-filantrópicas ligadas a la iglesia católica y a sus congregaciones de religiosas, así como a las acciones organizadas por la élite económica criolla.

La Costa Rica el siglo XIX (Molina, 1991: 181-236) está inserta en una dinámica de producción agro-exportadora, por un lado, del café en manos de la oligarquía nacional cafetalera y sus vínculos comerciales culturales con Europa y por otra parte, el enclave del banano de capital norteamericano. Ambas actividades productivas insertas en la dinámica mundial del capitalismo fabril-industrial. La diferenciación social estará determinada especialmente por la vinculación con estas relaciones económicas capitalistas y por la explotación de la tierra en sus formas pre-capitalistas (aparcerías, esquilmo, entre otras). Así entonces tenemos los capitalistas de la producción del café y su

exportación; los peones de las tierras cafetaleras; los obreros agrícolas bananeros; los artesanos del campo y la ciudad (zapateros; los funcionarios públicos y algunos profesionales graduados en la Universidad Santo Tomás – farmacéuticos, abogados, agrónomos), además de los y las maestras de la escuela normal (1915).

El estado liberal costarricense (Vargas,1992) en el siglo XIX-XX actúa con sus rasgos típicos – no interventores – en las relaciones económico-sociales, marca algunos matices importantes que lo diferencian de la región centroamericana. El impulso de la educación primaria gratuita y obligatoria desde el siglo XIX y luego, mediante la ley fundamental de educación y la reforma de educación secundaria (1957/1963) de da la progresiva y sostenida ampliación del acceso a la educación primaria y secundaria. La educación superior bajo la Universidad Santo Tomás queda suspendida con el cierre de ésta a fines el siglo XIX y no será sino hasta los años Cuarenta del siglo XX cuando se da la apertura de la Universidad de Costa Rica (Ucr).

En materia de salud la atención institucional (Viales, 2005: 84-85), estuvo fuera del ámbito de las acciones del estado liberal, pues es la Junta de protección social – como análoga a la Charity organization social inglesa y norteamericana – la que asumirá la apertura y administración de hospitales y cementerios a cargo de los llamados «filántropos de la oligarquía cafetalera» y de organizaciones religiosas.

El segundo período – a partir de los años cuareta del siglo XX – caracterizado por la génesis del estado interventor en la economía y en lo social da origen a de un conjunto de instituciones que durante casi cuatro décadas expresarán una política social de vocación ampliada con tendencias universalistas. Son los llamados *años dorados* del capitalismo monopólico internacional y para el caso de Costa Rica (siguiendo a Molina, Palmer, 2011: 119-144) – la llamada «edad de oro de la clase media». El patrón de producción sustentado buscó superar las debilidades de la agro-exportación, impulsando la llamada «sustitución de importaciones» inscritas en un patrón de producción industrial, «etiquetado y acabado final» (como le llamó el sociológo centroamericanao Edelberto Torres Rivas en los años sesenta), que ilustra el carácter dependiente de las economías locales con respecto a la expansión de las multinacionales. Estos procesos conllevaron las expresiones de la cuestión social del naciente proletariado industrial.

En este período se origina y desarrolla la profesión de trabajo social (Molina, 2012).

Apoyada en la tesis de licenciatura de la autora de este artículo elaborada con otras (Campos *et al*., 1977; Esquivel, 2007), indicamos que la atención en el campo de la educación se fortalece a cargo del estado con la creación de la Universidad de Costa Rica (1940) y la progresiva apertura de centros de educación secundaria y primaria. En materia de la salud, en los años cuarenta y siguientes será uno de los principales ámbitos de competencia estatal junto con las bases de la seguridad social (Molina, Palmer, 2011: 99-119). Esto se materializa con la creación de la Caja costarricense de seguridad social (Ccss), y por consiguiente: los seguros de enfermedad, maternidad, vejez y muerte se hacen posible mediante un pacto interclasista de financiamiento tripartito (estado, empresario y trabajador). Además, el Código de trabajo promulgado a inicios de los años cuarenta, fortalece las competencias asumidas por el estado a mediados de los años veinte en la Sub-secretaría de trabajo; la Dirección general de bienestar social adscrita al Ministerio de trabajo creado en los años Cuarenta fue parte de este proceso. Tal pacto inter-clasista será el resultado de luchas, concesiones-conquistas de los intereses del trabajo expresados en movimientos obreros y de artesanos aglutinados en el Partido comunista, junto con las posiciones del presidente Calderón Guardia (médico graduado en Bélgica), quien toma distancia de los intereses de la oligarquía cafetalera que representa y se alía a la alta dirigencia de la iglesia católica para defender las llamadas «garantías sociales» o derechos económicos y sociales consignados en la Constitución política de 1949.

La política social en este segundo período, se configura con mayor claridad en sus rasgos, luego de la guerra civil de 1948, (Molina, Palmer, 2011: 119-145). El acceso al gobierno nacional de las fracciones políticas, principalmente los llamados «grupos de clase media» vinculados a los intereses económicos industriales, pensamiento social demócrata y con una visión superadora de las clásicas funciones reguladoras del estado liberal. Todo ello, dio paso al impulso de un proyecto de desarrollo social amplio, unido a una decisión singular como fue la abolición del ejército. Las funciones interventoras en las relaciones económicas y sociales marcan la

creación de una institucionalidad que se ocupará de la gestión de la política social.

Es en este período donde corresponde colocar el origen y desarrollo como profesión del servicio social[2]. Las características de la lógica del proceso económico capitalista inserto en la lógica monopólica, la mayor diferenciación social y las demandas sociales al estado (obreros industriales, campesinos desposeídos de tierras rurales, desempleados migrantes en la ciudad que presionan por empleo, acceso al a la vivienda, alimentación, servicios de la salud entre otros) y los intereses capitalistas, presionados a compartir los costos de la reproducción de la fuerza de trabajo, conllevala ampliación de las funciones del estado para responder a lasmanifestaciones de la cuestión social en los años Cincuenta y Sesenta. Se amplía significativamente la institucionalidad pública[3] y con ello la necesidad de profesionales en para asumir funciones en el aparto estatal. El tercer período caracterizado por la dinámica de la lógica del capital en período de crisis de acumulación de los años setenta y las estrategias neoliberales de reducción de las competencias del estado en detrimento de los intereses de la clase que vive del trabajo.

Este período está inserto en la dinámica de las transformaciones en el patrón de producción y el mundo del trabajo en las relaciones capitalistas en la fase monopolista-imperialista o del capitalismo globalizado o imperialista. Tal dinámica adquiere sus particularidades en los Países en materia de agudización de las manifestaciones de la cuestión social signadas por la desigualdad social y sus expresiones en

[2] Compartimos la tesis sustentada por I. Iamamoto (1986); para explicar el origen de la profesión desde el capitalismo monopólico y su requerimiento de un estado interventor en la vida social y la política social como mecanismo para mediar las expresiones de la cuestión social y los intereses del capital. Otros autores son: Netto (1995), Martinelli (1995). Dicha tesis niega la comprensión evolucionista para ser superada desde la comprensión histórico materialista. Los tres libros referenciados en la bibliografía de este artículo, más la extensa obra de dichas autoras y autor dan cuenta de esta tesis.

[3] Por ejemplo: Instituto nacional de vivienda y urbanismo (1957), Instituto de tierras y colonización (1961), Dirección nacional de desarrollo de la comunidad (1967), Instituto mixto de ayuda social (1971), Fondo de desarrollo social y asignaciones familiares, Universidad nacional, Instituto tecnológico, Banco hipotecario de vivienda (1986).

el desempleo, la pobreza; y por una política social que gradualmente será impactada por la reducción del tamaño del estado; en sus competencias y en el financiamiento. La focalización se colocó como contracara de la universalización, la neo-filantropía como contracara de los derechos económicos y sociales conquistados y la des-profesionalización de la atención de las demandas de la clases que vive del trabajo para ser asumidas porel voluntariado. Todo ello redundará en desafíos para la formación y el trabajo profesional.

2. La formación profesional en trabajo social en la Universidad de Costa Rica

2.1. El origen de la formación profesional

Explicado el contexto socio-histórico constituyente de la necesidad de profesionales en servicio social, pasemos a referir algunos rasgos de la formación profesional.

En Costa Rica se forman profesionales en trabajo social en dos universidades. Una de carácter nacional pública: Universidad de Costa Rica[4] y en dos de las universidades privadas[5].

La Escuela de trabajo social de la Universidad de Costa Rica surge por iniciativa de abogados del ámbito criminalista y médicos que

[4] Además de la Universidad de Costa Rica forman parte del sistema de educación universitaria pública: la Universidad nacional creada en 1978, la Universidad educación a distancia y el Instituto tecnológico de Costa Rica. Estas cuatro entidades se articulan en una estructura denominada Consejo nacional de rectores que toma decisiones en materia de lineamientos y coordinación interuniversitaria para la educación universitaria pública. Para el año 2009 comparten el 1.05% del Pib para su financiamiento. Estas instituciones tiene autonomía académica y de gobierno. En materia de orientación de planes de estudio, proyectos de investigación y de acción social tiene plena autonomía. Reciben el financiamiento estatal y cumplen con las disposiciones legales-administrativas en el manejo del los fondos públicos. Sus autoridades son electas mediante votación de la comunidad académica y representación estudiantil y en algunos casos representación del personal administrativo.

[5] Existen cerca de 60 universidades privadas reguladas por el Consejo de educación superior privada.

impulsan la creación de una escuela privada con fines públicos, para el adiestramiento de quienes realizan funciones sociales en el aparato institucional del viejo estado liberal. Fue fundada en 1942 (Campos *et al*., 1977) y fue su director Héctor Beeche. Sin embargo, el proyecto de fundamentar la formación profesional en el campo criminológico impulsado por Beeche, no se tornó hegemónico, sino que la perspectiva de sus fundadores – en tanto representantes de instituciones públicas del campo de la salud, del trabajo, de la atención de la familia y de la infancia – dio lugar a una formación más abarcativa. Todo ello en esa transición de un estado liberal con más acento en lo coativo legal, hacia un estado que se perfilaba con tendencia a intervenir en la vida social. En 1944, la recién creada Escuela de servicio social pasó a formar parte de la Ucr.

Se otorgaba el título de trabajador social desde 1947 hasta 1972, año cuando conquista el rango de escuela anexa de la Facultad de ciencias económicas. En ese entonces y a partir de 1955 hasta 1963, al cursarse 4 años de estudios (los estudios generales o humanidades aprobados en la Ucr en el contexto de la reforma universitaria de 1957, se otorgaba el título de licenciado en ciencias económicas con especialidad en servicio social. Una vez que se eliminan las materias obligatorias de la rama de las ciencias económicas y se aprueba un currículo propio se otorgó el título de licenciatura en servicio social.

El proyecto de formación y de identidad profesional, durante estas primeras tres décadas de construcción, de acuerdo con las investigaciones realizadas (Campos *et al*., 1977; Esquivel, 2007) se argumenta que los planes de estudio estuvieron inscritos en la influencia determinante de las concepciones del trabajo social norteamericano[6]. Desde 1949 hasta 1972 fue director Francisco Herrera cura costarricense graduado como máster en trabajo social en la Catholic university of America.

[6] Para el año 1960 se realiza en Costa Rica el *IV Congreso panamericano de servicio social* auspiciado por la Organizazción de estados americanos (Oea) y en 1964 un delegado enviado desde las Naciones Unidas hace una evaluación de la escuela.

2.2. La formación profesional y la intención de ruptura con el social work

La ruptura más significativa (Molina, 2007) con las influencias del trabajo social norteamericano en cuanto a la orientación y concepción de la razón de ser de la profesión se gestará al calor del debate del Movimiento de reconceptualización[7], sus marchas, y contramarchas se expresarán con nitidez en la formación profesional en el currículo 1973; currículo 1976; currículo 1981[8].

El desarrollo de la escuela en este período corresponde con el origen y desarrollo del estado benefactor y su sostenida ampliación de la política social. Para estos años la Escuela pasó a formar parte del recién creada Facultad de ciencias sociales (1972) y a ser consistente con los fundamentos y principios de la Universidad de Costa Rica, acordados en el III congreso universitario referidos a posiciones críticas y comprometidas con las transformaciones que la sociedad costarricense requiera. Los años entre 1982-1990 serán años de contramarchas en las visiones críticas y de debates de tendencias sobre las concepciones de la profesión y la formación profesional que serán retomadas y profundizadas en el debate académico en el Proyecto educativo institucional 2004.

[7] Aunque hayan referencias reiteradas en la bibliografía producida en el Cono Sur p. e. Grupo Ecro (1971) que en su crónica del congreso 1971 (Ecuador) menciona que no existían expresiones del movimiento más allá del Cono Sur. La afirmación expresa absoluto desconocimiento de lo que ocurría en otros contextos, pues en el mismo texto se evidencia la sorpresa de la existencia de un debate más radical existente en Países andinos. La investigación de Manuel Villalobos (2013) para obtener el grado de licenciatura dará cuenta de este proceso para el caso de Costa Rica.

[8] Cabe mencionar que en 1975 la Escuela de trabajo social (Ets) de la Ucr impulsa un proyecto curricular piloto en la sede regional de occidente de la misma universidad con rasgos absolutamente innovadores, centrado en el taller como método pedagógico integrador de teoría y práctica; investigación, docencia y acción social y los intereses de estudiantes-docentes, sectores populares. La participación de docentes chilenos y argentinos, salvadoreños en el exilio junto con las docentes costarricenses fue potenciada y replicada con singularidades en la sede central a partir de 1976. La experiencia continuará desarrollándose en dicha sede regional con las modificaciones curriculares que el propio equipo docente le imprime hasta crear una oferta curricular relativamente independiente de la carrera del la sede central hasta la actualidad.

2.3. La actual formación profesional de nivel de grado

La Carrera de trabajo social fue acreditada (Molina, Ruiz, 2001) en el año 2001 y re-acreditada en el año 2006 hasta el año 2014 por el Sistema nacional de acreditación de la educación superior (Sinaes)[9].

En la actualidad la misión de la escuela de trabajo social reza así: «ofrecer a las y los estudiantes una sólida formación académica sustentada en un proyecto educativo científico, innovador, ético y político que, mediante la docencia, la investigación y la acción social, les permita comprender e intervenir ante las múltiples expresiones de las desigualdades sociales, desde un posicionamiento crítico y comprometido con el respeto de los derechos humanos y el mejoramiento en las condiciones de vida de las poblaciones trabajadoras en situaciones de pobreza, explotación y exclusión social» (Escuela de trabajo social, 2006: 3).

Según la misma referencia indicada, la visión de la Escuela de trabajo social refiere aaspirar a «una unidad académica formadora de profesionales comprometidos con los procesos de construcción de una sociedad solidaria, equitativa y justa, garante de una vida digna para las poblaciones sujetas de su quehacer profesional, mediante intervenciones de calidad y el fortalecimiento de los servicios sociales, en el ámbito público y privado» (*Ivi*: 3).

2.4. Los fundamentos ético-políticos y los valores que sustentan la formación profesional

En correspondencia con los principios de la Universidad, la Escuela de trabajo social ha establecido en su *Plan de desarrollo estratégico 2006-2010* valores. Dichos valores son coherentes con los fundamentos críticos de la profesión en América Latina y dan soporte a una formación de un profesional intelectual comprometido social y políticamente con el fortalecimiento de la democracia y el horizonte de la realización plena de los derechos humanos en todas sus dimensiones.

[9] Me refiero a la sede central de la Ucr Rodrigo Facio, ubicada en la capital del País.

