

# THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

## LA PROFESIONALIZACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN SOCIAL EN LA ESCUELA A PROFISSIONALIZAÇÃO DA EDUCAÇÃO SOCIAL NA ESCOLA

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**KEYWORDS:**

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**ABSTRACT:** The formal introduction of Social Education professionals in schools in Spain dates back to 2002 in Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha. However, social education as a practice and occupation not yet professionalized, anticipating theory and regulation, has already dealt with pupils with school problems since the 1970s, carried out by social services or multidisciplinary teams at the community level. In this article, we analyze the level of professionalization of Social Education in schools from the broad perspective of the universe of school socio-educational action. The analysis is based on the theory of professions and uses the selection of the actors involved in its professionalization as an analytical tool. A qualitative deductive approach is used as a methodological procedure, following the proposals of the Glaserian version of Grounded Theory and the Atlas.ti program. The results indicate that there are de-professionalizing factors such as the fragmentation of the profession, the scarcity of employment, the absence of monopolization, deficient regularization, lack of autonomy of professionals, the assignment of non-educational tasks, and precariousness due to unstable financing, as well as professionalizing factors such as the efficiency of professionals, satisfaction of the educational community, and the activism of professional groups. Depending on the executing entity, three models of socio-educational action in the school can be distinguished. Using a critical empirical nominalism, we can conceptually distinguish two educational realities based on the bond of the agent, the orientation of the activities, the intensity of the intervention, and the professional who performs it.

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<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b>                  educación social;                  profesión;                  escuela;                  profesionalización;                  empleo</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> La introducción formal de profesionales de la Educación Social en centros escolares en España se remonta al 2002 de la mano de Extremadura y Castilla-La Mancha. Sin embargo, la educación social como práctica y ocupación aún no profesionalizada, adelantándose a la teoría y a la reglamentación, ya se ocupaba del alumnado con problemáticas escolares desde los años 70, realizada desde los servicios sociales o los equipos multidisciplinares de ámbito comunitario. En este artículo pretendemos analizar el nivel de profesionalización de la Educación Social en los centros escolares desde esta perspectiva amplia del universo de la acción socioeducativa escolar. Para llevar a cabo este cometido, se fundamentó en la teoría de las profesiones empleando como herramienta analítica una selección de los actores implicados en su profesionalización. Se utilizó como procedimiento metodológico un enfoque cualitativo inductivo, siguiendo las propuestas de la versión <i>straussiana</i> de la Teoría Fundamentada y el programa Atlas.ti. Los resultados señalan que existen factores desprofesionalizantes como la fragmentación de la profesión, la exigüidad del empleo, la ausencia de monopolización, una regularización deficiente, falta de autonomía de los profesionales, la asignación de tareas no educativas, la precarización por una financiación inestable, etc. así como factores profesionalizantes como la eficiencia de los profesionales, satisfacción de la comunidad educativa y el activismo de los grupos profesionales. Además se observaron particularidades en función de la entidad ejecutante, lo que nos llevó a distinguir tres modelos de acción socioeducativa en la escuela. Valiéndonos de un nominalismo empírico crítico, hemos realizado una distinción conceptual del campo para describir dos realidades educativas basándonos en el vínculo del agente, la orientación de las actividades, la intensidad de la intervención y el profesional que la desempeña.</p>
<p><b>PALVRAS-CHAVE:</b>                  educação social;                  profissão;                  escola;                  profissionalização;                  emprego</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> A introdução formal de profissionais de Educação Social nas escolas na Espanha remonta a 2002 na Extremadura e Castilla-La Mancha. No entanto, a educação social como prática e ocupação ainda não profissionalizada, à frente da teoria e das regulamentações, já vem lidando com alunos com problemas escolares desde a década de 1970, realizada por serviços sociais ou equipes multidisciplinares na comunidade. Neste artigo pretendemos analisar o nível de profissionalização da Educação Social nas escolas a partir dessa perspectiva ampla do universo da ação socioeducativa escolar. Para realizar essa tarefa, baseou-se na teoria das profissões utilizando como ferramenta analítica uma seleção dos atores envolvidos em sua profissionalização. A abordagem qualitativa indutiva foi utilizada como procedimento metodológico, seguindo as propostas da versão <i>straussiana</i> da Grounded Theory e do programa Atlas.ti. Os resultados indicam que existem fatores desprofesionalizantes como a fragmentação da profissão, a escassez de emprego, a ausência de monopolização, uma regularização deficiente / má regularização, falta de autonomia dos profissionais, atribuição de tarefas não educativas, precariedade por financiamento instável, etc. além de fatores profissionalizantes como a eficiência dos profissionais, a satisfação da comunidade educativa e o ativismo dos grupos profissionais. Além disso, foram observadas particularidades dependendo da entidade executora, o que nos levou a distinguir três modelos de ação socioeducativa na escola. Utilizando um nominalismo empírico crítico, fizemos uma distinção conceitual do campo para descrever duas realidades educacionais a partir do vínculo do agente, a orientação das atividades, a intensidade da intervenção e o profissional que a realiza.</p>

## 1. Introduction, justification, and objectives

Like Social Education in particular, the professionalising development of Social Education at school does not follow a linear and equal evolution in the different geographic areas. Programs are developed in territories with different activities and conditions, which somehow determine the programs' professional profile and the result of their professionalisation.

The incorporation of Social Education professionals is conditioned by a set of political-educational decisions, with different levels of responsibility: state, regional, and school. Consequently, Spain does not have a standard collaborative plan between the different administrations at the state level to incorporate Social Education professionals in schools. Instead, isolated actions are carried

out by the various administrative levels and the community framework of each territory.

