**Social Pedagogy in Spain: from academic and professional reconstruction to scientific and social uncertainty**

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction and aims:** A reflection on the reality of Social Pedagogy in Spain during the second decade of the 21st century from an analytical perspective, with the aim of finding out and recognising its weak points, its strong points, its challenges and its opportunities. The analysis centres on reviewing Social Pedagogy as a key discipline in the reconstruction of Educational Sciences and a socio-educational response to the demands and needs of society and the Welfare State. Analysis of the current situation is completed with research into Social Education studies. The sphere of reference is made up of the group of universities offering social education courses in Spain. The variables structuring the data capture were: 1) the structure of the offer, 2) the features of the courses offered, and 3) course results. **Methodology:** The sample taken was structural in nature, selecting 11 universities holding the courses in three areas of Spain - the North, Central and Southern Spain and the Mediterranean region. Information was gathered using two complementary methodologies, a questionnaire, falling within the context of the Ibero-American Social Education Society (SIPS), and a review of the web sites of the universities offering courses in social education. **Data processing and analysis:** The analysis was carried out in two complementary stages. First of all, the closed questions were processed using SPSS and then the digital records of the open questions were processed using the NVIVO program. **Results:** The large majority of the courses on offer are classroom-based, with some distance learning courses being available. The average size of the courses was around 87 places. It should be pointed out that the double degree in Social Education and Social Work on offer is merely symbolic. There is multi-departmental involvement in teaching the Degree, although a larger role is played by the Pedagogy departments and all socio-educational fields are involved. Within the most important skills, diagnostics and project design and management stand out. The professors teaching the courses are highly qualified and, with respect to teaching methodologies and assessments, these have changed and broadened out since the course was first held. **Discussion:** Theoretical reflection and data analysis is used to discuss the chance for Social Education to overcome the impasse in which it currently finds itself, in spite of the development and growth in social education studies over the last twenty years. The need is discussed to include evidence-based research as a basis for socio-educational action and as a necessity to continue to move forward in Social Education and the qualification of socio-educational professionals.

**KEY WORDS:** social pedagogy, social education, evidence-based socio-educational intervention

**1. Introduction: The Contradictory Reality of Social Pedagogy**

What is the current situation of social pedagogy in Spain in the second decade of the 21st century? This is not an easy question to answer in a paper of this size, where an in-depth study of different walks of social pedagogy from an epistemological, research-related, professional, academic, historical, social and political perspective is impossible. Nonetheless, after decades of a process of revival and reconstruction of this socio-educational discipline in all senses of the word, a study is needed of the current state of social pedagogy in order to determine its weak and strong points, together with the threats it faces and the opportunities that it offers.

By this, I mean a study directed at shedding light on the current situation and future prospects of social pedagogy as a key discipline, not just in the reconstruction of educational science but also in socio-educational responses to problems in schools and to the needs and demands of society and the welfare state. In this context, during the 1990s in Spain, one of the most significant events at academic and professional levels of educational science was the revival and reconstruction of social pedagogy in its capacity as an old and yet new educational discipline aimed at offering a socio-educational response to social and educational problems and needs (Caride, Gradaílle, & Caballo, 2015). Indeed, if we look at the evolution of social pedagogy, what is most significant is the fact that we are talking about the rebirth of a discipline that had become obsolete in the background context of an educational science that looked more to the past than to the present and which was incapable of carrying out a process of academic, professional and social renewal. The emergence of new disciplines, with a different background history and approach, only served to confirm the obsolescence of this former discipline.

In this context, the gradual re-emergence of social pedagogy within the panorama of differing educational disciplines has not just signified transformations to this pre-existing discipline but also the academic and professional systemization of different pedagogic disciplines. It has also led to educational science’s closer contact with the new challenges and problems that education faces in a new century filled with uncertainties of all kinds. Social pedagogy’s reconstruction has been mainly based on two processes: firstly, a somewhat unbalanced process of professional and institutional development through professional figures (street outreach workers, family service workers, workers at treatment and protection centres, youth workers, activity coordinators, adult educators etc.) without a formal university training who have been offering a response to existing social and educational needs. The institutionalization of training in this field and convergence of different socio-educational traditions in one single qualification came with the creation, in the early 1990s, of a university-level Diploma in Social Education. This process was further consolidated with the ensuing creation of a Degree in Social Education and the introduction of several master’s degrees with academic and professional ties with the field of social pedagogy. At the same time, the revival of this discipline has also been founded on academic and scientific developments, with universities playing a key role in terms of its institutional integration in methodologies, theory and research. This has led to reflections on different thematic areas of social pedagogy, to the development of fields of socio-educational research, and to numerous publications, journals, conferences, seminars and congresses on this field of social education (Duţă, Forés & Novella, 2015).