Por lo tanto, comprometidos con la justicia social con libertad como valores conquistados en la modernidad, pero aún universales desde el punto de vista de los derechos de la ciudadanía. Dichos valores explicitados en el currículo 2004 vigente son los siguientes:

«a) excelencia académica: concebida como una filosofía del ser y hacer académico. Se sustenta en rigurosos fundamentos ontológicos, epistemológicos, teóricos y metodológicos, así como en posicionamientos ético políticos que sean coherentes, y por ende, visibles en las prácticas y actitudes cotidianas de las y los miembros de la comunidad académica. Se apoya en criterios de calidad, eficiencia, eficacia y mejoramiento continuo. Lo cual supone una gestión que enriquece académicamente a la Escuela y a la Universidad en general y que, a su vez, está en sintonía con las necesidades y problemas emergentes del entorno social;

b) solidaridad y compromiso social: todos los sectores sociales serán de interés para el quehacer de la Escuela de trabajo social; sin embargo, priorizaremos nuestra gestión hacia aquellos sectores cuyas condiciones de vida y de trabajo generan situaciones violatorias al pleno disfrute de sus derechos. Para lograrlo, construiremos conocimiento y acciones comprometidas con las realidades, necesidades, intereses y desafíos de estos actores sociales, desde una posición de promoción, defensa y exigibilidad de los derechos humanos, en pro de la equidad y la justicia social;

c) ampliación de la democracia: parte de la construcción de procesos de participación crítica donde docentes, estudiantes y administrativos son considerados como sujetos que ejercen sus derechos y asumen sus responsabilidades. También, supone ir más allá de los límites de la comunidad universitaria para convertirse en promotor y defensor de los derechos civiles, políticos, económicos, sociales, culturales y ambientales, apoyando de esta forma los procesos de construcción de una democracia inclusiva;

d) aceptación de la diversidad humana parte de la no discriminación de personas por su condición de género, edad, etnia, preferencia sexual, opción política y religiosa, pero la trasciende. Implica valorar y aceptar lo diferente, lo heterogéneo, lo múltiple, concibiéndolo como posibilidad, no como obstáculo, para la construcción e implementación de propuestas integrales dirigidas a diversos grupos sociales;

e) autonomía universitaria: la universidad y la unidad académica poseen independencia para expresarse y actuar de forma crítica, en consecuencia con las disposiciones del estatuto orgánico de la Universidad de Costa Rica y las reglamentaciones correspondientes».

El programa académico en el nivel de grado condensado en el Currículo 2004 es el resultado de periódicas evaluaciones curriculares (Molina, Ruiz, 2001) insertas en la dinámicas de los procesos de autoevaluación para la acreditación[10]. Esto conlleva consultas en primer término con los y las estudiantes, docentes, empleadores acerca del perfil general de la formación. Estos procesos a su vez implican la confrontación, con la realidad social – en términos de las expresiones problematizantes de las condiciones de vida de la población que evidencian no realizaciòn de los derechos humano/sociales – y por otra parte, con la direccionalidad de la política social, que media tales situaciones problematizantes desde los programas sociales gubernamentales y no gubernamentales. Todo ello permite la comprensión de las tendencias y escenarios del mercado laboral de los y las futuras profesionales, así como los desafíos sociales y éticos que la profesión tiene. Un tercer ámbito de análisis refiere a confrontar los temas contenidos en las asignaturas del plan de estudio con los desarrollos del conocimiento en el campo del trabajo social, la teorìa social, la filosofía y disciplinas afines y su expresiòn en los programas de los cursos o asignaturas del plan de estudio.

En general, asumir la formaciòn profesional con un perfil crítico històrico y una direccionalidad tendiente a la transformación, consecuente con los valores – supra citados – y la lectura histórico crítica de la realidad social (cuestión social, movimientos sociales y política social) genera debates confrontativos desde el pensamiento conservador del trabajo social (en el ámbito universitario y extra universitario) y ello es parte del desafìo en una universidad con compromiso social, que no forma solo competencias técnicas sino profesionales intelectuales humanistas con pensamiento cuestionador

[10] Merece destacarse que la Escuela tiene una cultura evaluativa de su quehacer que data desde los años Setenta como registran Molina (1991), Molina y Guzmán (1990).

de los procesos estructurales que se reproducenn en las vidas cotidianas (Molina, Romero, 1998; Molina. Ruiz, 2001).

Las características del perfil profesional indicado seguidamente corresponde con la actualización realizada en la Escuela de trabajo social de la Ucr, según consta en actas del archivo dela sección docencia, agosto 2008. Este perfil dará cuenta de un momento se superaciónde los rasgos de la formación profesional que predominaron en la década de los años noventa, los mismos evidenciaron un relativo retorno hacia los fundamentos teórico metodológicos del clásico trabajo social junto con perspectivas sistémicas (Molina y Ruiz, 2007).

Los aspectos considerados en el perfil general de la formación indica los siguientes:

a) ser humanista, generalista y críticamente propositiva ante los desafíos de la sociedad costarricense históricamente determinados, que fundamenta la competencia profesional en el conjunto de las relaciones sociales y la institucionalidad que conforma el mercado de trabajo;

b) una formación para actuar en las expresiones de la cuestión social, formulando y desarrollando propuestas por medio de políticas públicas, programas, proyectos; proyectos y acciones en la las Organizaciones no gubernamentales (Ongs) y la empresa privada, así como desde las organizaciones de la sociedad civil;

c) una formación que estimula el compromiso con los valores que sustentan la profesión referidos a la protección, defensa, exigibilidad y ampliación de los derechossociales;

d) una formación crítica en correspondencia con las exigencias de la época, a partir del reconocimiento de las transformaciones sociales que determinan la vida de los seres humanos que experimentan la desigualdad social, la pobreza, el debilitamiento de la acción estatal inserta en la lógica del mercado;

e) una formación que asume el desafío de transformar los espacios de trabajo profesional en espacios realmente públicos, ampliando los canales de acceso de la población, permitiendo mayor control por parte de la sociedad en las decisiones que le conciernen. Esto requiere socializar las informaciones, el conocimiento de derechos e intereses en juego, o acceso a las reglas que conducen a la negociación, atribuyendo transparencia y visibilidad de los canales que permiten el acompañamiento y la implementación de las decisiones;

f) una formación que permita la aprehensión crítica de los procesos sociales con una perspectiva de totalidad, así como el análisis de la particularidad del movimiento histórico de la constitución del estado y sus formas de atender la expansión del desarrollo capitalista a partir de procesos investigativos y de la identificación de posibilidades de transformación;

g) una formación con competencia ética, teórico-metodológica y técnico operativa para desempeñarse en el ámbito de la formulación, gestión, ejecución y evaluación de la política social; con competencias para incidir en los proceso de trabajo asistenciales, socio-educativos y terapéuticos en un marco de protección, defensa, promoción, exigibilidad y ampliación de los derechos humanos.

Sobre la base de los valores, el perfil profesional general y su especficidad en la formación por niveles del plan de estudio se estructuran las asignaturas. Dicho plan de estudio vigente desde el año 2004 tiene una duración de cinco años (10 ciclos lectivos de 16 semanas cada uno), con un total de 170 créditos, más la realización de 300 horas de trabajo comunal universitario (obligatorias y adicionales a las horas de las prácticas académicas) Incluye también el diseño y desarrollo de una investigación,la defensa oral y la aprobación de un trabajo final de graduación para obtener el título de licenciatura en trabajo social.

La duración del desarrollo del trabajo final de graduación tiene un promedio de 18 meses y máximo 24 meses (posteriores a los 10 ciclos lectivos).

2.5. Los fundamentos curriculares y sus dimensiones

El plan de estudio está conformado por cinco niveles o años y es transverzado por líneas curriculares, a saber: teoría social; historia, teoría y métodología y práctica; realidad social. Tales líneas curriculares contienen asignaturas o cursos distribuidos en 10 ciclos lectivos. En tales cursos o asignaturas los temas y actividades de aprendizaje deben reproducir los fundamentos que se refractan en las siguientes dimensiones curriculares que dan cuenta de la direccionalidad filosófico, teórica hegemónica en el proceso formativo

pero en un marco de pluralismo del pensamiento (Escuela de trabajo social, 2009). Dichas dimensiones son las siguientes:

a) *dimensión ontológica-ético-politica*. La posición que se tenga en cuanto a la comprensión de la realidad social determina la dimensión ético-política de la formación profesional. Esto coloca el debate acerca de la ética liberal y la ética social humanista arraigada en los derechos humanos, su comprensión político-estratégica asentada en la contradicción: discurso de igualdad jurídica vs desigualdad social real. La formación académica se posiciona en una ética social fundada en el cumplimiento y la exigibilidad de los derechos humanos;

b) *dimensión teórico-metodologica*. Una premisa fundamental es el ser humano social desde la ontología materialista o sea, la comprensión del ser humano social constituido históricamente a partir de la mediación fundamental: el trabajo, que posibilitó el proceso de hominización y con ello el desarrollo de la conciencia, el lenguaje y la teleología de todos sus actos. Proceso que se construye en la mediación que los seres humanos hacen con la naturaleza y otros seres humanos para transformarla produciendo medios de trabajo y medios de vida y con ello, la mutua transformación de los seres humanos en el establecimiento de relaciones sociales consecuentes con las formas de producir bienes materiales y diversas expresiones culturales y de organizarse socialmente. Tales formas de producir y de relaciones sociales han señalado épocas históricas, como la contemporánea signada por el desarrollo del capital;

c) *dimensión técnico operativa*. Esta dimensión como expresión de instrumentos y procedimientos para encarar el objeto de trabajo refiere al manejo conceptual y desarrollo de habilidades técnicas para trabajar con personas, parejas, familias, grupos, organizaciones comunitarias. Así como formular, gestionar y evaluar política social. Esto supone recuperar los desarrollos de los procedimientos metodológicos sistematizados en el transcurso histórico en cuanto a sus aportes técnicos, para colocarlos en una comprensión y manejo consecuente con la aprehensión de los objetos de trabajo profesional en sus determinaciones sociales y desde lo que arroje el proceso de investigación de tal objeto, para decidir el rumbo de la acción, coherente con un a direccionalidad ético-política de viabilización de derechos. Con esto tratamos de subrayar que no es el aprendizaje de

pautas, fases, procedimientos metodológicos según el tamaño del sujeto lo relevante sino que es la realidad y la direccionalidad ético-político lo que determinará la construcción del camino metodológico.

Desde estas dimensiones es fundamental (Molina, 2009; 2012) una concepción de la realidad social como totalidad en autodesarrollo histórico, contradictorio y en transformación; y, desde allí, interesa la aprehensión de las manifestaciones de la cuestión social en perspectiva de la particularidad histórica, inserta en la historia universal contemporánea y su reproducción en las singularidades humano-sociales. Por lo tanto, la formación profesional debe sustentar una comprensión de la práctica pre-profesional desde los procesos de trabajo en los que el o la profesional intervienen.

La aprehensión de los objetos de trabajo profesional contenidos en sujetos-individualizados pero sociales, que perciben su realidad desde la subjetividad son constituidos en una historia familiar en el que los procesos del contexto son fundamentos constitutivos de los procesos investigativos y de la intervención que deben ser destacadas como tales durante la formación profesional (Molina, 2012). La aprehensión de los objetos de trabajo profesional o sea la expresión de la manifestación de la desigualdad social encarnada en sujetos (personas, familias, grupos, localidades) requiere un camino metodológico fundado teóricamente (Molina, Romero, 1999[a b c]). Esto coloca la discusión histórica de orden filosófico-epistemológica sobre el origen del conocimiento y sus posibilidades, el método y las premisas de la relación sujeto-objeto, según corresponda con: el positivismo-neopositivismo; fenomenología y el materialismo dialéctico. Esto conlleva, ubicar la investigación social como parte constitutiva de los procesos de trabajo profesional y en consecuencia estudiar sus fundamentos y procesos según sea la perspectiva onto-epistemológica. Este asunto constituye un gran reto a nivel pedagógico pues es muy acentuada la tendencia de predefinir a modo de protocolos o procedimienntos metodológicos detallados el camino de la investigación de los objetos y de la intervención.

Todo ello reproduce el lastre de la herencia del positivismo, enraizado en los llamados procesos clásicos del *social work* (Usa). Por lo tanto, este asunto es fuente de frecuentes tensiones en la comunidad académica.

2.6. Las prácticas académicas pre-profesionales

Las prácticas académicas constituyen el primer acercamiento de los y las estudiantes al conocimiento de los escenarios laborales de los y las profesionales, tanto desde el punto de vista de las lógicas institucionales, como desde las demandas sociales que la población hace de los diversos servicios sociales. Son por excelencia escenarios de desarrollo de habilidades y actitudes enmarcadas en perspectivas teóricas para la investigación e interpretación de los objetos contenidos en situaciones problematizantes y en la construcción de procesos de intervención; también son escenarios de conocimiento y aprendizajes sobre las formas y procesos de gestión de la política social. Las prácticas pre-profesionales son una de las expresiones de la relación universidad-sociedad.Se desarrollan mediante la modalidad taller[11] (Molina, Romero, 1992) a partir del tercer año de formación profesional. Los ámbitos donde se realizan las prácticas y la naturaleza general de cada una se resume en el Cuadro 1.

Cabe destacar que el primer y segundo nivel del plan de estudios refiere a los cursos iniciales de formación humanista e introductorios a la formación profesional y a disciplinas afines al campo del trabajo social. En estos dos iniciales niveles no se ubican prácticas académicas pre-profesionales supervisadas.

Mediante la realización de las prácticas académicas supervisadas se establecen vìnculos entre la formación y el campo del ejercicio profesional, en tanto que las mismas se desarrollan en los ámbitos institucionales donde la profesiòn es ejercida – sobre lo cual se ejemplifica en en acápites siguientes – y que implican el establecimiento de Cartas de acuerdos e intenciones para explicitar las obligaciones y derechos entre la Ets y cada centro de práctica, de los y las estudiantes practicantes y sus vìnculos con la supervisora docente

[11] La modalidad taller se emplea desde 1976 y básicamente consiste en el proceso pedagógico que a partir de la aprehensión de objetos de la realidad social pertinentes con el trabajo social se desarrolla la triple integración docencia, investigación, acción social; teoría-práctica; estudiantes-docentes-poblaciones meta. Para ampliar el tema puede consultarse Molina y Romero (1994) y Molina (1991).

y la co-supervisora (profesional en trabajo social) que acompaña el proceso de aprendizaje.

La temática y lugares para la selección de los centros de práctica considera expresiones relevantes de la cuestión social y la política social que incide en tales manifestaciones. La mayoría de los centros de práctica se ubican en: salud, seguridad social, asistencia social, violencia social e intrafamiliar y administración de la justicia, gestión local del riesgo ambiental y participación ciudadana.

En el Cuadro 1 se resumen los principales rasgos que caracterizan la práctica pre-profesional, que se inicia en el tercer año del plan de estudio, o sea en el quinto ciclo lectivo.

Cuadro 1 - Escuela de trabajo social, Universidad de Costa Rica. Ámbito y naturaleza de la práctica académica según nivel del plan de estudio 2004

Tercer nivel V y VI ciclos lectivos 16 horas semanales de práctica supervisada	*Ámbito - El espacio local* Interesa conocer e investigar las relaciones y las condiciones económico sociales que configuran el espacio local y su identidad cultural, así como las organizaciones comunitarias existentes que desarrollan proyectos y acciones para enfrentar la vida colectiva cotidiana local y establecen vinculaciones con instituciones públicas para acceder a servicios, activar mecanismos de exigibilidad de derechos ciudadanos
Cuarto nivel VII y VIII ciclos lectivos 16 horas semanales de práctica supervisada	*Ámbito - Instituciones estatales ejecutoras de política Social, Ongs, empresa privada* Interesa conocer los procesos de trabajo profesional e insertarse en ellos para desarrollar competencias en el manejo de las dimensiones de la formación referidas a la singularidad de los sujetos de la acción profesional que son atendidos desde la institucionalidad pública u organizaciones privadas, que corresponde a un sector de la política social
Quinto nivel IX y X ciclos lectivos 12 horas semanales de práctica supervisada	*Ámbito - Sectores de política social para investigar la formulación de la política y la gestión de departamentos, secciones, programas o proyectos* Interesa determinar objetos de transformación para elaborar propuestas de creación, innovación, modificación que responda a desafíos contextuales, demandas institucionales y de las poblaciones meta de los servicios sociales

Fuente: Escuela de trabajo social, Currículo y programas de cursos 2004.