Roughly speaking, in an attempt to systematise the status of the issue, we could conclude that the incorporation has been carried out, basically, in two ways:

- by *institutionalisation*. The Administration formally assumes and *regulates* incorporation through regional regulations.
- by implementing ad hoc projects by the school and different institutions or associations (public, private, or from the third sector).

The institutional incorporation of Social Education professionals into schools began in Castilla La-Mancha with the Order of June 26, 2002, and the first professionals to join schools were from Extremadura in 2002. However, in the professional development of Social Education, praxis is

ahead of theory and regulations (Caride, 2005; Romans, Petrus & Trilla, 2000). A profession since the 1970s, Social Education has been attending to students with school problems (i.e., absenteeism, school dropout, etc.) mainly through multidisciplinary teams from the community sphere or through social services (Melendro, 2008). These experiences are diverse and subject to local contingencies. Frequently, networking has been the driving force behind these partnerships. Also, social realities have driven the demand, usually for timely local projects with limited space and objectives. Only in some cases have they led to stable projects over time.

In recent years, the existing research on institutionalized school socio-educational action in Spain has increased notably (Bretones, Solé, Meneses, Castillo & Fábregues, 2019; Vila, Cortés, & Martín, 2019; Cabrera & Rosales, 2018; Terrón-Caro, Cárdenas-Rodríguez, Rodríguez, 2017; González, Olmos & Serrate, 2016; Ortega & Mohedano, 2011). Most of these works are descriptive-correlational studies of the professionals' functions. They have allowed us to understand the professionals' place in the centres and the details of their incorporation. They also report the impact of professionals' actions and assess the school community. However, after almost 20 years of formal incorporation and many more years of informal collaboration, we consider that there are important gaps:

- There is a lack of official figures on the expansion of Social Education professionals in schools,
- There is a lack of evaluations of the effectiveness of specific projects beyond subjective assessments or descriptions, focusing on quantitative variables to assess their real impact on schools,
- There is a lack of studies focusing on non-institutionalised socio-educational action in schools, social services, and non-profit organisations.

Although there are notable essays and reflections on praxis (Castillo, Paredes & Bou, 2016; Barranco, Díaz & Fernández, 2012; Castro, Malheiro, Rodríguez, 2006), there is a lack of systematic studies such as those in Europe (Speck, 2019; Speck & Jensen, 2014; Kastirke & Holtbrink, 2013; Olk & Speck, 2009; Elsner & Rademacker, 1997).

The aim of this article is to analyse the status and process of the professionalisation of Social Education in schools from this broad perspective of school socio-educational action. Institutionalised and ad hoc projects, that is, external professionals working from other entities in collaboration with

the school, will be considered (Hoyos, Galán & Vilar, 2003; ASEDES, 2007; Pelegrí, Juliá & Mata, 2017; Ballester & Ballester, 2014).

The aim was to determine professionals' conditions, progress, and setbacks, and the effects of their actions, and thus establish the professionalising and deprofessionalising factors, assess their development, and determine whether professionals are being legitimised in this new work scenario.

## 2. Methodology

We followed the methodological procedure of the *Straussian version* of the grounded theory. This systematic inductive method of data analysis, oriented toward an interpretative description, detects regularities in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). Thus, we are guided by the results of such interpretative analysis in other works (Soriano and Trinidad, 2014) applied to other investigations on Social Education in school (Vila et al., 2019) and on professional socio-educational action with adolescents (Montserrat & Melendro, 2017).

Following the precepts of the grounded theory, the theoretical criterion to explore the effects of the actions of Social Education professionals was the theory of professions and its articulating concepts: occupation-profession, professionalisation-deprofessionalisation, monopolisation, professional field, etc. On the other hand, the system proposed by Sáez & García (2006) was used as an analytical tool, examining the interactions of a selection of the key actors involved in their professionalisation: professionals, State, market and clients, and assessing the resources that each actor contributed to the professionalisation and the consequences of their interactions.

As the approach to professionalisation requires questioning the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the praxis (Sáez, 2003a, p.57), the object of analysis was 32 projects developed in different autonomous communities. We analysed more than 70 documentary sources, coding them according to their content: existing regulations (decrees, agreements), project information (reports, descriptions, job announcements, entities), and effects of the action (investigations, evaluation of results, etc.). All these sources were coded and interpreted through categorisations (incidents, open and axial coding) and triangulation of sources, following the grounded theory procedures, analysing the information with the Atlas.ti software. As quality criteria, we followed the recommendations of theoretical saturation, constant comparative method, adjustment, generality, and suitability of the theoretical interpretation obtained (Trinidad, Carrero & Soriano, 2006).

**Table 1: Projects analysed**

Communities and projects	Type I Regulated	Type II Semi-institutionalized Social services	Type III Outsourced Third Sector
Financing and/or execution	<i>Ministries of Education</i>	<i>Social Services-Municipalities</i>	<i>Third sector</i>
ANDALUSIA	Andalusia: Primary and Secondary Orienteering Teams		Mentor Program
ARAGON		PEEE of Zaragoza	
CANARY ISLANDS	ESEC1 and 2: Secondary, Primary and EPA		
CASTILLA LA MANCHA	HEIs		
CATALONIA	USEE/SIEI	Social Commissions; various projects	UEC
	TIS of Quality Plans	ES in Quality Plans	ES in Quality Plans
ESTREMADURA	HEIs		
GALICIA		Labañou Civic Centre; Relate bo roll UMAD Santiago de Compostela; Querote, Coruña Educa Centres	Aleida; Atalia Social ; dorna ; ACLAD: we all count, Aloumiños, Arabías, Mentor
BALEARIC ISLANDS		Several programs to improve coexistence, absenteeism.	Alter Program
		TISOC-TISE in collaboration with Social Services	
MADRID		Absenteeism Prevention Program, IRIS	
NAVARRRE		<i>School Promoter Program</i>	
State	PROA, Technical Teaching Staff Community Services.	Learning Communities	

### 3. Results

#### *Quantity and quality of employment*

The main effects of regularised projects for the professionalisation of Social Education in schools are the creation of a new employment niche suitable for Social Education as an educational practice. However, these posts are not always reserved for qualified Social Education professionals. Although graduates occupy most of the positions, they are not exclusive, and other qualifications have access to the profession, albeit only a minority.