The integration of social pedagogy at academic and university levels has gone hand in hand, professionally and socially, with the creation and development of professional associations of community workers (“educadores sociales” in Spanish) in different Spanish regions and to the foundation of the General Council of Associations of Community Workers. This corporate and professional step forward has contributed to the employment of these professionals by different public authorities, bodies, social organizations and private businesses and in different fields of social intervention. All this has led to the emergence of university, professional and social networks that are helping to consolidate social pedagogy as a discipline and community workers as a profession (Pérez, 2003; Sáez & Molina, 2006).

It is important to highlight the converging repercussions of social pedagogy’s institutional integration in Spain for a series of reasons: firstly, because collaborative initiatives between the business and academic worlds are not common and, secondly, because if the field of educational science was conspicuous for something, at university level, during the Spanish post-war period and early years of democracy, it was for its lack of contact with everyday educational realities, with all the ensuing implications in terms of professional identities, academic and scientific progress, and the creation of professional bodies. Furthermore, only through collaborative efforts of this kind can the swift institutional academic and professional integration of social pedagogy and social education be explained (March & Orte 2014).

Having said that, in our opinion, social pedagogy is reaching a certain impasse. In order to make qualitative scientific headway, it is important to gauge the reality of social pedagogy at Spanish universities so as to ascertain its possible development problems and identify its potential limitations. Another important issue is the evaluation of socio-educational interventions and the relevance of scientific evidence in this process. Gaining an insight into the reality of social education in universities, through different variables, is an important way of acquiring an overall vision of the different factors that form part of the global reality of social pedagogy. These are the aims of this paper. In any case, in this paper, we have used the concept of social pedagogy based on the aim of the concept, its perspective and its theoretical-methodological-research approach. Not only this concept is not in contradiction with the term of social education, but it is its reason of being and of its existence as the discipline of study.

**2. Building a culture of evaluation as one of the cornerstones of social pedagogy.**

For social pedagogy and social education to become fully integrated at an institutional level, the complementary introduction of clear, explicit policies regarding their evaluation is needed. This is crucial in order to move from a non-rigorous approach to this discipline to a serious one and to an understanding of the processes and effects of different socio-educational interventions. At this point, it is important to note the absence of a culture of evaluation that might lend greater weight to social pedagogy as a discipline. The absence of such practices in Spain for conducting systematic, rigorous, responsible, useful analyses of the different services, processes and outcomes of our Social Welfare State and democratic system is no mere coincidence. It is the result of a chosen option, of an attitude or policy of relinquishing evaluations as a means of assessing certain realities or intervention programmes, both at a public authority and civil society level.

Although there are numerous implications of differing kinds to the introduction of a culture of evaluation, it is clearly important to rule out technocratic, aseptic, worthless assessment systems, as explained by Silverio Barriga (1990: 267-280):

1. Because human action must be contextualized within the framework of a certain project, with specific aims and purposes.
2. Because, directly or indirectly, you are participating in a project’s implementation.
3. Because evaluation – something that is, in itself, a form of intervention – can alter the context of an intervention, with ensuing direct or indirect consequences.
4. Because contradictory use can be made of the data provided by experts, in all senses and from all angles.

For these factors to be taken into account, a specific evaluative model must be chosen: that is, a model diametrically opposed to a closed-ended, technocratic, bureaucratic, productivist one. Hence, at a policy level, two initial points must be borne in mind. The first is the potential introduction of a culture of evaluation on different social subscales, at an educational, cultural, health and labour-related and social service level. Having said that, the key question is whether a culture of evaluation is really beneficial and, if it is, what and who is it beneficial for? If, on the other hand, it is not an advantage, then why not? Once this first issue has been settled, a system of evaluation must be chosen, not only to assess the quality of the different services, but also for the fair, equal, non-discriminatory, democratic development of the different social subsystems. In addition to these two policy-related aspects, another point is the way in which the different systems of evaluation are put into practice and the use of the results in decisions tailored to meet certain goals and objectives. In this respect, the obtained results of evaluations can be used to bring about necessary changes or reforms, although these reforms can be applied in two possible ways: through “savage” reforms to the social services, as is currently occurring in many regions and sectors, or “rational” ones.

The introduction of assessment practices is a key methodological factor in rational reforms. Indeed, evaluations must be used as basic instruments in ensuring that social education finds its place in today’s current new scenario. That is, a new stage must be embarked on where outcomes, implementation processes, intervention and management methods, and cost-benefit analyses are all assessed so that existing resources can be adapted to meet new demands and needs with a view to optimizing services and programmes.

In short, a culture of evaluation is not only necessary today in professional and economic terms but also as a major policy option in reforms to the social services. Failure to carry out a “rational” process of reforms might lead to – and indeed it is leading to – the de-institutionalization of the social services, with negative repercussions on more disadvantaged social sectors and a return to the old concept of charity or aid by the social services.