3. La producción de conocimiento en la escuela de trabajo social

La apremiante re-lectura de las condiciones económicas fraguadas en el marco de gobiernos neoliberales conduce en la escuela de trabajo social (Plan de estudio, 2004; Plan de desarrollo estratégico, 2006; Programa institucional de investigación, 2006) a un posicionamiento ético-politico, para priveligiar la producción de conocimiento crítico a partir de núcleos temáticos que condensanen sus objetos de estudio asuntos referentes a las expresiones de la cuestión social, por ejemplo: el no trabajo, el empleo precario y flexibilizado, la pobreza, el debilitamiento de la seguridad social, el deterioro de la salud, el riesgo ambiental ante el uso extensivo y no sustentable del planeta.

Las complejas manifestaciones de la cuestión social se colocaron como norte y son asumidas como desafíos contextuales para el trabajo social costarricense para planificar en forma orgánica y sostenible la labor académica (investigación, docencia y extensión universitaria). La lectura del contexto y las dimensiones significativas para el desempeño de las competencias profesionales del trabajo social costarricense fueron resumidas en términos de núcleos temáticos, a saber: no trabajo; pobreza-exclusión social; violencia social; deterioro de la salud; deterioro ambiental y gestión del riesgo ante desastres provocados por acción humana o factores de la naturaleza; control social y participación ciudadana; ampliación de la democracia.

También se definieron ejes transversales, a saber: derechos humanos, género, discapacidad, fundamentos del trabajo profesional; la reforma del estado y la política social.

Como puede apreciarse estos asuntos de interés para la investigación, la docencia y la extensión universitaria guardan estrecha relación con la temática que ha sido dada a conocer en la llamada Agenda global del trabajo social (2011), acordada por las organizaciones Iassw, Fits, Cibc.

En el Plan de desarrollo estratégico 2006-2011 se plantea la creación progresiva de los núcleos integradores de investigación-docencia y acción social para cada uno de los desafíos contextuales desde donde se gestan los proyectos de investigación-acción social y la docencia. Los núcleos temáticos articulan investigadores, los y las docentes responsables de los cursos afines de grado y posgrado, los y las

estudiantes de los talleres de práctica académica. Además, formarán parte de esta estructura las y los profesionales que se desempeñan en los sectores de la política social según corresponda a cada núcleo.

4. El trabajo profesional social en el terreno de la ejecución y gestión de la política social

En este apartado se hace referencia a la práctica profesional, las atribuciones profesionales y se ilustra conlas tendencias de la política social como mediador clave del trabajo profesional institucional. La mayor parte de los y las profesionales se ubican en instituciones y empresas estatales. En segundo lugar una proporción menor en organizaciones no gubernamentales que se ocupan de poblaciones específicas relacionadas con con programas de atención a refugiados, adultos mayores, niños y niñas en riesgo social, tráfico de mujeres para la explotación sexual comercial, entre otras. En tercer lugar los escenarios laborales se ubican en empresas privadas (transnacionales comercializadoras de banano; empresas nacionales productoras de bebidas).

4.1. Los escenarios laborales y sus determinantes históricos

Las características del estado costarricense especialmente en las décadas comprendidas entre los años Cuarenta y Setenta del siglo XX marcan una tendencia de crecimiento sostenido en la formulación de una política social inclusiva y ello dio lugar a la creación de espacios de trabajo para las profesionales en condición de asalariadas, especialmente en el sector público. Así las cosas, el ejercicio profesional ha estado inserto – entre los años Cincuenta, Sesenta y Setenta del siglo XX – en el entretejido de las mediaciones del estado benefactor, las cuales fueron determinantes en la ampliación de la política social, así como sobre el desarrollo ampliado de campos institucionales para el ejercicio de la profesión (Molina, Palmer, 2011: 119-144).

La lógica reformista, social demócrata que hegemonizó los gobiernos de esa época (con relativa alternacia con gobiernos social cristianos) marcó una expectativa de ampliación de derechos sociales y una oferta de servicios sociales estatates públicos para la clase trabajadora, que en algunos casos tendieron a ser universales (salud, infraestructura sanitaria, seguridad social, educación primaria y secundaria entre otros y los servicios de asistencia social focalizados según estratos de la población en situación de pobreza.

Toda esta lógica de ampliación de las funciones del estado y su expresión en la política social es entendida desde la comprensión del auge del capitalismo monopólico en los Países centrales y sus vínculos con los Países subdesarrollados o periféricos – como es Costa Rica – y las estrategias necesarias para manejar la conflictividad social.

En las décadas de los años Ochenta, Noventa, y lo que va del siglo XXI (Molina, 2009; 2012), los procesos que repercuten en el ejercio laboral remiten a la crisis estructural del capitalismo central y su estrategia neoliberal para recuperar la ganancia y acumulación del capital. Esto colocó al estado benefactor como uno de los objetos de la crítica por considerarse fuente de gasto social excesivo y de deficit fiscal, así como de paternalismo. Se gestó y desarrolló otro patrón de producción (en el que el desempleo es una forma de disminuir costos a las empresas), la privatización de empresas públicas rentables escondido en el discursos de la descentralización y de la reconformación y disminución de las funciones del estado benefactor. La politica social pasó a estar atravezada por reducción presupuestaria, traslado de funciones mediante las estrategias de la tercerización, la neofilantropía y el voluntariado. Acompañando esto las modalidades de flexibilidad laboral o mejor dicho embate a los derechos laborales. En síntesis lo que fue reforma social desde los años Cuarenta del siglo XX fue objeto de ataques, se orquestan procesos de contra-reforma para minimizar la acción estatal hacia los interses de la clase trabajadora. Son estos procesos los que actualmente van dando singularidad al ejercico profesional y sus competencias/funciones respectivas. Tal ejercicio es tensado o no en cada profesional, según sean los márgenes y fundamentos de su autonomía relativa profesional (conocimiento, técnica, posición ético-política) que ofrecen resistencia y visión

estratégica o simplimente se conforman y asumen la ética y direccionalidad neoliberal.

En años más recientes – la década del Noventa en concordancia con la estrategia de disminuir la intervención del estado, también se encuentran escenarios laborales en organizaciones no gubernamentales y en empresas privadas. Con mínima expresión se aprecia el ejercicio liberal de la profesión. Coherente con la lógica neoliberal y su embate a los derechos laborales y al empleo estable se comienza a apreciar la contratación de profesionales por plazo fijo o sea, mediante contrato de servicios profesionales que no asumen los costos de la seguridad social, lo cual es coherente con dicha lógica, – pero no aceptable porque implica no protección del trabajo con seguridad social. Todo esto forma parte de la estrategia de flexibilización laboral de (contra) reforma del estado.

Actualmente, la política social tiende a ser restrictiva en términos de ampliación de cobertura, pues la estrategia de la focalización y el traslado de competencias otrora estatales a la sociedad civil por la vía de la privatización o neo-filantropía, coherentes con la estrategia neoliberal, han adquirido importancia creciente, sin que esto signifique que el estado no sea aún protagónico en ejecución de política social. Se observa una reducción relativa de la inversión social y cobertura en educación, salud, asistencia social, pero por otra parte, hay una significativa legislación aprobada, pero sin suficiente claridad del respaldo financiero para su cumpliminto en el último quinquenio de los años Noventa, que coloca la protección de derechos de grupos específicos. Por ejemplo: Código de la niñez y la adolescencia, ley de la juventud, la ley de la igualdad real de la mujer, la ley contra la violencia doméstica, la ley de penalización de la violencia doméstica, la ley penal juvenil, la ley contra el acoso laboral y académico, la ley de igualdad para la población en situación de discapacidad, la ley del adulto mayor, la ley nacional de atención a las emergencias y los fallos de la Sala constitucional del poder judicial sobre el derecho a los retro-virales para la población Vih-Sida, entre otras leyes.

4.2. Las competencias profesionales generales y algunos desafíos

La mayoría de las y los profesionales se desempeñan (Molina, Sáenz, 1994) en el sector público especialmente en salud, seguridad social y educación. Otros escenarios son: administración de la justicia, asistencia social, protección de la familia, la infancia y adolescencia, adultos mayores, protección de derechos de mujeres víctimas de violencia; gestión local municipal, entre otros.

En la actualidad hay casi 1800 profesionales registradas en el Colegio de trabajadores sociales (2013).

En correspondencia con los estudios, indagaciones y las consideraciones de la Comisión pro reforma de la ley del Colegio de trabajadores sociales (2008: 11-12) interesa anotar las competencias profesionales actualizadas, porque son la síntesis de un debate colectivo y participativo sostenido durante los últimos años.

Tales competencias profesionales de los y las trabajadoras sociales (Rojas *et al.*, 2008) se realizan según la perspectiva crítica desde el horizonte de la protección, defensa, promoción y exigibilidad de los derechos humanos. Corresponden con las funciones que se desarrollan con las particularidades del caso, según sea la naturaleza de los objetos de trabajo profesional delimitados en cada institución en consonancia con el marco legal y sus mediaciones politicas y financieras.

Las atribuciones profesionales que las y los trabajadores sociales desarrollan en el ámbito de la ejecución, la gestión y la evaluación de la política social – re-elaboradas en el seno de la Comisión de reforma de la ley profesional del Colegio de trabajadores sociales de Costa Rica (Rojas *et al.*, 2008) son las siguientes: «a) elaboración de estudios sociales, socio-económicos, socio-criminológicos, victimológicos, socio-ambientales, organizacionales, comunales, de vida y costumbres; b) peritajes y dictámenes sociales comunales, grupales, familiares e individuales; c) investigación de condiciones y situaciones sociales de diferentes sectores de población; d) asistencia social, bienes, servicios e información con sujetos individuales o colectivos que en condiciones de exclusión social o situaciones contingenciales por efectos de fenómenos naturales que provocan desastres; e) promoción de la participación social para el ejercicio de la ciudadanía; f) procesos organizativos y de capacitación; g) procesos socio-educativos; h)

mediación grupal, familiar, intra-institucional, interinstitucional y comunitaria; i) resolución alternativa de conflictos; j) intervención en crisis; k) atención terapéutica individual, de pareja, grupal y familiar; l) supervisión de procesos de trabajo social; m) formulación de políticas, planes, programas, proyectos y servicios sociales; n) gestión y administración de políticas, planes, programas, proyectos y servicios sociales; o) evaluación de políticas, planes, programas, proyectos y servicios sociales».

Algunos ejemplos sobre la institucionalidad y los campos temáticos de la política social costarricense, en los que se desarrolla el ejercicio profesional, o sea, donde las atribuciones profesionales adquieren singularidades, consonantes con la naturaleza de los objetos de trabajo y las mediaciones político-legales e institucionales son:

a) en el sistema judicial y la institucionalidad pública (Poder judicial) implicada en el campo socio-jurídico son importantes escenarios del ejercicio laboral de las y los profesionales en trabajo social. Las atribuciones profesionales adquieren especificidades referentes a los procesos que atañen a la protección y defensa de derechos en los programas que se ocupan de la justicia penal juvenil y de adultos, la violencia intrafamiliar sea física, psicológica, patrimonial, sexual, la protección de la víctima, los conflictos intrafamiliares ante disputas entre padres sobre el ejercicio de la patria potestad de los hijos, etc.;

b) en instituciones públicas del gobierno central e instituciones descentralizadas, así como en organizaciones no gubernamentales, los campos temáticos del ejercicio de la profesión refieren a la protección de los derechos civiles, políticos y económico sociales de la infancia, la adolescencia, las y los adultos mayores, la mujer, los sujetos con discapacidades, según género, edad, condición migratoria, diversidad sexual y étnica, entre otros.

La protección, promoción y defensa de los derechos al trabajo, la salud, la vivienda digna, la alimentación, la educación, la seguridad social y la asistencia social, para citar algunos, tiene centralidad en instituciones públicas como por ejemplo la Caja costarricense de la seguridad social, el Instituto mixto de ayuda social, el Ministerio de educación, el Ministerio de trabajo y seguridad social, el Ministerio de vivienda y asentamientos humanos, el Ministerio de salud, el Patronato

nacional de la infancia, el Fondo de desarrollo social y asignaciones familiares, el Fondo nacional de becas, entre otros.

4.3. La regulación del trabajo profesional y el desafío de la actualización de la ley

Mediante la ley n.3943 del 29 de noviembre de 1967, conocida como *ley orgánica del Colegio de trabajadores sociales*[12], se ejerce la regulación del ejercicio profesional. El otro fundamento regulatorio del trabajo profesional lo constituye el Código de ética cuya última reforma data del 25 de septiembre de 1998. Conviene destacar que la ley mencionada requiere ser actualizada para colocar la comprensión de la profesión y sus mecanismos regulatorios de cara a los desafìos actuales, que derivan de un modelo de desarrolllo que ha acentuado la desigualdad social y ha retrocedido en procesos de universalización de acceso a servicios sociales y bienes públicos para garantizar el ejercicio de los derechos ciudadanos.

También se coloca como desafío desde el desempeño de las atribuciones profesionales conformar círculos de debate profesional que tengan como objeto los contenidos, estrategias, direccionalidad y presupuestos de los programas que conforman la política social del País. La mayor presencia pública para evidenciar la direccionalidad de la política social y todas las amenazas para avanzar hacia la universalización de los derechos humanos constituye una responsabilidad ética.

5. Consideraciones finales

La perspectiva que la autora ha sustentado en este artículo es consonante con los desarrollos teóricos que desde el trabajo social latinoamericano se han construido: la comprensión histórico-crítica.

[12] La ley del ejercicio profesional ha sido colocada en diversos momentos como objeto de debate para sus reformas y actualización. El último proceso se inició en el año 2006 por acuerdo de asamblea del colegio.

Por ello, puede derivarse de la lectura del presente texto que para comprender el origen del trabajo social en Costa Rica queda superarado el enfoque evolutivo de la profesión.

Esta comprensión crítica es entendida desde ello y meollo que la explica, esto es la relación existente entre la política social como una de las formas de mediación que el estado benefactor hace de la contradicción principal de la sociedad capitalista. De manera que se entiende que la política social se fragua en los procesos de negociación-conseción-conquista en los que actores políticos y civiles defienden sus interesesy de ello resultan acciones u omisiones para encarar las diversas expresiones de la cuestión social.

Esta lógica devastadora del capitalismo acentuó el desempleo, la pobreza, la violencia, la depredación de la naturaleza, redujo la calidad y cantidad de los servicos sociales. A su vez se constituyó en terreno fértil para el resurgimiento del pensamiento crítico-histório materialista, un tanto denostado por el influjo de las corrientes posmodernas y por sectores profesionales cuyos compromisos intelectuales-políticos apuntan al conformismo y a la no resistencia con el estado de cosas.

En otras palabras, las complejidades contenidas en la cuestión social, que problematizan la vida de las familias de la clase trabajadora – asalariada, desempleada – y las formas de enfrentamiento por parte de las organizaciones y movimientos sociales, así como la vía de las estrategias, acciones y omisiones del estado y su política social constituyen el pivote para:

a) explicar el por qué surge esta profesión, su constitución, modalidades de ejercerla en el ámbito estatal y no estatal, conformación de espacios laborales y direccionalidad ético-política;

b) analizar a correspondencia de los procesos de formación profesional universitaria en trabajo social con respecto a los desafíos que emanan de esa relación triangulada por tensos intereses estado-cuestión social-organizaciones y movimientos sociales. En otras palabras esto es básico para sustentar los fundamentos ontológicos del curriculum y la fundamentación de la naturaleza y direccionalidad de las prácticas académicas vinculadas con los ámbitos del ejercicio laboral;

c) la construcción del programas de investigación y para hacer agendas investigativas que establecen relaciones entre: i) las causas y expresiones de los asuntos que problematizan las condiciones de vida de los sujetos de atención profesional (sujetos y familias, grupos – según criterios etarios, género, etnias, etc –, organizaciones comunitarias) con ii) la política social en su amplio sentido y su direccionalidad político ideológica, la legislación y marcos institucionales. Todos estos aspectos constituyen mediaciones del ejercicio profesional que configuran límites y posibilidades para la atención de los objetos de trabajo contenidos en los sujetos;

d) para desarrollar conocimiento y acciones comprometidas con la creación de una sociedad con justicia social y libertad.