Concerning the quantitative variables, the institutionalised projects are expanding, with a recurring characteristic: they are always initiatives

mediated by the respective Education Departments. However, although a positive evolution can be observed, there are also some shadows. On the one hand, this growth is slow because “institutionalised” projects are a minority. Only three cases could be considered fully institutionalised: Extremadura, Castilla La-Mancha, and Andalusia. The ESEC of the Canary Islands, the Socio-educational Intervention Technicians (TISE) of the Balearic Islands, and the Social Integration Technicians (TIS) of Catalonia are less stable or professionalising institutionalisations, but with common features in their implementation

Moreover, the number of social educators hired in this modality is quite low compared to the total number of schools in the territory. The reason for this is that social educators have not

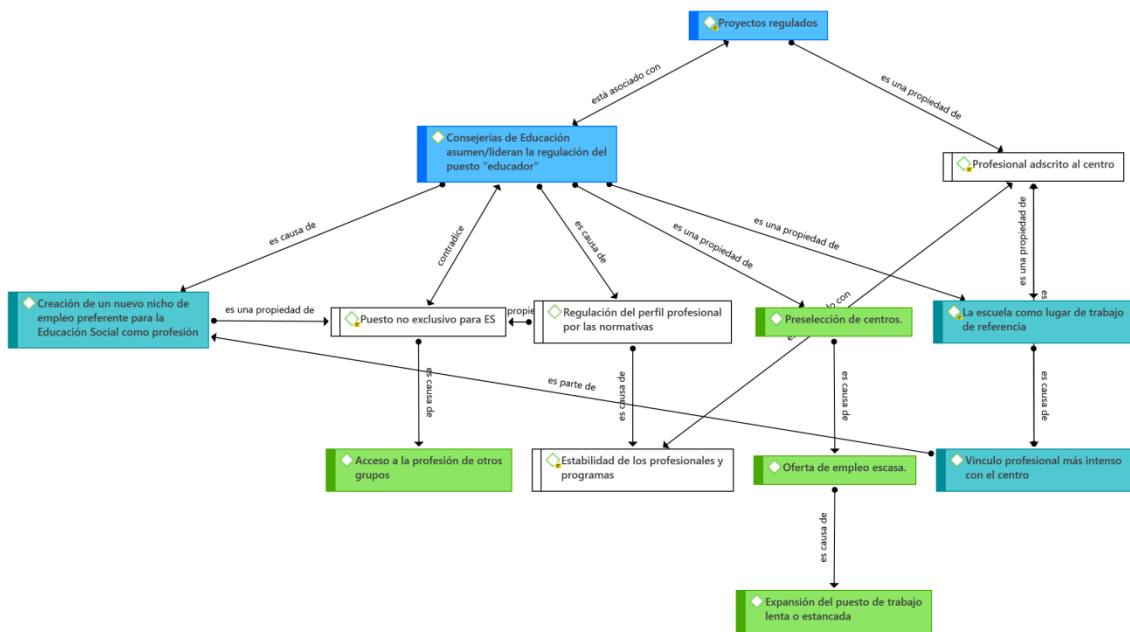


Figure 1: Conceptual network of the quality and quantity of employment of regulated projects.

been incorporated into all schools on a massive scale. Instead, their status has been reduced to a pre-selection of schools delimited by regulations, subject to schools located in problematic areas or linked to specific “at risk” population groups. Thus, this expansion does not take place despite the positive evaluations of the experiences by the schools and the demands of both the professional associations and the participating educational community.

In fact, there were also some setbacks, as is the case in the Canary Islands, where the ESEC was abolished after its second edition due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This decision contrasts, for example, with the actions undertaken in Germany (Straß, Engels, Hettler, Kunitsch, Heike and De bartolo, 2020), where social education professionals were entrusted with monitoring and supporting students’ learning and well-being at home. Another example is the Balearic Islands, where the TISE programme was abolished shortly after its launch during the cuts of the 2008 economic crisis (like so many other diversity programs). After being reinstated, it has finally been replaced in the 2021-22 academic year by technical teachers of community services (PTSC) (Serra, 2021). People with degrees in Social Education can access PTSC, but it is not exclusive. Although, at the time, the figure of the PTSC was one of the first experiences of institutional social intervention at school,

some studies reveal a basically *school-based intervention model*, which hardly differs from the teaching staff (Ortega & Mohedano, 2011; Terrón *et al.* 2017). However, considering their evaluative function and teaching role, the teaching staff may not be suitable as the sole school socio-educational figure (Borges & Cid, 2019).

There is thus a slow, albeit progressive, trend of incorporating social education professionals into schools through institutionalisation, although with some stagnation and setbacks. This slow progress highlights the absence of a firm commitment by governments to provide stable professionalised school socio-educational action in schools.

For their part, the employment situation of professionals in social services or municipal administrations has a strong local character. The management and development of employment vary depending on the territory where the professionals are located and the level of the administration that finances them, due to the different available economic resources. All these factors have a direct impact on the stability of the projects and the professionals. Thus, we find very volatile programmes, possibly due to deficient financing, which makes it difficult to provide continuity, and also to the versatility of the service, which allows adapting resources and programmes to new needs.