Despite the process of professional development that has taken place in recent years, it is important to gain a systematic overview of what is being done, including existing intervention projects in different fields, the obtained outcomes, and the different evaluations that have been conducted at different levels in order to find out the impacts of existing projects. Given the broad field that social pedagogy covers and its different scopes of activity, specific issues must be taken into consideration by professionals from the field of social education (Orte, Amer, Pascual & Vaqué, 2014). It is essential to reflect on what is being done, how it is being done, and on the obtained outcomes if we want this to be a robust socio-educational discipline able to combine theory and practice. Clear socio-educational assessment methods must be developed in the field of social pedagogy, based on a planning process designed to meet social and educational needs and demands (Pascual, 2007). Evidently, we have a long pathway ahead of us despite social pedagogy and social education’s institutionalization (Janer & Úcar, 2014).

**3. Insufficient research in the field of social pedagogy**

An analysis of the current state of research at different Spanish universities within the broad field of social pedagogy brings to light a series of points:

a) The shaky institutional framework of different socio-educational research groups;

b)The need to foster the survival of these research groups;

c)The need to boost inter-university research groups, both at a national and international level etc.

It is not a question of ignoring what is going on in research circles, but of highlighting everything that still needs to be done in an area in which more concerted, better efforts are needed. Triangulation methods must be applied to work in the field of social pedagogy, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods at all levels.

Not only must a plural holistic method be used, but it is time to banish the idea or dogma firmly rooted in some sectors of this discipline that only qualitative methods should be used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This is a misconception that would only hinder the consolidation of social pedagogy. In this context of methodological plurality, of combination of different sources, techniques and quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches it is important to point out a few points. First, we should banish reductionist approaches that tend to exclusively focus on quantitative or qualitative approaches; as social pedagogy needs, by its own nature and characteristics both approaches. In second place it is important to highlight the lack of rigour of some research using qualitative methodologies; this methodology needs rigour, a serious methodological training, an appropriate treatment of the data and well-founded conclusions, going further than intuitions or perceptions lacking evidence.

Some years ago, at a talk presented in an International Symposium on Educational Sociology, educational sociologist Bill Williamson (1992) posed the following question in a perhaps rather naïve way: what is the knowledge gained from research into educational sociology or any other educational discipline actually for? Or, to put it another way, who are research studies in the field of education for? What purpose do they serve?

Following the same line of thinking but with social pedagogy as our basis, we can, in turn, pose the following questions: who chooses the subjects of research in this field? How are they chosen? What are their goals? For whom are they conducted? The answers to these questions are not easy: researchers, politicians, professional associations, private bodies, or international, national or regional public bodies? If a study is made of the evolution of research in the field of social pedagogy, a series of points for consideration must be taken into account: why has more emphasis been placed on social maladjustment than other issues unrelated to social exclusion? Why have school-related issues received so little attention in this discipline? Why are studies of assessment practices in social education so inconsistent? Why have research results in the field of social education had little relevance on the definition of policies in related areas? Why have studies on assessment processes in social education not been taken further? Why are studies on the subject of maladjusted minors more common than studies on adult education?

Another point for consideration is whether educational research by university researchers conforms more to academic and personal needs than to social, professional or cultural ones. In fact, special reference must be made to the existence in social education of a duality between researchers and academics’ interests and society’s own needs. This is a delicate issue that must be faced if both interests are to be brought in line in order to ensure the development of social pedagogy. Nonetheless, this is not the only dichotomy that can be found in socio-educational research. There is also a dichotomy or duality between basic and applied socio-educational research, and between socio-educational research and interventions. One of the basic characteristics of social pedagogy is clearly its dual dimension in terms of research or knowledge and action, and this dual aim must be taken into account when any kind of research study is conducted.

**4. Scientific evidence as a basis for socio-educational action**

Progress in Social Education can only be made based on ideas expanded upon previously: 1) Socio-educational research needs to be developed with rigour, diversity and methodological triangulation, using quantitative and grounded qualitative methodology, etc. 2) Socio-educational assessment needs to be developed at its various levels and with different conceptual approaches. Therefore, the development of Social Education only makes sense if it is done not just based on a well-grounded theoretical concept but also from a rigorous methodological standpoint. The era of speculation, of reflection without information, of educational essentialism, no longer makes sense, not only from the point of view of effectiveness but also from an evidence-based approach to social and socio-educational change (Forés & Novella, 2013).

From this standpoint, as set out in the introduction, we uphold the idea that socio-educational interventions must be based on scientific evidence. To us, this has to be the foundation stone on which Social Education is built and rebuilt. This should be the route map laid out by social and educational challenges to which science should give effective responses at individual and communal level. Therefore, as propounded by Sánchez-Meca, Marín Martínez & López-López (2011, 95):

“Professional practice should be based on the best scientific evidence. This fundamental premise should be applied to any professional field and, as such, to the field of psychosocial intervention. Professionals in this field should decide which programme, treatment or intervention to use depending on the evidence arising in empirical assessment studies, properly designed and implemented. Furthermore, social, education and health policies should also be adopted taking accumulated scientific evidence on the best way to treat or prevent social and health problems into consideration. With this aim, focus on *Evidence-based Practice* has emerged, as a tool aimed at achieving treatment and intervention programmes applied in routine professional practice that are based on the best scientific proof or evidence."