Los procesos de formación profesional en trabajo social en la Universidad de Costa Rica han estado direccionados desde dos grandes perspectivas. La primera, refiere a la naturalización de la vida social, su a-historicidad que coloca los problemas sociales y a los sujetos como disfuncionalidades del sistema que requieren ser adaptados. La segunda perspectiva, enfatiza la crítica histórica, materialista con vocación transformadora en los límites de las posibilidades del ejercicio profesional. Subraya en la actualidad el compromiso con la defensa intransigible de los derechos humano-sociales en tanto son conquistas de la modernidad.

Por las implicancias ético-políticas en cada una de estas perspectivas y las derivaciones teóricas metodológicas puede subrayarse que ha existido una tendencia histórica en la que, la primera perspectiva fue hegemónica durante los primeros treinta y cinco años de existencia de la escuela de trabajo social. En la siguiente fase (o sea, los restantes siete lustros) la confrontación intelectual y la hegemonía de una y otra perspectiva se ha mostrado oscilante y dependiente del ejercicio del poder de la argumentación en el debate, en la presencia formal y real de tales perspectivas en los procesos de formación profesional y en los intereses que muestran las agendas investigativas construidas por los actores académicos.

Con respecto al ejercicio profesional interesa subrayar que este es un complejo terreno que contiene y reproduce en la autonomía relativa profesional, las perspectivas mencionadas – que han sustentado los

procesos de formación profesional por más de siete décadas en Costa Rica – con sus consecuentes enfoques teórico-metodológicos y éticos.

La complejidad de ejercer la profesión es mayor, cuando existe pensamiento crítico y una direccionalidad ético-político comprometida con una vocación transformadora. Implica la pertinencia de colocar el escenario laboral en la trama de determinaciones históricas que le configuran, así como aprehender los sujetos y sus situaciones de vida problematizantes como expresiones de cuestión social, condensadas en objetos de trabajo y aprehendidos en su historicidad (para lo cual su competencia teórica,metodológica es fundamental) y el manejo de la técnica para dar lugar a proceso de intervención. Esta intervención requiere fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos para el conocimiento de la politica, la ley, los recursos y el manejo los intereses institucionales e inter-institucionales en conflicto para dar dirección a la acción transformadora en los límites del marco institucional.

En la actualidad en el ámbito del ejercicio profesional sectores determinados abogan por la revisión y reforma de la ley vigente del ejercicio profesional, que fue instituida en consonancia con la concepción de la naturaleza de la profesión de los años Sesenta del siglo XX, para que pase a estar acorde con una perspectiva de defensa inclaudicable de los derechos humano-sociales, la democracia, la justicia social y la libertad.

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11. Social work in South Africa: context, concepts and some critical reflections

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Index

Introduction; 1. An overview of the South African socio-economic situation; 2. Synopsis of the development of social welfare; 3. Current status of social work; 4. Typology of social work service providers; 5. Continuum of social service delivery; 6. Management and supervision of social workers; 7. Social work education; 8. Professional social work associations; 9. Some critical reflections; References

Key words
South Africa, social development, social welfare, developmental social work

Introduction

Two decades have elapsed since South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, which heralded the advent of a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996)[2]. Social work, as an established profession in the South African society, played a significant role in the democratization of the country (Patel, 2005). However, the active voice and impact of social work on the prevailing social development para-

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digm of the country is questionable and this concern gave rise to this article with the purpose to open constructive dialogue and debate on the matter. Hence, this article aims to present some critical reflections regarding social work practices in South Africa. To this end, an overview of the South African socio-economic situation, a synopsis of the development of social welfare and an exposition of concepts relevant to the current status of social work are presented as context. Essential concepts instrumental to an understanding of the context are outlined throughout the article.

1. An overview of the South African socio-economic situation

Diversity is a key feature of the South African population, with 11 official languages and historically, racially and culturally divided societies. For 2013, Statistics South Africa (2013) estimated the mid-year population as 52,98 million, comprising 79.8% black people, 9% coloured, 8.7% white and 8.7% Indian. The African national congress (Anc) has been the ruling political party since 1994, aiming to redress the National party's apartheid legacy of a deliberate and sustained exclusion of the majority of the citizens from political decision-making processes.

Although South Africa has one of the continent's largest economies, the country is challenged with one of the most uneven income distributions in the world with a Gini-coefficient of 0,69 (National planning commission, 2012), and an average unemployment rate of 25% (this unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force). This contributes hugely to the poverty rate, which is estimated at 41.4% of South Africans living under the poverty line. Coupled with one in seven hiv infections of its citizens (Statistics South Africa, 2013), South Africa as a developing country, has as a consequence numerous socio-economic challenges in all spheres of civil life and specifically in terms of crime and policing, infrastructure, education, health and social welfare.

The country has a well-established social welfare system and a large proportion of social spending is allocated for social grants. Social welfare spending accounts for approximately 60% of total government ex-

penditure and the social security in South Africa may be regarded as one of the largest non-contributory systems in the world. Currently the number of beneficiaries of government grants exceeds the number of personal taxpayers by a wide margin, with roughly three people on social grants for every person who pays income tax, and almost two social grant beneficiaries for every employed individual in the country. An estimated 17% of the population depend on state welfare, whilst 74% of beneficiaries are children younger than 18 years and are therefore not liable to taxation. However, the adult (voting) population numbers approximately four voters to each taxpayer. Consequently a disturbing ramification might be that an estimated 48% of youths between the ages of 15 and 24 and nearly a third of those between 25 and 34 years may in fact be regarded as structurally unemployed. The implication is that they are potential recipients of social grants in future rather than potential income taxpayers. This should be seen against the estimate that only 0.8% of South Africans who were regarded as poor were able to migrate to higher income groups in 2009 (Engelbrecht, 2011).

Be that as it may, six types of social grants are currently administered by the South African social security agency (Sassa) to improve the standards of living, to redistribute wealth and to create a more equitable society in the country. These grants are the following: a grant for older persons; a disability grant; a war veteran grant; a care dependency grant; a foster child grant; and a child support grant. Each grant has to meet a different set of requirements and provisions (Saunders, 2013). Many grant beneficiaries rely on grants as their only income; and in many households, incomes are augmented by more than one grant (Engelbrecht, 2008).

The current socio-economic situation of the country can also not just be blamed on the current global financial crisis, which is regarded as the worst economic slowdown the past 60 years. The harsh socio-economic conditions in the country have persisted over a period of time, during which the majority of households suffered a lack of opportunity to improve their circumstances, in spite of a relatively sophisticated social welfare system (Engelbrecht, 2011). A synopsis of the development of social welfare as presented in the next section, will provide further elaboration.

2. Synopsis of the development of social welfare

Various narratives exist around the development of social welfare in South Africa, as the country's history was shaped by successive eras of colonialism, apartheid and democratization, resulting in irreconcilable perceptions based on differences in experiences. Therefore, the account of the development of social welfare is demarcated with the country's early history and post-apartheid as two definite time periods, based mainly on the work of Potgieter (1998).

2.1. Early history of structured social welfare

Between 1864 and 1899 the Dutch reformed church in particular was first to create structured care meeting the welfare needs of people in South Africa by founding various institutions in the Cape Colony. Poverty among a large section of the population was aggravated by a war with Britain in the beginning of the twentieth century. More than 26,000 white women and children, and 14,000 black people died in concentration camps, resulting in many children being orphaned. In response, women's charitable associations were founded in 1904 for white people, followed by Child welfare societies for all population groups.

A Land Act of 1913 deprived black people of the right to own land outside certain demarcated areas and forced them to maintain links with the rural subsistence economy through a system of temporary migrant labour. Structured social welfare efforts focused almost exclusively on the white population and culminated in an investigation by the Carnegie commission of enquiry into the poor white problem in 1934. This resulted in the establishment of training institutions in social work in the 1930s and the first Department of social welfare in 1937.

World war II was followed by droughts in 1945, disease and poverty, forcing people who were ill-equipped to life in a modern industrial society to migrate to cities. In 1948 the Nationalist government came to power, which ruled the country for 46 years and introduced a system of separate development (apartheid) through institutionalised racial discrimination. This resulted in social welfare services with 18 govern-

ment bureaucracies at national and provincial levels responsible for the administration and delivery of welfare services. Despite these fragmented welfare services, a sophisticated social service delivery system developed. With the banning of political movements such as the Anc in 1960, ordinary people also became involved in social service initiatives, which resulted in widespread protests against apartheid-initiated programmes.

Even with the majority of South Africans not able to receive equal welfare benefits, three acts were introduced in 1978, which changed the future welfare scene in South Africa. The National welfare Act (100 of 1978) made provision for the registration of welfare organisations; a Fund-raising Act (107 of 1978) aimed to control fund-raising by the general public and a Social and associated workers Act (110 of 1978) made provision for a statutory council to regulate the conduct, training and registration of social and associated workers. These acts resulted in certain discrete principles in the social welfare system in the 1980s, based on the segregation of races, a state-private welfare partnership, the rejection of socialism and the idea of a welfare state, and a movement away from a residual and therapeutic focus to a community-based preventative orientation. During this area a second Carnegie inquiry into poverty and development was also launched and focused on the whole of South Africa. However, the separation of population groups was confirmed with a new constitution in 1983, making provision for a tricameral parliament with separate chambers for whites, coloureds and Asians, with the exclusion of blacks. National government programmes such as a Population development programme did not succeed in mobilising community participation and the country furthermore experienced growing effects of economic sanctions and a recession, resulting in decreased funding for social welfare services.

2.2. Post-apartheid

In 1990 all political organisations were unbanned en Nelson Mandela was released after 27 years' imprisonment. The first democratic election of the country was held in 1994 when the Anc government of national unity came to power. In 1997 a unified Department of welfare

started to operate. Part of the transformation process required the Department of social welfare to change its name to the Department of social development. The new government had the opportunity to challenge the political processes of the past, which also included handling of social welfare (Lombard, 2003). Several government-led policies were introduced, such as the Reconstruction and development programme (Reconstruction and development plan, 1994), the (Gear) Growth, employment and redistribution strategy (1996) and the White paper for social welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997), which had a vital impact on the shaping of social work in the new political dispensation.

While welfare reform in many Western countries meant reducing government commitment to welfare, the new South African government embarked in 1994 on an inclusive transformational welfare system based on the principles of social development. The Reconstruction and development programme (Reconstruction and development plan, 1994) was initiated and was an integrated socio-economic policy framework with the aim of joining the South African communities and resources in the final dismantling of apartheid. The Reconstruction and development plan (Rdp) paved the way for an alternative way of thinking on the mobilisation of human resources potential and endeavoured to be an integrated and sustainable programme; a people-driven process, providing peace and security for all; focused on nation building, linking reconstruction and development; and aimed for the democratization of South Africa.

In 1996 the South African department of finance adopted the macroeconomic Growth, employment and redistribution strategy (1996). This neo-liberal shift recommended financial discipline, strategies to increase public and private investment, commitment to the free forces of capitalism and the logic of the market. However, this policy was opposed by many sectors in the country, such as trade unions, and was soon to be replaced inter alia by a Broad-based black economic empowerment Act (2003), resulting in political intervention in the business environment. Gear's stringent limits on expenditure did not meet the social development goals of the Rdp, and failed to deliver the envisaged economic, job growth and redistribution of socio-economic opportunities for the benefit of all the people in South Africa.

Within the same time frame of the adoption of socio-economic and macro-economic policies and strategies such as the Rdp and Gear, a White paper for social development was adopted in 1997 as part of transforming the welfare system of the country. This was an attempt to move towards a developmental approach in social welfare, supporting a people-centred approach to social and economic development. The adoption of social development as an approach towards social welfare was a deliberate rejection by the government of a neoliberal approach of market reliance and minimal government. The social development approach implies a commitment to invest in human capabilities and purposely redistribute resources on more equitable terms in order to achieve social justice. The approach focuses on poverty eradication through building people's capabilities to achieve self-sufficiency (Patel, 2005); and is largely based on Midgley's (1995: 25) definition as «…a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development».

The developmental approach has been the official guide to social welfare in the country since 1997 and is inherently a movement away from a residual and institutional welfare approach, characterised by the emergence of social welfare in South Africa. More specifically, the developmental approach to social welfare recognises the need for integrated, strengths-based and rights-based approaches to social service delivery; ensures and promotes the sustainability of intervention efforts; emphasises appropriate services to all, particularly the poor, vulnerable and those with special needs; and recognises that social work, among other social service professionals, plays a major role in addressing the developmental needs of the South African society (Department of social development, 2006).

Against this backdrop of the development of social welfare in South Africa, the current status of social work will subsequently be expounded.

3. Current status of social work

The distinctive type of social work that has evolved from the social development approach has become known as developmental social

work (Midgley, Conley, 2010: XIII), which constitutes the profession's specific contribution to the developmental approach (Patel, 2005). Developmental social work can be defined as an integrated, holistic approach to social work that recognises and responds to the interconnections between the person and the environment, links micro and macro practice, and utilises strengths-based and non-discriminatory models, approaches and interventions, and partnerships to promote social and economic inclusion and well-being (Mayadas, Elliott, 2001; Gray, 2006; Patel, Hochfeld, 2008). An integration of case work, group work and community work is regarded as the primary methods of social work service delivery.

A range of acts are currently guiding social work practices, with the Constitution of the republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996[a]), primarily providing the right of access to appropriate social assistance to those unable to support themselves and their dependants. Apart from acts such as those for the aged, prevention and treatment of drug dependency, and social assistance, a Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) (Republic of South Africa, 2006) is directing social work. The Social service professions Act (110/1978) (Republic of South Africa, 1978) provides the regulations for a statutory, autonomous South African council for social service professions (Sacssp) and sets out inter alia an ethical code, and standards for education and training in social work (South African council for social service professions, 2012[a]). All social workers and student social workers have to register annually with the Sacssp and are bound by the ethical code. Social service professions other than social work are in various stages of development in terms of establishing professional boards and developing qualifications.

The total number of social workers registered with the Sacssp in March 2012 was 16,740 (Moloi, 2012). Of these social workers 40% are employed by the government and the rest are employed at Non-profit organisations (Npos), in private practice capacities or are not active practitioners. It is estimated that only 9,000 social workers are servicing the current population of more than 50 million people in South Africa across all sectors (Statistics South Africa, 2013). In spite of a recommended ratio of 1 social worker to 60 cases by the Department of

social development (2006), social workers report caseloads sometimes exceeding 300 and more (Engelbrecht, 2006).