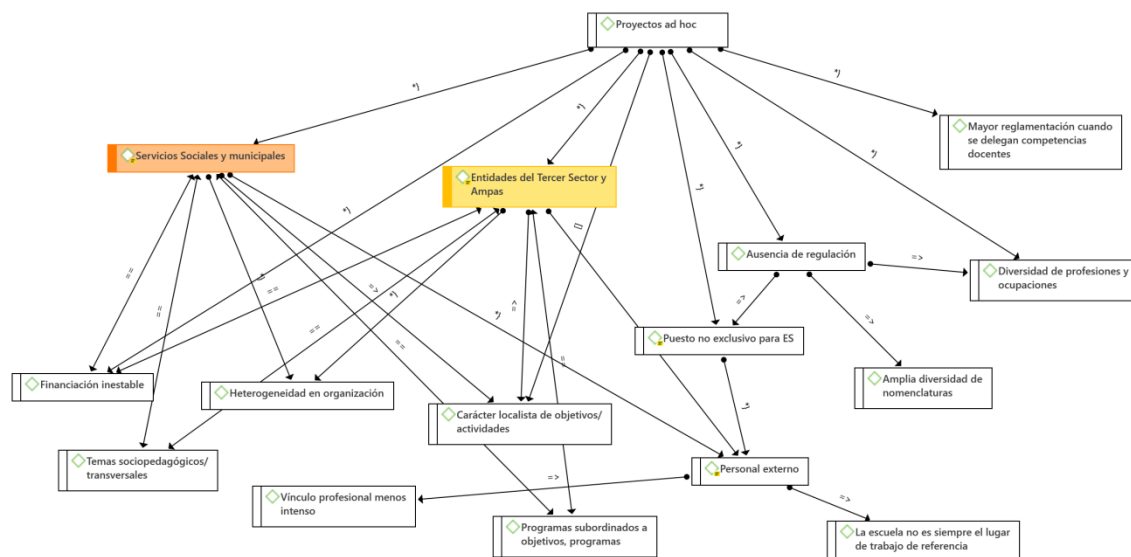


Figure 2: Conceptual network of the quantity and quality of employment in ad hoc projects.

The viability of third-sector projects depends mainly on the subsidies granted by the State through the different administrative levels and the school management teams' willingness to implement these forms of socio-educational action. Indeed, the viability of this type of project depends on the combination of three factors: the availability of funding, the entity that provides it, and the school that accepts it.

The lack of stability in project financing is one of the most relevant problems for the survival and effectiveness of projects, for the following reasons:

- Educational criteria must be adapted to the economic conditions—the date on which the subsidies are released and the timeframe stipulated by the subsidies—, not to the needs arising from the intervention and the objectives to be achieved.
- Funding is intermittent and does not allow for long-term planning.
- The lack of stability in funding affects the professionals' stability, through continuous changes in staff and partial working days (Pelegrí *et al.*, 2017). Temporariness and staff changes do not allow the consolidation of projects or the professional's role in the school.

On the other hand, the professionals' entry into schools is subject to the management teams' decision and not to legal imperatives, so the school sector also modulates the intensity of the intervention. We emphasise that the educational institution can introduce this perspective and the vigour with which it is performed. Thus, the existence of the program and the intensity of the

intervention remain at the discretion of the school and its sensitivity to the socio-educational issue.

### The link between legislative and implementing agencies

The regulations stipulated by the respective Education Departments establish a link with the profession which contributes significantly to guaranteeing a preferential position for Social Education as a profession, as well to its stability. In other words, the Education Departments tend to influence the type of professional link established with the school. Regulated programs tend to make the school the place of reference for social educators, as opposed to non-regulated programs, which use external personnel.

In general, and also within the regulated programs (e.g., Andalusia), we observe the following models of approach to socio-educational work depending on the link between the agent and the school:

- on the one hand, there is a tendency to assign a professional to a school (or more than one), in which the school is the place of reference/workplace; work is done *for* and *from* the school,
- on the other hand, there is the model we have called “socio-educational action teams”, in which intervention is conceived itinerantly by creating teams that operate in schools that request such action or after offering a catalogue of services through the implementation of targeted programmes. In this case, the professionals are not linked to any school but work in geographically delimited areas, based on the schools' demands, either at the



schools' initiative or that of the professionals/entities.

Externality has its risks: establishing fictitious processes of cooperation (Castillo & Bretones, 2014), in which work is carried out exclusively "on demand" by the teaching staff, when the problem is well-established, and the school is mainly seeking to get rid of a problem (Pelegrí et al., 2017). This situation affects the professional's autonomy and capacity for decision-making negatively.

In the case of *ad hoc* programmes, there may be collaboration agreements between entities. However, a higher level of regulation is observed when the activities concern curricular objectives. For instance, in the case of the UEC and the Alter program, the school delegates teaching to a non-governmental entity. In this case, there is a high degree of supervision of the intervention because school activities are carried out with didactic, assessable, and accreditable content.

Although such regulation creates a normative framework, it is not sufficiently clear. There seem to be several reasons: on the one hand, the

dispersion of the functions in different regulations (Galán, 2008) makes it difficult to have a univocal/unambiguous vision of the tasks entrusted to the professionals. On the other hand, the lack of delimitation of professional functions means that professionals are assigned tasks that are not within their competence (Terrón et. al. 2017; Ortega & Mohedano 2011). There is also the risk of not clarifying the potential professional overlap with other school figures.

### Fragmentation of the profession

As in many other fields of work, in Social Education, there is great flexibility in the access to the profession and a great variety of nomenclatures and qualifications to perform similar functions. Each denomination refers to a part of what the profession covers. In addition, the qualification required is different depending on the employer, creating confusion in the labour market, and leading to unnecessary fragmentation of the profession (Sáez 2003a, p.150).