Given this context, the authors consider that psycho-social intervention professionals should have the appropriate expertise to be able to apply the *Evidence-based Psycho-social Intervention Focus*. A focus that should be systematically reviewed by empirical studies, which should offer a panoramic view of the most effective programmes for resolving, or preventing a psycho-social or socio-educational problem. In this context, such an in-depth review should be carried out using rigorous systematic studies and/or meta-analyses on the problems to be resolved.

If meta-analysis is chosen, what steps does it take? Before addressing this question, within the framework of evidence-based socio-educational or psychosocial intervention, it should be taken into account that, as stated previously, Social Education, both on its research side and its assessment side, suffers from a lack of solid evaluation studies and socio-educational research, even ones with contradictory or differing results. This makes meta-analysis more difficult, giving Social Education the challenge of responding to this shortfall so that evidence-based socio-educational intervention has the opportunity to develop.

Overall, and in agreement with the above-mentioned authors, the steps for this possible, and necessary, meta-analysis are as follows: 1. Formulate the problem; 2. Seek out research; 3. Classify the research; 4. Calculate the size of the effect; 5. Statistical analysis and interpretation; 6. Publication. It is, therefore, a series of methodological stages which, to be effective, need research- and assessment-based studies to exist. For this reason, the meta-analysis required needs development of solid socio-educational research as well as assessments of socio-educational invention programmes. At any event, this analysis methodology is a good choice for taking the effectiveness of socio-educational interventions into account from all angles. In this respect, Sánchez-Meca, Marín-Martínez & López-López (2011, 105) say the following:

"There is no doubt that meta-analyses of the effectiveness of interventions in the psycho-social field are providing highly useful information for them to be put into practice by the professionals who have to make decisions on a day-to-day basis about how to intervene or treat the social, educational and psychological problems which are part of their daily work."

Within this perspective, research undertaken by the *Grupo de Investigación y Formación Educativa y Social* (GIFES, Social and Educational Research Group), from the Department of Education and Didactics of the Balearic University is an example of a research group that works with this perspective of evidence-based programs (Orte, Touza & Ballester, 2007). The question as to the effectiveness of preventive work, measured in terms of consistent change in a set of relevant factors, comes as a result of a concern on behalf of technicians and policy makers regarding most preventive programs. In the research conducted by the Social and Educational Training and Research Group (GIFES-UIB) concerning the implementation of the Family Competence Program (Kumpfer, 1998) for the Spanish population, this was one of our concerns (Orte, Ballester & March, 2013).

Which are the foundations of the Fam.ily Competence Program? The accumulation, for a few decades now, of studies that relate parental behaviours with the social, emotional and psychological development of their children (for instance, Baumrind, 1971; Kochanska, Murray & Coy, 1997; Lila, Musitu & Buelga, 2001; Musitu & García, 2004; Lila & Gracia, 2005) seems to leave no room for doubt as to some of the consequences of this relationship: parents with appropriate parenting skills, affective parents, who respond to the needs of their children, who allow them to participate actively in the establishment of family rules and who use positive discipline options, achieve independent, sociable, cooperative, self-confident children.

The Family Competence Program (FCP) is an adaptation of the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) (Kumpfer & DeMarsh, 1985; Kumpfer, DeMarsh & Child, 1989), which is a selective multicomponent risk factor prevention program whose original design was developed to reduce the influence of family risk factors in the sons and daughters of substance abusing people whilst strengthening protection factors, with the purpose of increasing their resilience to substance abuse and other possible problems. It is considered a model program in the classification made by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), whose quality criteria include fidelity in the intervention, assessment of the process, measurements of the outcome of a change in behaviours, and the validity of the measuring procedures.

Originally, the concept of socio-educational work was applied as a generic label, which identified the intervention as having a dual focus and little else. Over time, socio-educational interventions have developed into a much more sophisticated approach, including systemic and relational approaches, at a non-clinical level. Differences between these and so-called “family therapies” have grown, not only due to the differentiated approach, but also because of the formalization of programs working with families, as well as the development of very detailed assessment research. Within the framework of socio-educational work, and as a result of the systemic and relational approach, socio-educational interventions have been developed with the family. The methodologies implemented, initially influenced by cognitive- behavioural and systemic approaches, allowed significant progress to be made in work models based on empirical evidence. The family competence approach was developed in this context, as a not-directly-clinical approach, focusing on the family as a whole and carried out using written programs, one of the most outstanding of which is the Strengthening Family Program (SFP) - the Family Competence Program (PCF) in Spain (Orte et al, 2008a) - structured in accordance with criteria for the most effective intervention programs.

The implementations conducted by *GIFES* focused on drug prevention programs, especially *Proyecto Hombre* in Spain, as well as on primary care social services and child protection services. This study focuses on controlled implementations in social services between 2009 and 2013. The FCP has been through three design and research stages in Spain:

- Initial experimentation: 2005. Transversal design based on implementations of 14 sessions and pre- and post- measurements.