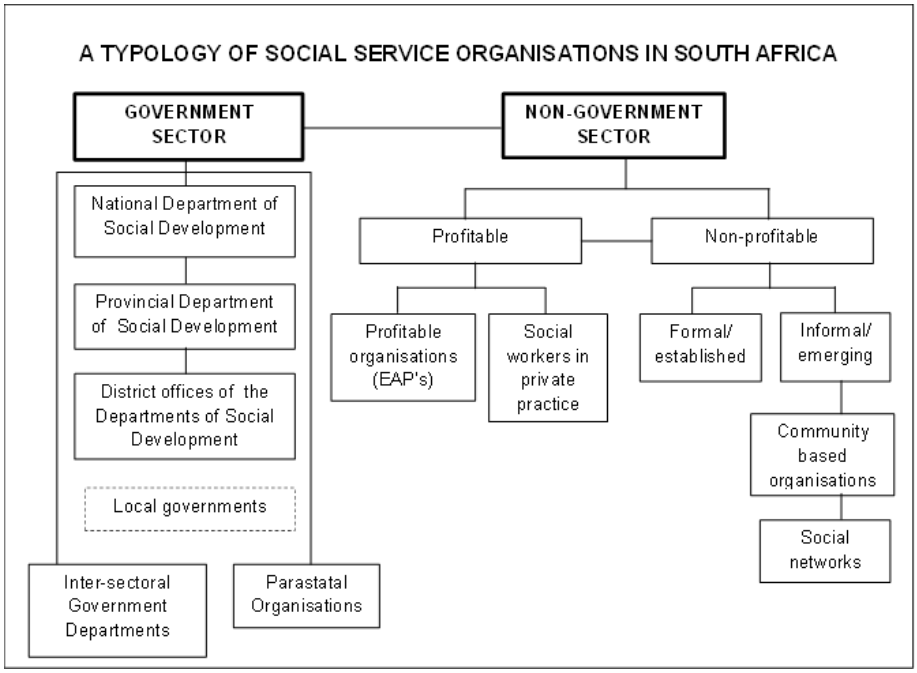
Furthermore, a gross discrepancy between the remuneration of social workers working for the government and those in the private sector, together with overall low salaries of social workers and unfavourable working conditions, were some of the reasons of an incontestable brain drain of social workers after South Africa's first democratic elections (Engelbrecht, 2006). This staffing crisis has led to the Minister of social development declaring social work a scarce skill (Skweyiya, 2005) and approving a recruitment and retention strategy for social workers. However, South Africa is currently experiencing a 77% shortfall of social workers, affecting the implementation of crucial social welfare legislation. For instance, 66,329 social workers are required to implement the Children's Act; 743 social workers are essential for the implementation of the Older persons Act; and 1426 social workers for the implementation of the act dealing with prevention of and treatment for substance abuse. Notwithstanding these tremendous shortfalls, the social work profession is still regarded as significant in communities and to fulfil government's efforts to provide social welfare services in South Africa (Waters, 2013).

Pivotal to an understanding of the current context of social work in South Africa, is an examination of the typology of social work service providers in the country, service recipients, service delivery, management and supervision of social workers, social work education and relevant associations.

4. Typology of social work service providers

Various service providers are involved in the provision of developmental social work services, with the government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector as the main role players. Figure 1 is a graphical illustration of the typology of social service organisations in South Africa.

Figure 1 - A typology of social service organisations in South Africa



Source: Adapted from Boshoff (2006).

The range of service providers can be divided broadly into the government (public) sector and the non-government (private) sector.

The government sector consists of the National department, which provides inter alia strategic direction for social service delivery. The roles and responsibilities of the provincial departments of social development can briefly be described as to formulate, coordinate, maintain and review provincial policy and planning in consultation with stakeholders, and to plan, implement, coordinate and monitor the delivery of social services in accordance with national norms and standards. These roles and responsibilities coincide with those at the district and local levels (Department of social development, 2006).

The non-government sector can be distinguished as profitable as well as non-profitable. Social workers in profitable private practice offer a wide range of direct services with some also rendering employee assistance programmes at private companies. They are fulfilling an essential role in social service delivery, additional to government and

non-governmental social services. The latter services are traditionally divided into formal established Non-governmental organisations (Ngos), which are registered with the government in order to receive subsidies, and those organisations which are in an emerging phase of organisational development, based in the community or which are merely social networks. The Ngo sector is estimated to make up more than 100,000 organisations, of which 72,000 are registered with the Department of social development. Some of these registered Ngos are accredited to do statutory work, although they are subsidised by the government for just a percentage of their running costs, provided they render social work services to the primary target groups identified by the Department of social development (2005).

5. Continuum of social service delivery

The primary target groups identified by the Department of social development as social work service recipients are the poor and the vulnerable people in society. Specifically, these target groups are delineated as children and the youth, families, women and older people. People infected and affected by hiv and aids, people with disabilities and those who have other special needs prevail across all target groups on the continuum of social service delivery (Department of social development, 2006).

In its efforts to achieve the desired outcomes for social service recipients, the Department of social development established a continuum of social service delivery as contained in an integrated service delivery model for social services (Department of social development, 2006). The main features of this model suggest certain levels of intervention, namely prevention (aimed at strengthening and building capacity and self-reliance); early intervention (assistance before statutory services and intensive intervention are required); statutory intervention/residential/alternative care (supporting the recipient of services who is no longer functioning adequately in the community); and reconstruction and aftercare (to enable the recipient of services to return and reintegrate with the family or community as quickly as possible). The core services rendered by social service providers have been grouped

into five broad categories of services, namely promotion and prevention (these services intersect with community development services); protection services (provided within the context of legislative and/or a policy framework and including statutory services); rehabilitation services (aimed at those whose functioning is impaired); continuing care services (with the goal to improve independence and quality of life); and mental health and addiction services (assisting people to live balanced lives by protecting and restoring their mental well-being).

6. Management and supervision of social workers

In order to maintain a high level of service delivery, several statutory requirements of social work practices in South Africa, such as the Social service professions Act (Republic of South Africa, 1978), Code of ethics (South African council for social service professions, 2012[a]), and the Children's Act (38 of 2005) Republic of South Africa, 2006), mandate the supervision of social workers. The Social service professions Act (Republic of South Africa, 1978) stipulates that a social worker may only be supervised on social work matters by another competent and registered social worker. However, in reality the management of social workers by non-social workers often has a detrimental impact on the practice of the profession. This gave momentum to the development of a national supervision framework for the social work profession in South Africa (Department of social development, South African council for social service professions, 2012), which not only addresses supervision of qualified social workers, but also of student social workers.

7. Social work education

Training of social workers is offered at all universities in South Africa. The South African qualifications authority Act (Republic of South Africa, 1995) legislated a National qualification framework (Nqf), which embarked on a process of developing qualifications and standards for social work, including a four-year Bachelor of social work

(Bsw), structured and research master of social work and doctor of social work. The Bsw contains an integrated theoretical and field practice component in terms of credits, exit levels, outcomes and associate assessment criteria. These minimum standards provide sufficient space for the unique focus of a university's teaching programmes, and reflect a shift from the previous political dispensation's rehabilitative focus to a social development approach. The purpose of this professional four-year qualification as stipulated by South African qualifications authority (South African qualifications authority, 2012) is to equip learners with: skills to challenge structural sources of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion; knowledge and understanding of human behaviour and social systems and the skills to intervene at the points where people interact with their environments in order to promote social well-being; the ability and competence to assist and empower individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities to enhance their social functioning and their problem-solving capacities; the ability to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities by enabling them to accomplish tasks, prevent and alleviate distress and use resources effectively; an understanding of and the ability to demonstrate social work values and the principles of human rights and social justice while interacting with and assisting the range of human diversity; the understanding and ability to provide social work services towards protecting people who are vulnerable, at-risk and unable to protect themselves; knowledge and understanding of both the South African and the global welfare context and the ability to implement the social development approach in social work services; understanding of the major social needs, issues, policies and legislation in the South African social welfare context and the social worker`s role and contribution; the skills to work effectively within teams, including social work teams, multi- and inter-disciplinary teams as well as multi-sectoral teams.

Statutory parameters of the social work education require that students should be registered with the Sacssp as student social workers, and uphold the council's ethical code. The successful completion of the qualification enables students to be registered with the Sacssp as a professional social worker (South African council for social service professions, 2012[a]). As part of the government's recruitment and retention

strategy, scholarships are available for deserving social work students, resulting in an increase from 4,200 to 5,574 social work graduates in the 2010/11 financial year (Waters, 2013).

The social work training institutions are organised in an Association of South African social work education institutions (Association of South African social work education institutions, 2014), in order to maintain and support a community of social work educators who are committed to the continuing development of social work education, training, research and practice in South Africa. Association of South African social work education institutions (Asaswei) is affiliated to the International association of schools of social work (Iassw).

A statutory process regulated by the South African council for social service professions (2012[b]) requires all social workers in the country to obtain a required number of Continuing professional development (Cpd) points annually in order to remain registered with the Sacssp. The purpose of this system is to ensure that social workers retain and continuously develop their knowledge and skills to maintain professional standards.

8. Professional social work associations

For many years, professional social work associations were fragmented in South Africa, owing to the country's history of cultural divides. In 2007 the National association of social workers (Nasw-Sa) was established, affiliated to the International federation of social workers (Ifsw). This affiliation grants social workers the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the Global agenda for social work and social development (National association of social workers South Africa, 2012).

9. Some critical reflections

Considering South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid, for most South Africans the country is now a better place than before. However, some critical reflections on social work in the country raise serious concerns.

The success of the Rdp as one of the new democratic government's first projects, which had a significant impact on social welfare and social work, was soon to be overshadowed by the instalment of Gear. As in the British experience, the discourse of neo-liberalism, had «colonized the public sector as business thinking and practices crossed the public-private sector divide and were transplanted into activities such as social work» (Harris, 2002: 5). The contradictory principles of Gear and the guiding principles of the White paper for social welfare, which supported a people-centred approach to social and economic development through a social development approach towards social welfare, did not however restrain the government from gaining political leverage by increasing gargantuan spending on social security, which has become the major poverty alleviation measure in the country.

Consequently, the place, role and function of developmental social work within the country's social development welfare system became diffused, as social transfers offer a much quicker and more comprehensive way to redistribute money to the poor than traditional social work interventions. Although the crucial need for an extensive social security system as safety net for the country's vulnerable people is by no means disregarded, how this accords with the principles of social development and the role and function of developmental social work within this context, is still not clarified (Engelbrecht, 2011).

Exacerbated by the fact that the shortage of social workers in the country will be hard to address even in the next decade, coupled with the government's evident inability to adequately fund and resource the Ngo sector as partners in their social development endeavours, the future of developmental social work, notwithstanding the government's praiseworthy policies, is facing various challenges. For instance, the Minister for social development recently revealed that her department has not conducted sufficient costing to determine the number of social workers required to implement current welfare legislation (such as the Children's Act), a state of affairs quite detrimental to the successful implementation of well-intended and sophisticated acts (Waters, 2013). The practice reality is thus that although the need for prevention and early intervention in social work is emphasised by government policies and embraced by social workers, the continuing great demand for child protection in practice makes this continuum of care merely aspirational.

As a consequence, the irony is that the demand for case work services (especially in foster care) is exceeding group and community work methodologies in practice, which still bear the features of the previous political dispensation's remedial approach to social work.

This increasing demand for direct social work services is not just out of pace with the government's intended continuum of service delivery and developmental social work, but is also inconsistent with the exit level outcomes of the Bsw degree. The social work education institutions deliberately transformed their teaching programmes during the past two decades to be in line with the current regulations of government policies and legislation, relevant to social work (Spolander, Pullen-Sansfaçon, Brown, Engelbrecht, 2011). However, it is now evident that the integration of theory and practice is more paradoxical for beginner social workers than they ever envisaged. In this context, based on empirical reflections by social work practitioners, Engelbrecht (2008: 172) asked: «Is this the most that can be expected from social workers? Are small gains worthwhile, and do they collectively add up to social improvement? Social workers offer social support and access to social resources where available and, in this way, fight the war on poverty and contribute to uplifting the country's poor. Is this enough?»

Moreover, one of the main concerns in the social work profession of the country is that the social work role is largely defined by government rather than the profession itself (Lombard, 2008), despite positive indicators such as the unification of the profession in one national association and an association for social work education institutions. This means that the political aims and agenda of the government, as in South Africa's past, could potentially jeopardise the independence and professional credibility of the social work profession in the country. It has already turned Ngos (wittingly or even unwittingly) into agents of the state, owing to their dependence on government subsidies, and causing them to deviate from their traditional community interests. As a result, critical voices of many social service organisations in the country (and by implication social workers), whose funding is largely dependent on performance-based contracts with the government, are potentially silenced by managerial control and a neoliberal discourse disguised as accountability.

However, as is evident in the development of social work as a fully-fledged profession in South Africa, the resilience and strength of social workers as professionals should not be underestimated and submerged by political processes of the day. The regulation of the social work profession by the Social work Act (1978) has been a determining factor in maintaining standards of social work practices for nearly four decades, notwithstanding political ramifications impacting on social workers' working conditions and their service delivery. The statutory registration of social workers and student social workers, code of ethics and Cpd system are furthermore indicators of the depth of a well-established profession. Also, the well-established Ngo sector, longstanding advocating tradition of Asaswei, and the blossoming of the unified Nasw-Sa as professional association, together with their internationally affiliated support networks, add to the capacity inherent in the profession. Moreover, supervision of social workers is mandatory in South Africa and conveys a professional social work heritage to practitioners through practices such as a national framework for supervision encompassing national standards. Ultimately, the social work education institutions are a formidable force, manifestly by their acclaimed scholarly academic programmes and outputs on undergraduate, postgraduate and research levels, and leadership role in global academic affairs (Joint world conference on social work, education and social development, 2014). These strengths, embedded in the social work profession throughout the history of South Africa are shielding social workers from despair and disillusionment that may erode their pride and professionalism.

The context and concepts of social work in South Africa, as expounded in this essay, show that social work was intended to transform from a residual and institutional approach to a rights-based social development approach, focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country. However, in spite of this intended transformation, many questions evolve in practice, and one of the questions going begging, is: what is the impact of developmental social work on poverty eradication, or are social workers just helping vulnerable people to live with it? Based on the critical reflections presented in this article, it may be concluded that it is questionable whether social development (and by implication also developmental social work) remain the *de facto* ap-

proach to social welfare in South Africa. It appears that social development as envisaged in government policies differs drastically from practice realities, and rather reflects features of a welfare state as in some other parts of the world. As was the case with South Africa's previous political dispensation, the need for depoliticizing the social work profession in the country is vital in order to open constructive dialogue and debate on social work's future core role and functions, and to capitalise on the profession's inherent strengths. Grounded, independent empirical research is recommended to shed more light on this contentious topic.

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12. Social work around the world: a comparative perspective

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Index

Introduction; 1. The origins of social work; 2. Social issues and social policy; 3. Social work education; 4. Social work profession; 5. Challenges and perspectives; References

Key words
Social work, social policy, social work education, practice, comparison

Introduction

Comparing is a way to increase knowledge. It is so much used in the scientific discourse as well as in the common sense, that many authors argue there is no knowledge without comparison (Fideli, 1998). In this article the comparison is employed to underline commonalities and differences characterizing social work in different countries. As many authors state, the form of social work depends on the cultural and political views of social problems and service recipients, so that the cultural and socio-political framework, the social issues, the social work education and practice become the main focuses of this paper. The awareness of different meanings of the words, including social work, in different cultures induces to prefer a phenomenological approach to the comparison (Smelser, 1982). In this way commonalities and differences can be found directly in the articles of this issue and they can be appreciated with reference to a three-dimensional perspective (international, national and local or macro, meso and micro), considered by many au-

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thors as the best way to understand the origins and the development of social work (Dominelli, 2004).

1. The origins of social work

Since its origins, at least in the Western countries, social work has been characterized by a transnational and international dimension. The influence of English social work in the United States of America (Usa) (i.e. Mary Richmond and Jane Addams) and of American social work in Europe and in a few developing countries is well known. At the beginning of the 20th century (Paris international conference, 1928), the development of the international dimension became one of the social work community's aims (Campanini, infra), more widely pursued after the Second World War (i.e. in the European reconstruction phase, Zavirsek, Lawrence, 2012). However, many critical issues emerge in connection with the international dimension and the agreement about it cannot be taken for granted (Midgley, 2001). The same word 'international' is questioned. As Healy (1995) states, it is used referring to: the skills and knowledge which are useful to work in international agencies, social work practice with immigrants and refugees, the researches and exchanges between social workers from different countries and an academic field of social work comparative study. In addition, the international dimension often points out the theoretical approaches and practices developed in the Western countries (above all the Usa and the Uk). As Payne (2005) states, many historical approaches to social work «assume that a Western, Judeo-Christian (from Jewish and Christian historically tradition) democratic framework is essential to practising social work, or understanding its origins» and neglect many other traditions (as Muslim or Hindu or indigenous cultures, now represented in the most recent social work definition, Isfw, 2014). Despite this criticism, many of the topics pointed out by Payne appear in the articles of this special issue. Many authors actually recognize the western influence on social work inception in their own countries, above all regarding social work education (i.e. Costa Rica, Italy, Romania) and the de-

velopment of the social service system, often supported by international grants (i.e. Italy, Romania, Russia)[1]. Moreover, many features, which reflect American ideology (based on capitalism, democracy and individual responsibility, Orwat and Besinger, infra), characterize several articles of this publication. Specifically, the development of social work – which arose, in many countries, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century – is connected to the processes of industrialisation and urbanization related to capitalism; to the development of democracy (and the rising of the State-nation) and to the specialization and professionalization of philanthropy, which turning point was the definition of a method (Richmond, 1917; Payne, 2005).