**Table 2: Degrees and nomenclatures of the job.**

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	Nomenclature	Title	
Institutionalised Programmes	Educator	Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha, Andalusia	Degree Social Education but NOT Exclusive. Access to the profession: Psychopedagogy, Teaching, Psychology, Pedagogy, Social Work and unspecified others.
		Canary Islands ESEC, PROA	Exclusive qualification for registered Social Education professionals
	TISE: Socio-educational intervention technicians		Degree in Social Education and Social Work
	TIS: Social Integration Technician		Social Integration Technicians (Diploma in SE scores but not recruited under this category)
	Educator USEE and SIEI		Non-exclusive Degree in Social Education
<i>ad hoc</i> programmes	Educator or monitor		Educator monitor Sociocultural animator
	Sociocultural mediators school promoters Linguistic agents of Interculturality and cohesion, Technicians/techniques		Social Education, Social Work, Psychology, Psychopedagogy, Pedagogy, Social Integration Technicians, Unspecified Bachelor's Degree, etc.

Despite being a position with an obvious socio-educational nuance called "educator", it can be observed that social education is occupied by professionals with other qualifications. Only in the case of the Canary Islands, through the mediation of the professional collective, does Social Education monopolise this job. There is somewhat more homogeneity within the regularised programmes

because they restrict access qualifications and standardise the nomenclature. These facts highlight the effects on professionalisation when the professional sector controls working conditions (Sáez & Molina, 2006, pp.261-294) and the importance of the Administration's regulation of the profession. The professional association is currently trying to achieve this through the enactment of

a Social Education law that would regulate the profession.

It would be interesting to reflect on the extent to which different responsibilities and skills are required to explain and justify the recruitment of professionals with such different levels of training, as well as the relevance of allowing access to the profession to other qualifications/occupations. While some authors allude to deficiencies in the Administration's knowledge of the the profile of Social Education and Social Integration Technicians (e.g., Castillo & Bretones, 2014), we are more inclined to consider that it involves economic reasons, as the administrations do not have the same contribution (weniger steuergruppe). In this case, the Administration hires by levels and not by professional profiles. This situation does not correspond either to training or acquired training but rather to administrative interests, with negative effects on Social Education, while revealing that there is no explicit demand for the profession by the Administration (Sáez 2003a, p. 147).

The diversity of nomenclatures to designate technically identical jobs makes it difficult to make the professional figure of Social Education at school visible, as it is diluted behind coordinators, technicians, promoters, monitors, and animators, etc. This fragmentation of the profession leads to unnecessary flexibility of access that is detrimental to Social Education professionals, whose employment options are thereby restricted, and their professional specificity is blurred. Hence, reclaiming total educators is important (Sáez 2003a, p. 151).

### Properties of Activities

The pedagogical nature of the activities are mainly focused on acting in conflictive situations and dealing with students with some kind of problem. Professionals are also assigned teaching, monitoring or control tasks, or excessively bureaucratic functions. Their role in activities related to the promotion of coexistence stands out (Sierra, Vila, Caparrós & Martín, 2016).

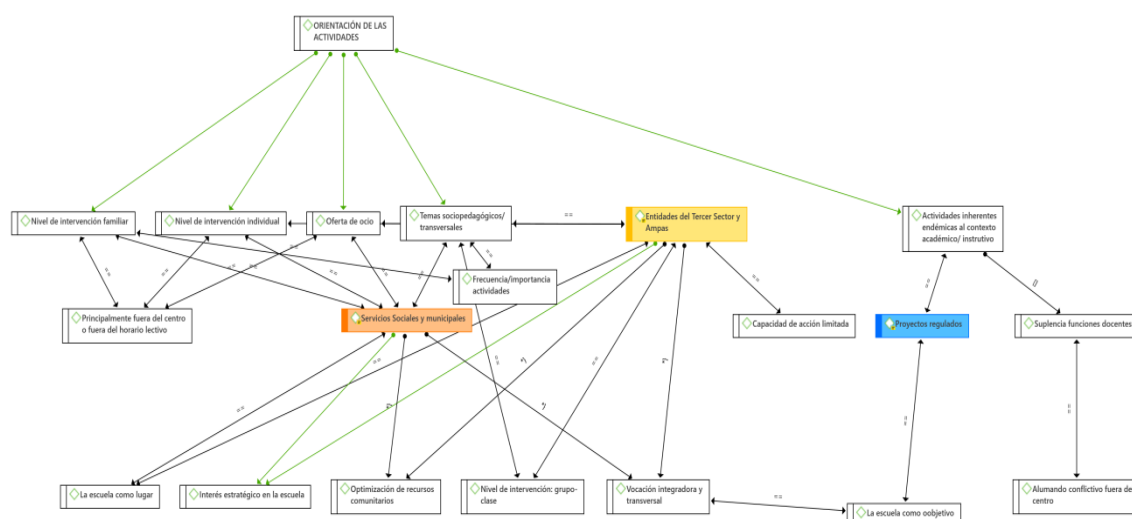


Figure 3: Conceptual network on the orientation of activities and their levels of action.

The following regularities can be seen in the levels of intervention and the time/place in which they place. The socio-educational themes take place at the group-class level, within the school. On the other hand, the level of individual or family intervention takes place mainly outside the school and/or outside school hours. Leisure activities take place outside of school hours.

In regulated programmes, actions tend to be directed toward endemic situations of school life. In other words, activities tend to be more strongly oriented toward the school and the dynamics arising from the instructional relationship between the modes and objectives of school education.

The focus of the *ad hoc* programmes activities is varied. This disparity in the themes usually responds to the specialisation of the entity that performs them. In the case of the activities carried out by social services, the tendency is to perform activities targeting mainly families and students and usually related to individual, family or social problems, but not necessarily attributed to school factors. Although the school is the setting where these asocial behaviours manifest, the interventions are individual (social skills, family intervention, school support, homework support). In this case, a large part of these activities takes place outside the school or outside school hours.