- Generalised implementations in drug prevention services, primary care social services and child protection services, based on the corrections introduced after initial experimentation: 2006-2011. Transversal design based on implementations of 14 sessions and pre- and post- measurements.

- Longitudinal design: 2011-2013, currently in process. The analyses conducted are complemented with a two-year follow-up of the participating families. In 2011 we collected data concerning the families that finished in 2009; in 2012 we are collecting the data on the families that finished in 2010; in 2013 we will collect data concerning the families that finished in 2011, the last generalised implementations.

The adaptation carried out by *GIFES* (Orte & GIFES, 2005a, 2005b; Orte, Touza & Ballester, 2007) sought to meet quality criteria, therefore in the FCP a pre-test/post-test assessment was used along with control groups, complemented by process measurements produced from the process- outcome assessments. The assessments conducted focused on the outcomes and on the processes carried out. In the study presented here, some of the most outstanding processes are related to the outcomes obtained by the families. Of the many implementation processes involved in a preventive program, we chose the ones related to the family competence approach methodology characterised by the FCP. As far as the change observed in the participants is concerned, we selected the factors that report change in the families as a whole.

In any case it is evident that Social Education must, if it wants to be competitive, effective, credible, rigorous and well-grounded, continue along the route of evidence and effectiveness. Otherwise an essentialist, theoretical Educational model will be followed which is far removed from socio-educational problems.

**5. Social Pedagogy at the University**

Research carried out by GIFES-UIB and other university research groups is marked by four common traits enabling contributions to be accredited within the context of socio-educational research:

* it is valid research with solid methodological designs, analysing processes and results in depth;
* the research is based on transparency of the information and verified in various contexts: conferences, rigorous reviews, etc.
* it is carried out based on linkage with government services, the third social sector and social initiative enterprises, alongside the social and education needs identified in the community;
* it is carried out within university contexts, enabling research to be linked with the conceptual development of social pedagogy, but, at the same time, enriching the educational process for professionals in the field (teaching and social education).

Research groups, which have been working for some years with this focus, were created and developed at the university with the intention of overcoming the limitations noted previously. One of the factors enabling this development was the creation, over the last twenty years, of university courses in Social Education in Spain, via Royal Decree 1420/1991, of 30 August (Official State Gazette 10 October) (Ruiz, 2003). Social Pedagogy, as a discipline, should make the most of the opportunity offered by these courses. Social Education studies offer a context for reflection and analysis along with opportunities for social connection, which should be taken advantage of as the focus defended in previous sections of the article: improving the quality of Welfare State services (social, educational and cultural, etc), introducing a culture of quality assessment and carrying out socio-educational research. All of this should be connected to improvements in training professionals along with improvements to the social insertion of those professionals.

To complete the analysis, limited research has been carried out on university courses in social education in Spain. The methodology for the research is evaluative with a descriptive bias without inferential pretence. Its aim is to test the defining features of the courses in Social Education that are currently on offer by reviewing a sample of training centres.

## 5.1. Sample

This research, centred on Social Education studies, considers that the sphere of reference is made up of the group of universities offering social education courses in Spain, 34 centers in total with 2,617 seats offered every academic year[[1]](#footnote-1). The sample taken is **structural** in nature (Ballester, Nadal & Amer, 2014), selecting 11 universities (32.35% of the centers) running these courses in three areas of Spain: the North of the country, Central and Southern Spain and the Mediterranean area.

INSERT CHART 1

Invitations were made to all the departments in Spain offering the qualification, with the sample being complete when a minimum number of universities per area (3) was obtained.

## 5.2. Analysis variables

The variables on which data capture was structured in this research were:

* Structure of the offer.
* Features of the training offered.
* Educational results.

The data on the first two variables could be detailed without much difficulty. However the data on educational results were not conclusive and therefore have been excluded from the presentation below.

## 5.3. Methodology and sources of information

Data capture was carried out using two complementary methodologies: a questionnaire, within the SIPS context, to be answered over the internet and a review of the web sites of the universities offering social education courses. The selected informants were those in charge of the courses, with answers mainly being given by the *directors of studies* on the courses.

## 5.4. Data analysis and processing

Analysis was made in two complementary stages. Firstly, the closed questions were processed through SPSS and then the digital records of the open questions were processed using the NVIVO program.

# *5.5. Results of the research*

With reference to the type of teaching (table 1), as we know, the vast majority of the offer is classroom-based, with some distance learning courses being available. The table exclusively includes distance learning course given by Catalonia Open University, but it should be borne in mind that the UIB also offers a complete distance learning course. At any event, in spite of the greater presence of distance learning in the Mediterranean area, we should not forget that the National Distance Learning University offers the course from Madrid.

INSERT TABLE 1

The majority of the courses looked at were put in place immediately after the qualification was approved (table 2) although the speed of this varied over Spain as a whole, with slower development in the south.

INSERT TABLE 2

In relation to the development of the degree in Social Education (table 3), there were practically no delays or differences in the country as a whole, with the course being available as soon as the new study plans were authorised.