On the economical side, the industrialisation caused a mass-migration to towns: poverty, illiteracy, delinquency were the main issues to face. At the same time, on the political side, the rising state-nation – which was not a natural evolution of the community, but a specific economic and political project (Lorenz, 2004) – provided the context for the development of social work. The state-nation needed legitimation and social solidarity could be a means – founded on the attractiveness of belonging to a collective identity, rather than on the coercion – to achieve it. Consequently, a lot of private troubles became public issues, worthy of attention by governments, and a professional authority, with an activity based on the principles of scientific rationality, was requested to face them. Hence, both acknowledgment of social nature of the problems and the relationship between political power and science contributed to social work inception. As Soviet (and, at-large, communist regimes, Hering, 2007) experience evidences (Pervova; Lazar, infra), the recognition of the social issues has been essential for social work development: in fact, without it, social work is «not needed» (Iarskaia-Smirnova, Lyons, 2014: 431). Moreover, as many authors state (i.e. Lazar; P.V. Molina; Martinez-Roman and Mateo-Pérez; Pervova, infra), the democratic governments have provided a suitable conditions to enhance social work, while totalitarian regimes led to degrade or vanish it. In the meantime social workers contributed, for instance, to the fight «against the dictatorial order» in Brazil (Santana,

[1] The choice of the examples is based on the contents of the articles referring to the countries aforementioned.

Garcia, infra) and in Chile (P.V. Molina, infra), against apartheid in South Africa (Engelbrecht and Strydom, infra) and at the moment they are involved in the Spanish social movements (Martinez-Roman, Mateo-Pérez, infra).

Hence, social workers have been instrumental in enhancing human rights and social justice, but, in the same time, they have maintained an ambiguous relationship with the political power. As aforementioned, this relationship rooted in a research of each other legitimization and this, for social work, depended on a scientific-based practice, which ultimately justified help/control of marginalized people. The professionalization of charity lies in this perspective and its turning point was the «development of social casework as a method» (Payne, 2005: 38)[2]. Based on scientific rationality, the method had to go beyond the moral categories (used to distinguish between deserving vs undeserving people) and ensure positive outcomes, verifiable through scientific criteria. However, as Lorenz states (2004), since the origins, the scientific-rationality has been an ambiguous tool for social workers, who found difficulty in applying the abstract scientific categories to the subjectivity of people. Moreover, social issues couldn't only be considered depending on individual responsibility, but they also had to be connected to structural factors so that their overcoming required individual care as well as structural reforms. These two components, at the beginning connected to charity organization societies and settlement movements, which represents the «social action and reform branch of the profession» (Hare, 2004: 411), persist in characterizing the social work profession, at present engaged in a direct, 'clinical' service as well as in community work, policy practice or social development[3].

[2] Mary Richmond's *Social Diagnosis* (1917) is considered the first expression of social work method.

[3] As Hare (2004) points out, the professional activities having reference to settlement movements are different names in different contexts.

2. Social issues and social policy

The analysis of the social work inception draws the attention on the importance of economic and political power in recognizing social issues and providing a useful context to the social work development. Focusing on the social issues, the multi-faceted and multidimensional nature of the problems emerges along with the differences between countries and between local contexts inside each country, irrespective of the geographical size. However, every local issue is like a piece of a complex world mosaic, which becomes more understandable interweaving the economic and socio-political dimensions at three different levels (international, national and local).

Throughout the years, many social issues highlighted by the authors (i.e. poverty, illiteracy/education, marginality, mental disease) have gained the politicians and professionals' attention and different social services systems brought about[4]. Along with them, new issues – such as the so-called new poverty, new health emergencies[5], the widespread violence, the demographical change (i.e. lower birth rate and/or aging), the inequality in distribution of wealth (which, for instance, causes mass-migration), the environmental crisis[6] and the natural disasters – are emerging more or less everywhere. Moreover, in conjunction with the actual economic crisis, the unemployment, low paid and deregulated jobs and largely the families' impoverishment are growing. It doesn't seem only a matter of a longer list, what the authors are highlighting is an increasing vulnerability, involving people totally out in

[4] As Lorenz (2004) states, four welfare systems (Scandinavian model, residual model, corporatist model and rudimentary model), which permeated social work practice, are recognizable only in Europe.

[5] Specifically the authors report health problems connected to alcohol and drug addiction and the widespread Hiv-Aids infections (i.e. Pervova; Orwat and Besinger, infra).

[6] As many authors state, the environmental degradation impacts mostly on poor people, playing an important role in promoting injustice. Environmental racism, environmental injustice are the expression coined to identify «the society's failure to ensure the equitable distribution of the Earth's resources in meeting human needs, simultaneously providing for the well-being of people and planet Earth today and in the future» (Dominelli, 2014: 339).

the past, an emphasis on individual responsibility of successes or failures, a growing inequality and a weakening of social cohesion, often connected to the affirmation of neoliberalism.

As result of the economic and welfare state crisis and under the wave of neo-liberal ideology, social policies of many countries are affected by a relevant review. In the past the state provided to balance the negative impact of capitalism or, in communist countries, it was (or considered itself) social: a different relationship among state, market, third sector and citizens was developed to reduce inequality and ensure social cohesion[7]. Now, irrespective of the Welfare system model adopted, this relationship seems to be altered: the state is contracting its social role and in the meanwhile people or families' responsibility in social provisions is increasing. It is not only a mantling of responsibility, but, as Spolander and Martin state, it is the result of a specific economic, political and cultural project, which seems to undermine the rights of citizenship, established between the end of the '60s and the beginning of the '70s, and, at the end, the social cohesion (Lorenz, 2004; Payne, 2005; Handler, 2005).

The first advertisement of what would happen came from the Usa: at the beginning of the '70s the worry about benefits abuse, welfare dependence on one side, the focus on reducing professional errors and increasing service recipients' compliance on the other, brought to a requirement of work programs (Handler, 2005). The request remained outstanding, but the idea of workfare was incepted. Throughout the years this idea has grown up and it has gradually substituted welfare: the separation between deserving and undeserving people, cornerstone of the Usa welfare policy, has been deeply reviewed and means-texted based provisions have been re-actualized (Handler, 2005). Now, under the emphasis of the individual responsibility, a lot of social issues are turning into individual troubles while the deregulation of capital and labour markets is causing an increasing low paid workforce who can't count on social provisions and, rather, is subjected to a disciplinary ac-

[7] For instance the state was dominant in communist countries, market plays a relevant role in capitalistic one, a mix of private and public sector in providing social services has been developed in others and the families play an essential role in southern European countries.

tion by the state. Hence poor people are involved in workfare programs (which don't always guarantee adequate means of subsistence), marginalised and often criminalised (Wacquant, 2000).

On the European side, the collapse of Soviet regime advanced liberalism which «started to promote a more aggressive competitiveness, increased the neo-liberal ideology of work, and started to re-organise state institutions (ministries, welfare and educational institutions including universities) to serve the private rather than the public sphere» (Zavirsek, Lawrence, 2012: 438).

Although in different ways, the impact of globalization and neoliberalism on social policy and social work is highlighted in all the countries represented in this special issue. The accordance to political system or to the world vision is remarked by P.V. Molina and by Orwat and Besinger; the colonization of the public sector and the transplantation into activities (such as social work), out in the past, is underlined by Engelbrecht and Strydom and by Spolander and Martin; a drastic review of welfare state, privatisation of provisions, cut of public spending, new eligibility criteria (often means-tested based) are pointed out by Pervova and Lazar; contracting resources and social services outsourcing also characterize social policy in Costa Rica; a larger consensus gained by neoliberalism and managerialism and their increasing influence on social policy are highlighted by Sicora and the consequences of international organisations pressure on social policy are stressed by Martinez-Roman and Mateo-Pérez. As Spolander and Martin argues, social workers are weak aware about the consequences of neoliberalism on the human rights and on their own work as well. «The social work profession has been slow to articulate, theorize and consider the implications for practice» (Spolander, Martin, infra).

The implications of this assumption can be understood better analysing the development of social work education and profession in the different countries represented in this special issue.

3. Social work education

A scientific, recognizable knowledge has always been a crucial tool which the professional legitimation depends on. As observed above, the

'invention' of the method is considered the cornerstone in the recognition of social work profession and discipline. What can seem a straightforward process was actually a tortuous path towards the professionalization and the construction of an autonomous body of knowledge. As highlighted by many authors, the first social work trainings – which started between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century[8], according to the scientific mindful which characterized the modern view of the world (Molina, infra)[9] – were carried out by private schools in many countries, often thanks to other professionals' initiative (i.e. lawyers, doctors, etc.) or under the pressure of international organisations[10]. At the origins, many social work courses were embodied in other academic faculties (i.e. medicine[11], economy, etc.), which were relevant to social work practice. Throughout the years an academic accredited body of knowledge was structured and today public and private universities provide three, four or five-years Bachelor of social work in all the countries represented in this special issue. Master and doctoral studies complete the social work educational offer in many countries independently on their long tradition in social work training. Despite the development of social work education, which is, for instance, evidenced by the increasing number of degree and doctoral thesis underlined in this publication, a lot of differences in educational programs still occur. Moreover the lack of recognition of social work as an academic discipline (i.e. Italy), the different development of doctoral studies, the competition with other (often more profitable) programs[12]

[8] It is interesting to underline the concurrence of starting social work training (1925 in Chile, 1928 in Italy, 1929 in Romania, 1930 in Brazil and South Africa) and the first international social work conference (Paris 1928) aforementioned.

[9] As Bauman states, at the beginning of the 20th century the scientific mindful and, above all, the confidence in scientific progress, widespread in many countries, justified research and 'experiments' aimed to improve human race (Bauman, 1991).

[10] An excursus of the beginning of social work education is available in Healy, Link (2012).

[11] For instance Latin American social work evolved from «being an auxiliary branch of medicine to having a professional identity of its own» (Queiro-Tajalli, 2012: 52).

[12] As Zavirsek and Lawrence (2012) observe, social work doctoral studies can be carried out along with other programmes (i.e. management in public health or social administration) which better fit into managerial approaches.

seems to evidence the «ambivalence towards social work as an academic discipline with its own theoretical foundations» (Zavirsek, Lawrence, 2012: 442).

This assumption introduces the ongoing question about the contents of social work discipline. At the beginning social work courses were, in many cases, influenced by Anglo-Saxon social work theories, often translated uncritically into the local context and, sometimes, mixed up with other issues (i.e. Catholic values, philanthropy, socialism, feminism, Zavirsek, Lawrence, 2012). Then the local social work development along with the evolution of national social policies have contributed to reduce the dependence on the Anglo-Saxon theoretical approaches in favour of an autonomous knowledge. At the end of the 1960s and during the '70s, under the wave of protest movements, an important break with the Anglo-Saxon social work tradition occurred in many countries. Social workers criticized their own role in the society (considered as the long arm of the institutional power) and the methods (above all casework) which underpinned it. Emphasizing their political role, social workers questioned psychological approaches and implemented sociological theories, which stressed structural or collective explanations (i.e. criticism or Marxian approach, today again recognizable in some social work literature, Santana, Garcia, infra)[13]. Influenced by the national social policy development, different approaches advanced so that specific theoretical perspectives have been built up in many countries and notions as 'indigenization' started to spread in the international social work community (Midgley, 2001).

During the '80s and the '90s, the rising neoliberalism started to influence social work theorizing so that methodological reflection was getting mixed up with other issues (i.e. managerialism; Spolander, Martin, infra) which didn't belong to social work tradition. Although the impact of neoliberalism is different among the countries represented in this special issue, the risk of an uncritical translation of neoliberal con-

[13] Different issues about European and Latin American social work offer an evidence of the break with the American social work theories (i.e. Zavirsek, Lawrence, 2012; Queiro-Tajalli, 2012). In this special issue, the articles about Brazilian and Costa Rica social work underline the reconceptualization, which characterized the Latin American social work by the mid-60s.

tents into social work discipline seems to occur in all of them (Lorenz, 2013). Moreover, as Spolander and Martin state (infra), social workers find difficulty in theorizing new issues arising from globalization and they risk to be involved in neoliberalism approaches.

This short excursus doesn't acknowledge all the specificities of social work education in different countries, but allows to introduce some common criticisms. The first is the changing features of the discipline. As the authors highlight, social work theory develops and changes along with the evolution of society, social policy, social and human sciences so that the contents of the discipline can't be established once for all. Moreover, the ongoing question about the supremacy of theory or practice (science or art), the multi-referred knowledge useful to practice and the difficulty of establishing social work boundaries doesn't facilitate the achievement of agree-upon disciplinary contents. A competence-based approach is drawn up to overcome this impasse: particularly national and international associations try to identify key competence and essential contents of social work discipline, as, for instance, Orwat and Besinger underline (infra).

Despite these efforts the recognition of social work discipline (as a specific academic field) has not been taken for granted in all the countries represented in this special issue yet.

4. Social work profession

«Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being» (Isfw, 2014).

Social work is a relatively young profession and, as it often happens to young professions, it suffers from a controversial recognition, due to its ambiguous nature, the uncertain boundaries of its activities, the multidisciplinary base of its knowledge, a relative dependence from social

policy (and political power) along with an increasing scepticism, which affects all professional expertise. Moreover, the gender characterization and, in many countries, the social workers' employment in public sector[14] haven't facilitated the affirmation of social work in the arena of helping professions.

As well-known, the professional status of social work was questioned (and at the end denied) by Flexner (1915), who underlined the lack of theoretical knowledge and scientific method (Orwat and Besinger, infra), and since then it has been largely debated without achieving an ultimate solution. If social work can be considered a fully developed profession, a semi-profession, a professional group, a social profession (which embraces social workers and social pedagogues) is currently an open question (Hare, 2004) which reflects the difficulty in drawing the boundaries of this changing profession (Dominelli, 2004). In this context, five indicators will be useful to evidence the status of social work recognition in different countries: professional education, public recognition (licensing or registration required to work as social worker), ethical standards (code of ethics), professional organisation and professional standing (referred to field of work, remuneration, etc.)[15].

As observed above, the first training in social work began, in several countries represented in this special issues, approximately between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. However this occurrence neither implied a recognition of an academic accrediting body ok knowledge, which happened later also in the countries with a longer tradition in social work (i.e. in 1952 in the Usa, Orwat and Besinger, infra), nor ensured a structured professional entity, as evidenced by controversial accidents involving social work in many countries. Now social work education takes place at university in all the countries, but it means neither an equal development of educational programs nor the same recognition of social work as an academic discipline. Despite

[14] The employment at public organizations is considered a critical issue for two reasons: a loss of professional authority, due to be situated in a hierarchical scale, and the weakness in enhancing social work against a plethora of public servants' interests.

[15] Referring to the attributes which allow to distinguish professions from the other occupations, all these indicators appear in a comparative study about the professionalization of social work (Weiss-Gal and Welbourne, 2008).

these differences, theoretical and practical trainings seem to be interwoven in social work education: almost all social work trainings actually provide for field education, even if it can change in order to features, lasting and skills to be acquired.