Third sector programmes, on the other hand, deal with socio-educational topics of great importance for children and youth, in many cases, with innovative and attractive themes and methodologies. These programs focus on specialised subjects: drug addiction prevention, emotional education, non-sexist education, leisure activities, extracurricular activities, etc. Except for workshops, they are mainly carried out outside the school or outside school hours, although there may sometimes be individual work both within and outside the school.

This difference in the orientation of the activities, depending on whether they are focused on the school *endemia* or *adjacent issues*, is one of the central categories to articulate our proposal. The

difference consists of looking at the school from two perspectives: either the school is of strategic interest—the school is a *place* where the action occurs (if the actions were to occur in a civic centre or town hall, neither the content nor the methodology would change)—, or the school is a *target*, where the aim is the transformation of the institution.

## 4. Discussion

### Models of school socio-educational action

We found regularities in the different formats depending on the responsible entity. This leads us to consider the existence of three models of school socio-educational action.

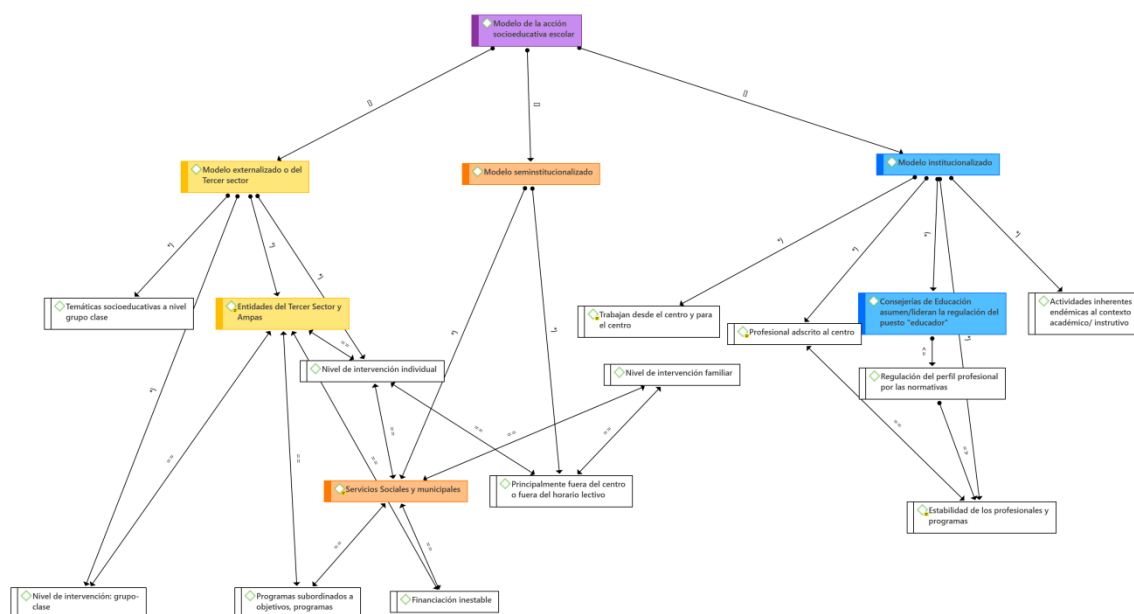


Figure 4: Models of school socio-educational action and their properties.

**Model 1: regularisation.** This group includes programmes and professionals who are *regulated* through specific rules of the Administration, in this case, mediated by the respective education departments. These departments are responsible for financing the professionals and establishing the guidelines of the programmes. Social educators are attached to the schools; they are part of the educational teams of the academic institution and work *for* the school and *from* the school. The school is their place of reference, without excluding action outside the school or out of school hours. The activities target *endemic* situations to the school dynamics. The projects tend to be more stable, guaranteeing the existence of the professional who performs the socio-educational action in schools with their professional specificity. Regulation offers more stability, both for projects and professionals.

**Model 2: Semi-regularized/ Social Services.** This group includes projects carried out by the social services and the respective municipal services. In this model, entry is not regulated, but there may be some kind of agreement with regional or autonomous governments. The form in which these projects materialise varies: from coordination with educational teams to *ad hoc* projects of various intensities. However, most of them are related to individual work and attention to some socio-educational problems of students and their families or leisure activities, usually outside the school and/or school hours, except for workshops at the class-group level. The school is not necessarily the professional's reference point as the place of action. Instead, the professional works *for* the school but *not always from* the school or necessarily *during school hours*. Experiences are

usually subordinated to objectives, programmes or people.

*Model 3: externalised or the third sector:* This model includes all those projects carried out by non-profit entities or third sector organisations, etc. The State mainly finances these projects indirectly through the call for subsidies from different administrations. These programmes are managed by non-governmental entities and carried out mainly by professionals from the social sector (Social Education, Social Work, Social Integration, Pedagogy, Psychology, school promotion, linguistic and intercultural agents...). The professionals collaborate with the school on projects in the different specialisation areas of the social entities they work for, optimising community resources. These professionals are *external*, although they work *for* and *within* the school. The typology of these projects varies, ranging from specific days or collaborations to more intense and prolonged interventions over time. These projects depend on three conditions: funding, the entity that provides

funding, and the school that accepts it. These conditions modulate the entry and the intensity with which the project is carried out. There are no full guarantees of stability. Programmes are usually renewed every academic year and are subject to objectives, projects or target groups. The professionals and their entities show a more comprehensive and integrating vocation, but their capacity is limited because no regulation or norm guarantees their presence in the centres.