INSERT TABLE 3

The size of the course varies depending on the size of the universities, with there being a clear correlation between the size of the universities and the dimensions of the Social Education courses (table 4). The average was 87 students per academic year, with courses ranging in size between 50 and 180 places.

INSERT TABLE 4.

The course has been perfectly integrated into the communities where the qualification is offered, with a clear indicator being the course languages (table 5). In the bilingual communities (Galicia, Catalonia and the Balearics) the courses are offered in Spanish and the co-official languages of each community.

INSERT TABLE 5

The option of offering the qualification together with social work, that is to say, a double degree in Social Education and Social Work, has only been taken up by one of the universities taking part.

INSERT TABLE 6

It seems that the double degree has not spread to the other Spanish universities (table 7) due to administrative and academic difficulties, or due to problems in linking the two qualifications. At any event, it looks like there will be no change in the short term and this will limit academic communication between the social education and social work disciplines. There are times when the disciplines move forward due to links to other disciplines, but this can produce a halt in the process and a corporate close out that is not to anyone’s benefit.

INSERT TABLE 7

Social Education is, quite rightly, a discipline where various intellectual traditions meet, from Pedagogy to Psychology via Sociology and others. However, without a doubt and with no differences between the various parts of Spain, the dominant areas of knowledge in the qualification's set up in Spain are educational.

INSERT TABLE 8

Although this dominance of educational knowledge is clear, the involvement of different departments in developing educational activity is high. As can be seen in chart 2, each university has brought about involvement from the four traditions mentioned above (Pedagogy, Psychology and Sociology) along with the presence of other different areas, depending on how the departments in the universities considered are set up. Specifying how this multi-departmental presence, which is always diverse, occurs is not as interesting as finding out that, effectively, there is no Social Education qualification, amongst those researched, that solely offers a classroom base in the Pedagogy departments.

This observation confirms the open vocation of *educational sciences* departments, which are much more interdisciplinary that any others in Spanish universities.

INSERT CHART 2

With regard to the theoretical/practical focus of the courses, a clear involvement in all socio-educational fields was observed from social and education or cultural services (chart 3). Nevertheless, they are not limited to fields of intervention (and, therefore, work experience, research, etc) in these three wide organisational sectors as there was also a presence of the penitentiary services and other services forming part of the Welfare State (Amador, Esteban, Cárdenas & Terrón, 2014).

INSERT CHART 3

To respond to educational needs which require such broad professional diversity, education must be guaranteed in a group of specific skills which are also wide-ranging. Classifying all the responses received, the 73 different responses were narrowed down to the 10 most relevant (chart 4) which, necessarily, are described with a large variety of nuances.

The classification made shows how the most important specific skills were considered to be those relating to diagnosis, project and activity design, their management and the techniques involved. These four skills are those providing the most responses from the heads of courses. As can be seen, they were presented with the need to select the 10 most relevant specific skills, so that it can be concluded that such skills are directed at socio-educational intervention, but without forgetting a grounding in diagnostics.

INSERT CHART 4

With respect to the professors' education, it could never be said that we are talking about under-qualification, instead it is quite to the contrary (Table 9). The presence of highly qualified professors is an indicator of the significant value that the course has acquired over the last twenty years. Currently the percentage of permanent professors with extensive education (from lecturers to university professors) is highly significant, as it includes 42.4% of the group of professors involved.

At any event, with the impairment that has occurred in Spanish universities in the last four years it could be that we will soon see a reduction in permanent professors, although this does not necessarily mean a reduction in their level of education.

INSERT TABLE 9

As can be seen in table 10, the current level of qualifications is very high, with a very large number of professors holdings doctorates and accounting for over 65% of all the professors in the three Spanish zones (table 10). That is to say, a degree of impairment may occur which puts professors' jobs in jeopardy but not their level of qualification. At any event, a result of such an impairment would be a reduction in the capacity for research by the course's teaching teams, which is a significant matter for a qualification that is bound to a discipline in the process of development.

INSERT TABLE 10

When it comes to the quality of the teaching given, one of the indicators is the diversification and updating of teaching methodologies. If lectures were absolutely dominant twenty years ago, when social education first appeared as a qualification, currently a wide diversity of methodology can be seen (chart 5) including a large variety of modules which it has been possible to classify into the nine dominant ones shown in chart 5.

INSERT CHART 5

Finally, the analysis of improvement in teaching can be completed by paying attention to the assessment systems (chart 6). In the same way as a wide diversification of methodologies occurred, a wide diversity of assessment systems can be seen, classified into five large groups which demonstrate the loss of the central focus on conventional exams, which are currently accompanied in Spain by various types of exercises, group activities and other modules.

INSERT CHART 6

**6. Discussion: The real risks for Social Pedagogy**

We took an analytical approach to Social Pedagogy in Spain, taking into account its strong and weak points. Among the strong points, the impact of putting Social Education studies in place two decades ago has deepened, both in the development of Social Pedagogy and the reconstruction of Educational Sciences. On the one hand, the relationship between the group of elements making up the Social Education qualification is noteworthy (the course curriculum itself or the multi-disciplinary education) and, on the other, the relationship with social institutions during the graduate training process.