The license or the registration to work as social worker is required in several countries and sometimes it is also requested to students during their social work education (i.e. South Africa). The regulated access to the profession, in its different forms, seems to have been present since the '50s-60s in a few Latin American countries (i.e. Chile, 1955, Costa Rica, 1967); it appeared later in Italy (1993), where, despite its history, social work profession was recognized only in 1987, in Spain (at the end of the '90s) and more recently in Romania (2005). Though this public recognition reduces, in many cases, the abusive practice, it doesn't ensure the monopoly over the social work fields of practice, as remarked, for instance, about the ex-communist countries, where professional social workers and a not-qualified workforce, also called social worker, coexist (Lazar, infra). Moreover, it's questionable if license or registration can enhance the public image of social work as well as it can reinforce the common professional identity. As the authors observe, different local social issues and policies have contributed to create a heterogeneous professional group (with different cultures, experiences and problems to face), also in the same country, so that referring to professional community as a unitary entity is quite awkward. Further, although the distinctive features of social work are increasing in interest, this heterogeneity doesn't help to develop a common belonging and identity, as the difficulty of sharing a social work definition in the Usa evidences.

Despite this criticism, the multiple identities of social work seem to settle on sharing a core value, which can refer to human rights and social justice (Hare, 2004), considered by some authors (i.e. Healy, 2008; Hodge, 2010) as unifying themes of social work practice and education and/or criteria in selecting human and social sciences approaches useful to social work practice (Dal Pra, 1985)[16]. Hence, the attention to ethical

[16] Particularly Italian social work literature points out the function of values in discriminating social science approaches, which can be embodied in social work knowledge (Dal Pra, 1985).

standards, evidenced by the first approval of ethical codes and the following reviews, is not surprising. The first social work codes of ethics were enacted between the '60s (Usa) and '70s (Uk) and they were subjected to review throughout the years until achieving the contemporary version, approved in 2008 in the Usa and in 2012 in the Uk. A similar process interested the code of ethics of the other countries[17], irrespective of the time of their first approval, so that all the actual codes of ethics turned out enacted between the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. As many authors state (Reamer, 2014), despite the past, the contemporary codes of ethics are marked by a close attention to social workers' responsibilities (addressed to clients, colleagues, practice settings, professional community, broader society), which seem to reflect new trends not only of social work, but, above all, of social policy.

Moreover, an important role in achieving a common professional identity and enhancing social work knowledge and skills is also played by national and international organisations of professionals and social work schools[18]. As highlighted in this special issue, the national associations of social work schools have played a propulsive/active role in promoting the professional recognitions, in enhancing social work knowledge and skills and in developing a critical thought (i.e. Latin American countries). At the same time several national professional organisations have contributed to identify key competences of social work (i.e. Nasw) and essential contents of social work education. Besides enhancing social work profession and knowledge, international organisations are playing a relevant role in pursuing common identity and common goals: the world social work day and global agenda are the most important examples of it (Campanini, infra).

Despite the professionalization process and the actions pursuing more visibility and incisiveness of social work, the professional standings are still questionable, as evidenced not only by the field of work

[17] For instance, the Italian code of ethics was enacted in 1998, reviewed in 2002 and again in 2009.

[18] A lot of national organisation are affiliated to international ones: a cross-national network, denser in a few areas of the world, is developing, reinforcing the transnational and international dimension of social work.

and remuneration, but also by the de-professionalization process which takes place in many countries. The employment of social work workforce (and its wage) reflects the differences of social policies and social service systems not only among countries, but also among the regions in the same country. Where the private sector is well developed (i.e. the Usa), it absorbs the highest percentage of social work workforce and the social workers' income is higher than, for instance, the civil servants' one. Where social provisions are guaranteed by the public sector, social workers are easily employed as public servants, while, social work workforce can be employed both in the public sector and in no profit organisations where a mix of them provides social services[19].

Despite the location of social work training in the higher education system, the rate of social workers employed as university professors and/or researchers remains low, also in the countries with a longer social work tradition[20].

Another indicator of the professional recognition may be the ratio of social workers per people or the caseload. The Usa boast the widest social workers community (310,000 licensed social workers) with a ratio of 101 social workers per 100,000 people (Orwat and Besinger, infra); Brazilian social workers represent the second community with 120,000 registered professionals per about 200 million people (Santana, Garcia, infra). Coherently with geographic and demographic differences, the other social workers communities are smaller: about 10,000 social workers in Chile, 1,800 in Costa Rica, about 40,000 in Italy, 16,740 in South Africa, but, it has to be underlined, not all of them are employed in social services. As Engelbrecht and Strydom highlight, only 9,000 South African professionals are employed as social workers and their caseloads exceed 300 and more national standard (1 social worker per 60 cases). Moreover, as the authors underline, the standard can be different among regions of the same country: predictable in the largest countries (i.e. Usa, Brazil, Russia), the different standards also characterize the smallest ones (i.e. Romania, Italy, etc.), highlighting a gap

[19] For instance in South Africa 40% of social workers are employed in the public sector and the rest in Ngos.

[20] For instance, despite the social workers' wide community, only 9% of professionals spend time in research in the Usa (Orwat and Besinger, infra).

which usually penalizes the poorest regions (as witnessed by Italian regional standards, Sicora, infra)[21].

5. Challenges and perspectives

The professionalization process, which has engaged social workers in all the countries, has faced changing fortune: after an uncertain inception, social work ran up in conjunction with the development of capitalism and welfare state regimes. During this golden age, which occurred in the countries represented in this issue in different times, a lot of steps towards fully professional recognition have been done. Yet, nowadays social work seems to be at risk of involution or, even worst, extinction in connection to an emerging economic and political project, which deeply questions the relationship between state and citizens and, ultimately, the commitment of social work. Under the wave of neoliberalism and managerialism social work seems to be affected by an increasing process of de-professionalization: fragmented and standardized interventions, contracted resources, widespread control on the professionals' work undermine the professional autonomy and authority, while, on the other side, a loss of wage makes social workers share the same troubles as the people they serve. Moreover, the increasing deregulated work and unemployment have also involved social workers in many countries, bringing professionals to look for a job abroad or in other domains (i.e. Lazar, infra). In the meantime large sectors of social work activities seem to be no longer in use or be practiced by an alternative – and often less qualified – workforce. In addiction the social work training, often located at the higher education system, seems to be affected by an uncertain recognition (above all about the autonomous body of knowledge) and outclassed by more profitable educational programs. In other words, while the state changes its role and «alters the conditions of solidarity from collective-ensured to individually-earned» (Lorenz, 2004: 20), social work seems to be in danger of losing the support (de-legitimation) of both institutions and citizens.

[21] For instance in the Northern Italian regions the ratio of social workers per people is fixed at 1 per 2000 (referring only to professionals employed at the municipalities).

As Spolander and Martin underline, social workers seem to have a weak awareness of the implications of the globalization on their own work: due to the difficulties in theorizing and practicing, they risk to translate uncritically management ideology into their own professional practice.

In contrast to this situation, a few alternatives are emerging, sometimes as denounces or ideological debates, sometimes as a concrete effort of theorizing and practicing. Many authors actually suggest a re-conceptualization of social work along with a re-politicization of its role (Ioakimidis, Cruz Santos, Martinez Herrero, 2014). Despite the past, this advocated political role seems to be characterized by more pragmatic features, which are rooted in promotion of human rights and social justice (Ioakimidis, Cruz Santos, Martinez Herrero, 2014; Lombard, Twikirize, 2014) and widely pursue the dialogue among different social actors. In this perspective «the 'in-between space'» (Lorenz, 2004: 11) occupied by social work is not criticized, as happened in the past, but emphasized as a place where new forms of solidarity can shape. Promoting the dialogue between different social actors (i.e. institutions, Ngos, citizens) in the «in-between space», social workers can re-appropriate their constitutive mediation role, reinforce their identity and «external influence» (Wiess-Gal, Welbourne, 2008: 289) and enhance – through the democratic debate – the social solidarity along with the citizenship rights.

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Abstract

International social work, by *Annamaria Campanini*

The author describes the meaning and the importance of international social work by exploring its definitions, its historical perspectives and the evolution of focus in this broad area. The role and work done also by the international social work bodies and associations (Iassw, Icsw, Ifsw) in developing and promoting the Global agenda will be analysed as an effort to capture the dynamic interplay between global perspectives and local practice. The author considers the challenges for social work education in preparing professionals for future practice.

Key words
International social work, Global agenda, social work education

Life in a time of neoliberalism: social work in England, by *Gary Spolander* and *Linda Martin*

The authors consider the impact of neoliberal economic theory on social work care services in England and highlight the resulting challenges for the profession. In this context the paper seeks to highlight the impact of austerity policies, changes to the role of the state, increasing social inequality and disciplinary action, along with the development of marketised care services on the role and the resulting challenges for social work. They seek to critically consider the implications of neoliberal economic and political policy by concentrating, in particular, on how global capital allocation, the discourse of efficiency and effectiveness along with managerialism for social work practice and supervision.

Key words
Neoliberalism, England, social work, new public management

Social work education and practice in Italy: emerging issues, challenges and concerns, by *Alessandro Sicora*

The author describes social work education and practice in Italy, also in a historical perspective, and locates them in the present structure of the welfare system. Today the main ongoing challenge is to maintain adequate levels of support to individuals and families who are facing increasing difficulties. The role of an adequate social work education is of great importance in this task.

Key words
Social work education, social work practice, welfare mix, neoliberalism

Social work and welfare policy in Romania: history and current challenges, by *Florin Lazar*

Social work in Romania is deeply rooted in the religious charity of the 14th century. Social work education was established in the interwar period. After 25 years of ideologically based banning during the communist regime, social work education and the profession are being re-built, while also facing the challenges of global neoliberalism discourse and its local enacting. The author discusses recent developments and current challenges of social work in Romania.

Key words
Social work, Romania, social work education, history of social work, welfare

Social problems and social work in Russia, by *Irina L. Pervova*

The previous soviet contract between the state and the citizen was based on the obligation of the state to provide care for its citizens, but Russian citizens still have their expectations of the state-supported social services. In the sector of welfare services and care, in Russia significant developments have occurred since the late 1980s. Social services and the training of qualified social workers are key elements in these developments. A number of social services, social centers, social work

specialists have appeared in the last two decades. Higher education training for social workers is a major contributor to these achievements. According to the current legislation, the recipient of social services in Russia is a person or a family in a difficult life situation, defined as a circumstance that contravenes or may damage the livelihood of a citizen (family) and requires professional support and assistance.

Key words
Social work, vulnerable population, social services

Social work in Spain. Social cuts to public arena, by *María-Asunción Martínez-Román* and *Miguel-Ángel Mateo-Pérez*

The human rights are suffering severe cuts made in name of economics adjustments required by international policies. We are in a process of dramatic policy change. Universities and professional social workers are participating together with civil organizations in public debate criticizing the quality – or lack – of such policies.

Key words
Human rights, policy, social workers, structural violence, Spain

Social work in the United States of America, by *John Orwat* and *Amanda Besinger*

Social work in the United States maintains a longstanding history of education and practice on the policy, community, and micro level. Such education and practice is grounded in social justice and is driven by values that distinguish social work from other professions. The authors describe social work in the United States to include education, scope of practice, and the state of the workforce. They conclude with a discussion of trends for the future.

Key words
Social work education, social work in the US, social work practice

Brazilian social work, by *Joana Valente Santana* and *Maria Lúcia Teixeira Garcia*

The authors analyse three aspects of Brazilian social work. First, they provide an overview of Brazil, a country marked by extreme inequality that permeates the economic and social relationships of its population, including rapid contradictory economic growth and the preservation of inequality. Second, they examine the main challenges faced by the country's social workers. Third, they explore whether Brazil's undergraduate and postgraduate programs are oriented toward professional training that fosters a critical, creative, and propositional perspective.

Key words
Social work, Brazil, training policies for professionals

Social work education in Chile: towards a century of history, by *Paula Vidal Molina*

The author provides an overview of the history of social work education transformation in Chile. Starting from the paradigmatic analysis of organizations such as the *Escuela de servicio social* of the University of Chile, the author explores the orientations of social work schools in 1925 to 1960, 1960 to 1973 and 1973 to 2012. The structural reforms introduced by the military dictatorship had important implications for the most prominent Chilean public university and this is best studied through a historic lens which explores the origins, the changes that occurred between 1960 and 1973, and neoliberalism. All these influences have permeated social work education in Chile for almost 90 years.

Key words
Social work, history of Chile, academic background, University of Chile

Social work in Costa Rica: education, knowledge production, professional work, by *Maria Lorena Molina*

The central theme of the paper is social work in Costa Rica. The critical historical analyses conducted by the author explains the conditions in which both this profession and academic education originated and developed The paper also analyzes the link between the theoretical and the practical training processes and social reality, social policy, and professional responsibilities.

Key words
Social work, university education, professional practice

Social work in South Africa: context, concepts and some critical reflections, by *Lambert K. Engelbrecht* and *Marianne Strydom*

South Africa adopted a social development approach towards social welfare after the first democratic elections of the country in 1994. On a continuum of social service delivery, the primary target group is the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable people. It appears however after two decades of democracy, that social development, as intended in government policies, differs drastically from practice realities. However, strengths imbedded in the social work profession throughout the history of South Africa are shielding social workers from despair and disillusionment that may erode their pride and professionalism.

Key words
South Africa, social development, social welfare, developmental social work

Social work around the world: a comparative perspective, by *Elsabetta Kolar*

Comparing is a way to increase knowledge. In this article the comparison is employed to underline commonalities and differences characterizing social work in the ten countries represented in this special issue. As highlighted in this publication, the form of social work depends on

the cultural and political views of social problems and service recipients, so that the cultural and socio-political framework, the social issues, the social work education and practice become the focus of this paper.

Key words
social work, social policy, social work education, practice, comparison

Resumen

Trabajo social internacional, de *Annamaria Campanini*

La autora indaga acerca del significado y la importancia del trabajo social internacional. Analiza las diferentes definiciones desde una perspectiva histórica, mostrando la evolución del interés en el trabajo social internacional. Asimismo, analiza el trabajo realizado por las asociaciones internacionales (Iassw, Icsw, Ifsw) en el lanzamiento de la Agenda global. Plantea reflexiones sobre los retos a los que debe enfrentarse la educación en trabajo social para formar profesionales.

Palabras clave
Trabajo social internacional, agenda global, educación en trabajo social

La vida en una época de neoliberalismo: el trabajo social en Inglaterra, de *Gary Spolander* y *Linda Martin*

Los autores examinan la implementación y el impacto en los trabajadores sociales de Inglaterra de la teoría económica neoliberal, poniendo de manifiesto los retos derivados de la profesión. En este contexto, se pretende resaltar el impacto de las políticas de austeridad, los cambios en el papel del estado, el aumento de la desigualdad social y las medidas disciplinarias, junto con el desarrollo de servicios mercantilizados y los desafíos que derivan para el trabajo social. Los autores intentan tomar en consideración críticamente las implicaciones de las políticas económicas y políticas neoliberales concentrándose, en particular, en cómo las aplicaciones del capital global, el discurso de la eficiencia y la efectividad, junto con la corriente gerencial influyen en la práctica del trabajo social y la supervisión.

Palabras clave
Neoliberalismo, Inglaterra, trabajo social, nueva gestión pública

Educación y práctica del trabajo social en Italia: problemas, desafíos emergentes y preocupaciones, de *Alessandro Sicora*

El objetivo del autor es describir la educación y la práctica del trabajo social en Italia, también en una perspectiva histórica, y ubicarlos en el marco de la estructura actual del sistema de bienestar. El principal reto actual es mantener los niveles adecuados de apoyo a personas y familias que están enfrentando dificultades cada vez mayores. En esta tarea es muy importante el papel que juega una adecuada educación en el trabajo social.