### Concept proposal

As a result of our analysis, we have made a conceptual distinction between two educational realities that tend to converge to problematise them. We based their elaboration on the following properties: a) intensity of the action, b) time and place of the action, c) orientation of the activities, d) purpose of the activities, e) professional link with the school and f) type of professional who carries it out.

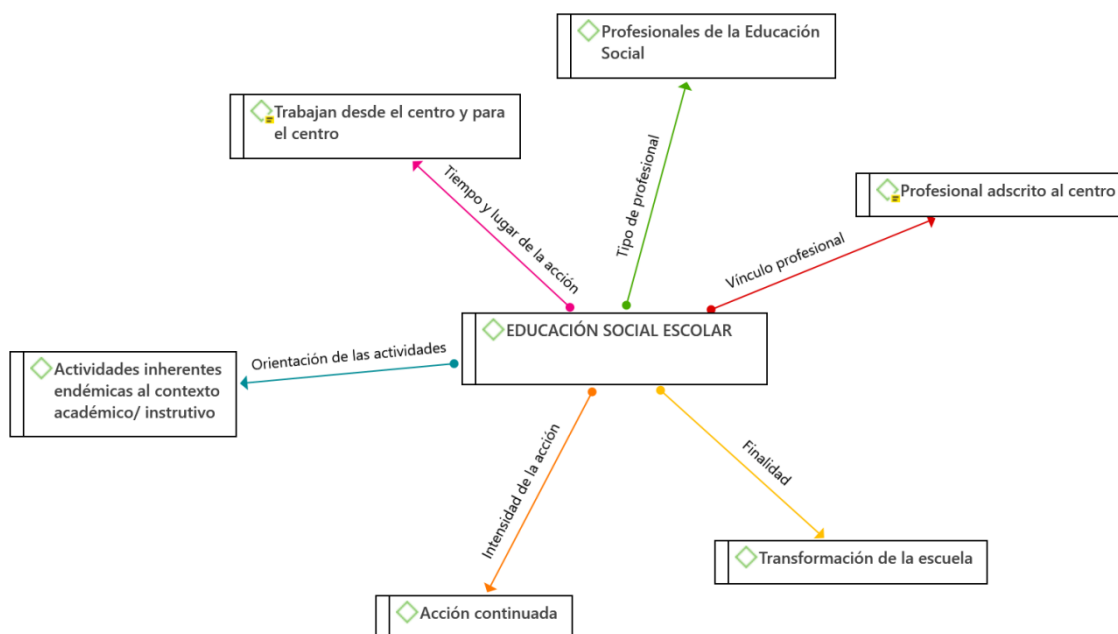


Figure 5: Properties of the concept of Social School Education.

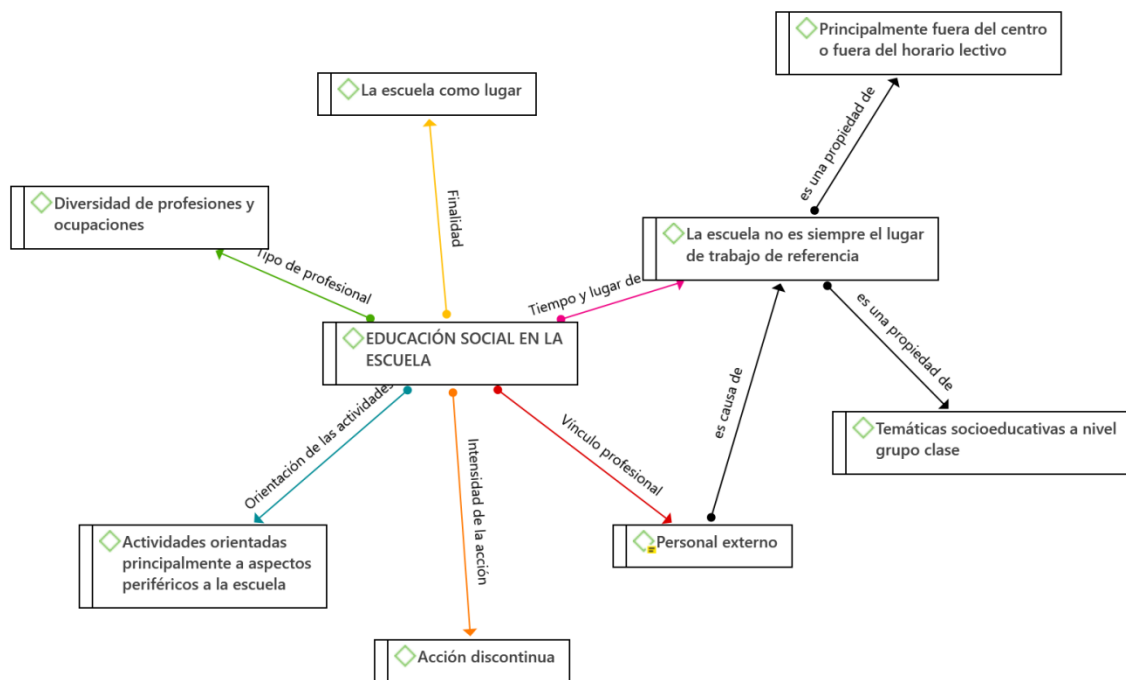


Figure 6: Properties of the concept of Social Education at School.

*School Social Education*: this is a continuous socio-educational professional action, with staff assigned to the school, working *within* and *for* the school, not excluding interventions outside the school or out of school hours, or with other agents of the educational community. Such actions are *embedded* within the school. An important part of the staff's activities is oriented towards educational processes inherent to the school, part of the dynamics arising from the school organisation, and including other types of activities. The objective is to transform the school as much as possible. School Social Education is carried out by Social Education professionals.