This has created a positive social perception and one of proximity to real social problems with respect to the social education professional. As shown by the data provided here, social education has undergone significant development at the University in terms of putting qualifications in place, the level of education of the university professors and the offer of specialist post graduate qualifications and subjects over the last twenty years. It is, therefore, a time filled with opportunities to address some of Social Pedagogy's weaknesses. From the point of view of the qualification, broadening the offer of distance learning, or generalising the offer of a dual social education/social work course are opportunities which, without doubt, would provide many benefits to the qualification as well as to graduates and the creation of multi-disciplinary research groups within the socio-educational field.

We believe that the most significant weakness, and at the same time challenge, for Social Pedagogy is accredited response to the problems in its field. This means, as we have mentioned, addressing assessment of the actions carried out from a scientific perspective and with a capacity to generalise the results of the actions carried out. It also means boosting research into social problems using scientific evidence as a reference base for socio-educational action. Furthermore, it means broadening knowledge mechanisms and spreading the results of actions via the actual training of the graduates, extending research groups and internationalising knowledge. Ultimately the aim is to deepen evidence-based socio-educational action taking Social Education studies as the investigative context. This is a goal which we think is feasible and which, without doubt, would widen the impact of Social Pedagogy, Social Education studies and the credibility of professional social educators exponentially.

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**APPENDIX: TABLES AND CHARTS**

Table 1. Type of teaching by areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Areas of Spain | | | Total |
| Type of teaching | | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| On line or distance | Incidence | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 20.0% | 9.1% |
| Classroom-based | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 4 | 10 |
| % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 80.0% | 90.9% |
| TOTAL | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 2. Year when the Diploma began to be taught according to area in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Areas of Spain | | | Total |
| Year when the Diploma began to be taught | | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| Before 1995 | Incidence | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| % | 66.7% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 90.9% |
| 1995-1999 | Incidence | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| % | 33.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 9.1% |
| TOTAL | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 3. Year when the Degree began to be taught according to area in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Areas in Spain | | | Total |
| Year when the DEGREE began to be taught | | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| 2009 | Incidence | 2 | 3 | 5 | 10 |
| % | 66.7% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 90.9% |
| 2010 | Incidence | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| % | 33.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 9.1% |
| TOTAL | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 4. Number of places offered to new students

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of places offered to new students | |
| No. Universities | 11 |
| Average | 87.0 |
| Median | 77.5 |
| Trend | 80 |
| Standard deviation | 37.28 |
| Range | 130 |
| Minimum | 50 |
| Maximum | 180 |

Table 5. Languages used to teach the course according to areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Areas of Spain | | | Total |
| Languages used to teach the course | | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| Spanish | Incidence | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| % | 100.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 27.3% |
| Spanish, co-official language | Incidence | 0 | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| % | 0.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 72.7% |
| Total | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 6. The double degree in Social Education and Social Work is taught according to areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 6 |  | Year of commencement | | Total |
| The double degree in Social Education and Social Work is taught | |  | 2013 |
| No | Incidence | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| % | 100.0% | 0.0% | 90.9% |
| Yes | Incidence | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| % | 0.0% | 100.0% | 9.1% |
|  | Incidence | 10 | 1 | 11 |
| % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 7. It is planned to start up the double degree according to areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 7 |  | Areas of Spain | | | Total |
| It is planned to start up the double degree | | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| Yes | Incidence | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 60.0% | 81.8% |
| No | Incidence | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 60.0% | 81.8% |
| Don't know | Incidence | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 40.0% | 18.2% |
| Total | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 8. Main areas of knowledge in Social Education studies according to areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 8 |  | Areas of Spain | | | Total |
| Main areas of knowledge in Social Education studies | | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| Education | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 60.0% | 81.8% |
| Education and others (Psychology) | Incidence | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 40.0% | 18.2% |
| Total | Incidence | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 9.Type of professors according to areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 9 |  | Areas of Spain | | | Total |
| Professors | | Central and South | North and east | Mediterranean |
| Lecturer | Incidence | 5 | 3 | 5 | 13 |
| % | 15.6% | 10.3% | 13.2% | 13.1% |
| University Graduates | Incidence | 5 | 7 | 9 | 21 |
| % | 15.6% | 24.1% | 23.7% | 21.2% |
| University School professors | Incidence | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| % | 6.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.0% |
| University School Graduates | Incidence | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| % | 6.3% | 6.9% | 5.3% | 6.1% |
| Assistant lecturers | Incidence | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| % | 6.3% | 6.9% | 7.9% | 7.1% |
| Assistant PhD lecturers | Incidence | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| % | 9.4% | 13.8% | 7.9% | 10.1% |
| Guest lecturers | Incidence | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| % | 3.1% | 3.4% | 5.3% | 4.0% |
| Temporary PhD lecturers | Incidence | 4 | 5 | 6 | 15 |
| % | 12.5% | 17.2% | 15.8% | 15.2% |
| Associate lecturers | Incidence | 8 | 5 | 8 | 21 |
| % | 25.0% | 17.2% | 21.1% | 21.2% |
| Total | Incidence | 32 | 29 | 38 | 99 |
|  | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 10. PhD professors according to areas in Spain