Palabras clave
Educación, práctica, trabajo social, welfare mix, neoliberalismo

El trabajo social y la política de bienestar en Rumania: historia y desafíos actuales, de *Florin Lazar*

El trabajo social en Rumania tiene sus raíces en la caridad religiosa del siglo XIV. La educación en el trabajo social se estableció en el período de entreguerras. La educación en trabajo social y la profesión están siendo reconstruidas después de haber sido prohibidas 25 años por motivos ideológicos durante el régimen comunista, aunque se enfrentan a los desafíos del discurso del neoliberalismo global y su puesta en práctica local. El autor analiza la evolución reciente y los retos actuales del trabajo social en Rumania.

Palabras clave
Trabajo social, Rumania, educación en trabajo social, historia del trabajo social, prestaciones sociales

Problemas sociales y trabajo social en Rusia, de *Irina L. Pervova*

El anterior contrato soviético entre el estado y el ciudadano, estaba basado en la obligación del estado de prestar atención a sus ciudadanos. Sin embargo, los ciudadanos rusos todavía tienen expectativas de que el estado apoye los servicios sociales. Desde finales de los Ochenta se han producido cambios significativos en el sector de los servicios sociales y

la protección social. En esta evolución son elementos clave los servicios sociales y la formación de trabajadores sociales cualificados. En las últimas dos décadas han aparecido servicios sociales, centros sociales y trabajadores sociales especializados. La educación superior de trabajadores sociales es una importante contribución a estos logros. En Rusia, según la legislación vigente, el beneficiario de los servicios sociales es una persona o una familia en dificultad. Esta es definida como una circunstancia que vulnera o puede poner en peligro la subsistencia de un ciudadano (familia) y requiere apoyo y asistencia profesional.

Palabras clave
Trabajo social, población vulnerable, servicios sociales

Trabajo social en España. De los recortes sociales a la arena pública, de *María-Asunción Martínez-Román* y *Miguel-Ángel Mateo-Pérez*

Los derechos humanos están sufriendo severos recortes con la excusa de que las políticas internacionales exigen ajustes económicos. Hay un cambio drástico de política. Las universidades y trabajadores sociales profesionales junto con las organizaciones civiles, están participando en el debate público y denunciando la calidad de estas políticas o su inexistencia cuando no las hay.

Palabras clave
Derechos humanos, políticas, trabajadores sociales, sociedad civil, España

Trabajo social en los Estados Unidos, de *John Orwat* y *Amanda Besinger*

El trabajo social en los Estados Unidos mantiene una larga historia de educación y práctica profesional en la política, en la comunidad y en el nivel micro. Este tipo de educación y práctica, se basa en la justicia social y se orienta por los valores que distinguen el trabajo social de otras profesiones. Los autores describen el trabajo social en los Estados

Unidos incluyendo la educación, el ámbito de la práctica y la situación de la profesión. Concluyen con una discusión de las tendencias para el futuro.

Palabras clave
Educación en trabajo social; trabajo social en los Eeuu; práctica del trabajo social

El trabajo social brasileño, de *Joana Valente Santana* y *Maria Lúcia Teixeira Garcia*

Los autores analizan tres aspectos del trabajo social brasileño: en primer lugar, se ofrece una visión general del Brasil, un país marcado por la desigualdad extrema que impregna las relaciones económicas y sociales de su población, incluyendo un rápido crecimiento económico y el mantenimiento de la desigualdad; en segundo lugar, se examinan los principales retos que afrontan los trabajadores sociales del país; y en tercer lugar, se explora si los programas de pregrado y postgrado de Brasil están orientados hacia la formación profesional que fomente una perspectiva crítica y creativa.

Palabras clave
Trabajo social, Brasil, políticas de formación de los profesionales

La educación del trabajo social en Chile: hacia un siglo de historia, de *Paula Vidal Molina*

La autora aborda panorámicamente la historia de las modificaciones sufridas en la formación del trabajo social en Chile. Demuestra las orientaciones de las escuelas entre el ciclo 1925-1960, 1960-1973 y 1973-2012, a través de un estudio de un caso paradigmático como es la Escuela de servicio social dependiente de la Universidad de Chile. La universidad pública más importante de Chile y golpeada fuertemente por las reformas estructurales realizadas por la dictadura militar. Se puede observar como los procesos (los origines, procesos de cambios entre 1960 y 1973, y posteriormente el neoliberalismo) históricos han permeado la formación de casi 90 años, en el trabajo social chileno.

Palabras clave
Trabajo social, historia de Chile, formación académica, Universidad de Chile

Trabajo social en Costa Rica: educación, producción de conocimiento, trabajo profesional, de *Maria Lorena Molina*

El tema central se refiere al trabajo social en Costa Rica. Los aspectos que se tratan corresponden a la perspectiva crítica-histórica. A partir de la misma se hace una sinopsis de los aspectos que constituyen las condiciones para el origen y desarrollo de esta profesión, en lo que refiere a: características de la formación académica y del ejercicio profesional. Se menciona la vinculación de los procesos formativos teóricos y prácticos con la realidad social, la política social y consecuentemente con los ámbitos del ejercicio y las atribuciones profesionales.

Palabras clave
Trabajo social, educación universitaria, ejercicio profesional

El trabajo social en Sudáfrica: contexto, conceptos y algunas reflexiones críticas, de *Lambert K. Engelbrecht* y *Marianne Strydom*

Sudáfrica adoptó un enfoque de desarrollo social orientado hacia el bienestar social después de las primeras elecciones democráticas que hubo en el país en 1994. Una asistencia continua de servicios sociales se destina al grupo más pobre entre los indigentes y las personas más vulnerables. Después de dos décadas de democracia, se tiene la impresión que el desarrollo social así como lo consideran las políticas de gobierno no corresponde con las prácticas en la realidad. Sin embargo, los puntos fuertes de la profesión en el ámbito del trabajo social a través de la historia de Sudáfrica, protegen a los trabajadores sociales de la desesperación y la desilusión que afectan su orgullo y profesionalidad.

Palabras clave
Sudáfrica, desarrollo social, bienestar social, trabajo social para el desarrollo

El trabajo social en el mundo: una perspectiva comparativa, de *Elisabetta Kolar*

La comparación es una manera de elevar el conocimiento. La autora utiliza el concepto de comparación para evidenciar los rasgos comunes y distintivos que caracterizan el trabajo social en los nueve países considerados en este número especial. Como lo demuestran los autores del volumen, el contexto socio-político y cultural influencia la percepción de lo que se considera un problema social, como asimismo las representaciones de los beneficiarios de los servicios. Por esta razón, a la autora le parece apropiado tomar algunos aspectos importantes relacionados con los problemas socio-políticos y culturales y con las políticas sociales, antes de centrarse en las características de la formación de los trabajadores sociales y el estado de la profesión en los diferentes países.

Palabras clave: trabajo social, política social, formación, práctica, comparación

Sintesi

Servizio sociale internazionale, di *Annamaria Campanini*

L'autrice riflette sul significato e sull'importanza del servizio sociale internazionale esplorando le definizioni, la prospettiva storica e l'evoluzione dei principali fuochi d'attenzione. Cerca di cogliere l'interazione dinamica tra le prospettive globali e le pratiche più locali e analizza il ruolo e il lavoro delle organizzazioni e associazioni internazionali di servizio sociale (Iassw - Icsw- Ifsw) nello sviluppo e nella promozione della *Global agenda*. Alla luce di questi sforzi internazionali, prende in considerazione anche le sfide della formazione degli assistenti sociali nel preparare i professionisti per la pratica futura.

Parole chiave
Servizio sociale internazionale, Global agenda, formazione al servizio sociale

La vita ai tempi del neoliberismo: il servizio sociale in Inghilterra, di *Gary Spolander* e *Linda Martin*

Gli autori considerano l'impatto della teoria economica neoliberale sui servizi sociali in Inghilterra e mettono in evidenza le sfide che ne derivano per la professione di assistente sociale. In questo contesto propongono di evidenziare l'impatto delle politiche di austerità, le modifiche apportate al ruolo dello stato, l'aumento delle disuguaglianze sociali e le azioni disciplinari di controllo sociale, insieme allo sviluppo dei servizi sociali di mercato e al relativo impatto sul ruolo e sulle sfide che ne derivano per il servizio sociale. Gli autori considerano criticamente le implicazioni di politica economica e di politica neoliberista concentrandosi, in particolare, sulla distribuzione del capitale internazionale e sul tema dell'efficienza e dell'efficacia in rapporto al managerialismo applicato alla pratica e alla supervisione del servizio sociale.

Parole chiave
Neoliberismo, Inghilterra, servizio sociale, new public management

Formazione e pratica del servizio sociale in Italia: problemi, sfide emergenti e criticità, di *Alessandro Sicora*

L'autore descrive, anche in prospettiva storica, la pratica e la formazione del servizio sociale in Italia collocandole nel quadro dell'attuale struttura del sistema di *welfare*. La sfida principale di oggi è di mantenere livelli adeguati di sostegno alle persone e alle famiglie che si trovano ad affrontare crescenti difficoltà. Il ruolo di un'adeguata formazione al servizio sociale è di grande importanza nel perseguire tale compito.

Parole chiave
Formazione, pratica, servizio sociale, welfare mix, neoliberismo

Servizio sociale e politiche di welfare in Romania: storia e sfide attuali, di *Florin Lazar*

Il servizio sociale in Romania ha le sue radici nella beneficenza religiosa del XIV secolo. La formazione degli assistenti sociali è stata avviata nel periodo tra le due guerre. Dopo 25 anni di divieto ideologico-comunista, la formazione e la professione sono state ripensate con l'obiettivo di affrontare le sfide neoliberiste poste a livello globale e locale.

Parole chiave
Servizio sociale, Romania, formazione al servizio sociale, storia del servizio sociale, welfare

Problemi sociali e servizio sociale in Russia, di *Irina L. Pervova*

Il precedente contratto tra lo Stato e il cittadino di epoca sovietica si basava sull'obbligo del primo di fornire cure al secondo. Ancora oggi i cittadini russi si attendono servizi sociali erogati dallo Stato. Dalla fine degli anni Ottanta, nel settore dei servizi di assistenza e cura, si sono registrati sviluppi significativi in Russia. I servizi sociali e la formazione degli assistenti sociali qualificati sono gli elementi chiave dell'attuale nuovo corso. La formazione di livello universitario pure. Il destinata-

rio dei servizi sociali è una persona o una famiglia che vive una situazione difficile, definita come quella circostanza che danneggia o può danneggiare la vita di un cittadino (famiglia) e che richiede supporto e assistenza professionali.

Parole chiave
Servizio sociale, popolazione vulnerabile, servizi sociali

Il servizio sociale in Spagna. Tagli sociali alla sfera pubblica, di *María-Asunción Martínez-Román* e *Miguel-Ángel Mateo-Pérez*

Le politiche di tutela dei diritti umani stanno subendo severi tagli sulla base del convincimento che gli equilibri internazionali esigono aggiustamenti economici. C'è un drastico cambiamento nella politica. Università e assistenti sociali, insieme alle organizzazioni della società civile, stanno partecipando al dibattito pubblico e denunciano la qualità di queste politiche, o, quando queste sono assenti, la loro inesistenza.

Parole chiave
Diritti umani, assistenti sociali, politica, società civile, Spagna

Il servizio sociale negli Stati Uniti, di *John Orwat* e *Amanda Besinger*

Il servizio sociale negli Stati Uniti ha una lunga storia di formazione e pratica: sulla politica, sulla comunità e a livello micro. Tale formazione e tale pratica si basano sulla giustizia sociale e sono guidate dai valori che contraddistinguono il servizio sociale dalle altre professioni. Gli autori descrivono il servizio sociale negli Stati Uniti includendo la formazione, l'ambito della pratica e lo stato della forza lavoro. Concludono il saggio con una riflessione sulle tendenze future.

Parole chiave
Formazione al servizio sociale, servizio sociale negli Usa, pratica di servizio sociale

Il servizio sociale brasiliano, di *Joana Valente Santana* e *Maria Lúcia Teixeira Garcia*

Le autrici analizzano tre aspetti del servizio sociale brasiliano. In primo luogo propongono una panoramica sul Brasile, un paese caratterizzato da un'estrema disuguaglianza che permea i rapporti economici e sociali della popolazione, in presenza di una rapida e contraddittoria crescita economica accompagnata dalla conservazione delle disuguaglianze. In seconda battuta esaminano le principali sfide affrontate dagli assistenti sociali nel contesto socio-economico delineato. In terza istanza cercano di capire se i corsi di laurea e post-laurea in Brasile siano orientati verso una formazione professionale atta a favorire una prospettiva critica, creativa e propositiva.

Parole chiave
Servizio sociale, Brasile, politiche formative per professionisti

La formazione al servizio sociale in Cile: verso un secolo di storia, di *Paula Vidal Molina*

L'autrice illustra il quadro generale della storia delle trasformazioni intervenute nella formazione del servizio sociale in Cile. Descrive gli orientamenti delle scuole nei periodi 1925-1960, 1960-1973 e 1973-2012, attraverso lo studio di un caso paradigmatico, quello della *Escuela de servicio sociale* dell'Università del Cile. La più importante università pubblica del Cile è stata colpita duramente dalle riforme strutturali intraprese dalla dittatura militare. I processi storici (le origini, i cambiamenti intervenuti tra il 1960 e il 1973 e, successivamente, il neoliberismo) hanno permeato la formazione del servizio sociale cileno per quasi novant'anni.

Parole chiave
Servizio sociale, storia del Cile, esperienze di insegnamento, Università del Cile

Servizio sociale in Costa Rica: formazione, produzione di conoscenza e lavoro professionale, di *Maria Lorena Molina*

Il tema centrale sviluppato dall'autrice è il servizio sociale in Costa Rica. La trattazione viene condotta in una prospettiva critico-storica, proponendo una sintesi delle condizioni che hanno condotto all'origine e allo sviluppo di questa professione, con particolare riferimento alla formazione accademica e alla pratica professionale. Menziona il collegamento tra i processi di formazione teorica e pratica con la realtà sociale, con la politica sociale e di conseguenza con i campi di esercizio e le responsabilità professionali.

Parole chiave
Servizio sociale, formazione universitaria, pratica professionale

Il servizio sociale in Sudafrica: contesto, concetti e riflessioni critiche, di *Lambert K. Engelbrecht* e *Marianne Strydom*

Il Sudafrica ha adottato un approccio allo sviluppo nelle proprie politiche sociali dopo le prime elezioni democratiche del 1994. Nell'ambito dell'erogazione dei servizi sociali, il principale gruppo dei destinatari è rappresentato dai più poveri tra la popolazione indigente e vulnerabile. Dopo due decenni di democrazia appare chiaro che lo sviluppo sociale, come inteso nelle politiche del governo, sia drasticamente diverso dalla realtà. Tuttavia, i punti di forza sviluppati dal servizio sociale professionale nel corso della storia del Sudafrica stanno proteggendo gli assistenti sociali dallo sconforto e dalla disillusione che potrebbero erodere il loro orgoglio e la loro professionalità.

Parole chiave
Sudafrica, sviluppo sociale, politiche sociali, developmental social work

Il servizio sociale nel mondo: una prospettiva comparativa, di *Elisabetta Kolar*

Comparare è un modo per accrescere la conoscenza. In questo articolo la comparazione viene utilizzata per far emergere tratti comuni e distin-

tivi che caratterizzano il *social work* nelle dieci nazioni rappresentate in questo *special issue*. Come evidenziato nel volume, il contesto socio-politico e culturale influenza la percezione di ciò che viene considerato un problema sociale nonché le rappresentazioni dei beneficiari dei servizi. Per questo motivo l'autrice analizza alcuni aspetti salienti relativi al contesto socio-politico e culturale, ai problemi e alle politiche sociali, prima di soffermarsi sulle caratteristiche dei percorsi formativi degli assistenti sociali e sullo status della professione nei diversi paesi.

Parole chiave: servizio sociale, politiche sociali, formazione, pratica professionale, comparazione