*Social Education at School*: these are discontinuous or intermittent socio-educational actions carried out by staff external to the school. They usually consist of specific activities, conferences or commemorative days, leisure activities or workshops with the class-group on socio-educational topics relevant to adolescents. The actions are carried out *for* or *in collaboration* with the schools but not within the institution (i.e., counselling, accompaniment, or support for some students or families). The school is conceived as a strategically located *place* in which to perform the action, bringing together the target population in a classroom. Social Education at school is developed by many social professions, including Social Education.

Therefore, all collaborative activities with schools that take place *outside* the school, next

to the school and occasionally *with* the school can be Social Education at school, but not necessarily School Social Education. The former is not a persistent action, not always or not mainly linked to endemic school situations aimed at transforming their dynamics. These are not pure models. We consider them two poles of the same axis that pivot around the above-mentioned properties.

We consider that programmes that are limited to “picking up” students who present difficulties in differentiated activities or itineraries and are limited to an individual approach are inadequate. Such programmes reinforce the school's *status quo* and can become *de facto* segregating interventions with the technical complicity of social educators to eliminate problems (Parcerisa, 2008). They are *stop-gap* solutions that avoid questioning the central problem: students' discomfort and the school's lack of competence in educating students.

## 5. Conclusions

In general, the deprofessionalising factors affecting Social Education in school are common to the profession. Sáez's (2003b, p. 59) metaphor of the pendulum illustrates the oscillating movements of the profession, which mark the destiny of its professionalisation. If Social Education turns into a specific, non-fragmented professional action, maintaining the educational orientation of its activities, its autonomy and its focus, then it will be legitimised and professionalised. To the extent that Social Education is supported by the State

through the regulation of its presence and functions in school, in its own right and steadily, and professionals are satisfied with their work, then it will be professionalised. Contrariwise, Social Education will be de-professionalised if it is supported by insufficient public policies, and temporary programmes, half-days, and intermittent subsidies make it precarious. It will be de-professionalised if its profile is split into different nomenclatures, or other occupational groups or professions gain access to the profession, the professionals' action is scattered with a multitude of tasks, or it loses its professional specificity because the professionals perform control and surveillance functions, teaching tasks, etc. renouncing the educational nature of their profession.

There are other classifications of the models of socio-educational action in school. One of the most cited is that of López (2013), who, in a lucid exercise of systematisation, stipulated the following order: social educators attached to schools, integrated into municipal social services and specific projects, led by social educators, and financed by municipalities. Although this systematisation is illustrative and accurate, it is not the most suitable for establishing typologies because it mixes units of analysis (contracting entity, professional link with the institution, and type of professional who performs the actions), making it difficult to establish correlations and models.

Another interesting proposal is that of Serrate (2014, p. 143), who categorises three types of lines of action by appealing to the different levels of administration: state, regional and administrative collaboration. This classification provides a broad view of the socio-educational action carried out in schools. In this case, using the same analysis unit, the result is a pattern that presents a better interpretation of reality. However, we believe that our proposal is more precise, as there are no uniform models. Different school socio-educational action programmes with their specificities can coexist in the same territory.

In terms of our conceptual distinction, we find elements that converge with those of Ortega and Mohedano (2011). They defend an *integrated model*, characterised by a strong professional link with the school, where the professionals' presence is complete. Also, the professionals underline their professional specificity in tasks that are differentiated from the teaching and guidance staff's tasks. Other converging ideas on the mission of Social Education in school are to situate the educational dimension all the time and in all spaces of the school (Barranco *et al.*, 2012), to focus from a school perspective (Castillo & Bretones, 2014, p. 157), as an independent professional offer

anchored in school life (Rademacker, 2011), an agent of transformation of the school's organisational structure (Rodrigo & Aguirre-Martín, 2020, p.195), a broad form of cooperation between social services and the school (Bolay, Flad & Gutbrod, 2003, p.9) of co-responsibility (Spies and Potter, 2011), with professionals collaborating with teachers on equal terms (Speck, 2020, p. 112), from a global and collaborative approach, neither clinical nor "expert" (Parcerisa, 2008). Indeed, teaching teams and social education professionals share the general framework of educational objectives (Ortega, 2014, p. 15). Social education and school are elements of the same unit and their differences are their respective professional specificities that must be specified in different tasks, but with a joint mission in a shared institutional space (Borges & Cid, 2019).

We believe that these ideas share the consideration of Social Education as more than a simple addition to activities or a complement to traditional school programming. Instead, we promote a more comprehensive approach, which affects all aspects of school life from the perspective of the educational success of all the students (Gonçalves, 2018, p. 98). However, this is not a uniform position; Vilar (Hoyos *et al.* 2003) considers that Social Education should only work "*alongside the school*", becoming a bridge between the school and the territory, leaving the educational system to solve its problems on its own.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered has been to carry out the research with the lack of available information on the projects and relevant data such as salary, working hours, number of professionals and, above all, objective evaluations of the actions. In addition, the study has the inherent limitation of examining 32 projects. However, we chose depth and representativeness, as opposed to enumeration and superficial description.

It is necessary to go deeper into the models of school socio-educational action, to investigate their potentialities and handicaps from the effects of praxis and how they can be made compatible to offer a holistic education and optimise resources. Some German studies point to better integration and cooperation of professionals when they work from the school institution, but at the cost of losing the intensity of their socio-educational specificity. They also note how professionals' autonomy is reinforced when they work from social services. However, in this case, their relationship with the teaching staff is more distant, and difficulties emerge derived from the assignments from the different institutions, as well as the risk of stigmatisation of the subjects of the action (Speck, 2020; 2006).

It would also be interesting to delve deeper into the proposed definitions and the dimensions we have used to construct them based on the reality of the profession, and verify their suitability

and relevance. Likewise, it would be relevant to reflect on the objective towards which the professional collective, the university and the Administration should work.

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