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 10 | Areas in Spain | | |
| PhD professors | Central and south | North and east | Mediterranean |
| No. universities | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Average PhD's per university | 15,0 | 26,6 | 15,7 |
| Mean | 15,0 | 24,0 | 17,0 |
| Standard deviation | 5,66 | 9,29 | 2,50 |
| Minimum | 11 | 19 | 12 |
| Maximum | 19 | 37 | 17 |
| % of professors | 65,6% | 72,4% | 65,8% |

**CHARTS**

Chart 1. Participating Universities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Northern Area | Santiago de Compostela University |
| Vigo University |
| Universidade da Coruña |
| Central and Southern Area | Madrid Complutense University |
| University of Castile-La Mancha (UCLM) |
| University of Las Palmas De Gran Canaria |
| Mediterranean Area | Barcelona University |
| Girona University |
| University of the Balearic Islands |
| Catalonia Open University |
| Rovira i Virgili University |

Chart 2. Departments that social education studies come under

1

Psycho-social educational analysis and intervention. Teaching and organisation in schools. Evolutionary and educational psychology. Philosophy, Political sciences and Sociology.

2

Department of Education. Department of Psychology and Sociology. Department of Special Learning. Department of Geography and History

3

Department of Pedagogy. Department of Psychology

4

Department of Pedagogy. Department of Psychology. Department of Philosophy (Sociology and Anthropology). Department of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. Department of Employment and Social Work Law. Department of Civil and International Private Law. Department of Teaching Musical, Artistic and Bodily Expression. Department of History.

5

Department of Pedagogy and Specific Teaching techniques. Department of Applied Pedagogy and Education Psychology. Department of Philosophy and Social Work. Department of Psychology. Department of Public Law

6

Psychology and Education Studies

7

Educational methods and diagnostics ("MIDE"), Teaching and Guidance in Schools ("DOE"), Education Theory and History ("THE"), Social Work ("TSS"), Anthropology, Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Music and Visual and Plastic Arts, Physical Education

8

Pedagogy, Psychology, Specific Teaching techniques. History

9

Pedagogy and Teaching. Education Philosophy and Research Methods. Psychology. Developmental Psychology in Education. Sociology and Political Sciences in Public Authorities (unassigned department)

10

Theory of Education. History of education and Social Pedagogy. Teaching and Organisation in Schools. Research and Diagnostics methods in Education. Developmental Psychology and Education. Basic Social Psychology and Methodology

11

Theory and History. MIDE. DOE. Developmental Psychology and education. Sociology VI. Musical expression and body language. Visual expression.

|  |
| --- |
| Chart 3. Areas of intervention for social education qualification holders |
| Adults and the elderly: permanent, life-long learning, occupational training  Socio-cultural/leisure and spare time support, socio-cultural management  Dependence and helping to independence  Social misfit and vulnerable groups: unprotected and in conflict minors, families at risk, minorities, disability, addictions, social services in general  Community development  Disabilities  Environmental education  Family education  Education for development  Education for mediation, social inclusion and diversity  Permanent learning  Social Exclusion and educational care of disadvantaged groups  Globalisation and socio-educational action for diversity  Groups in social conflict |
| Childhood and adolescence. Fostering and adoption.  Childhood and youth  Childhood, families and educational mediation  Social Insertion  Interculturality  Marginalisation  The elderly/permanent learning, Guidance and TIC  Social and occupational mediation  Women. Gender and equality  Leisure time and socio-cultural support  Leisure time, promotion and management of cultural activities  Adult people  Elderly people  Prisons  Social, Health and Welfare Services |
|  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chart 4. Specific skills included in the degree (the 11 most important) | | |
| 1 | POLICIES | Learn about social welfare policies and the legislation supporting socio-educational intervention processes |
| 2 | DIAGNOSTICS | Understanding the historical processes, institutions and ideas which have shaped current socio-educational intervention models. |
| 3 | DIAGNOSTICS | Analyse and diagnose the complex reality which is the basis for development of socio-educational processes. |
| 4 | DIAGNOSTICS | Be trained in diagnostics and mediation in conflict prevention and resolution in situations of inequality and crisis in socio-educational communities. |
| 5 | DESIGN | Design, organise, manage and assess socio-educational programmes, projects and services within the sphere of family education and community development, social integration, promoting and managing cultural initiatives, children, youth and the elderly. |
| 6 | DESIGN | Design, apply and assess programmes and strategies for socio-educational intervention in the field of community development and cooperation in development |
| 7 | MANAGEMENT | Develop programmes and projects in a family and academic context and also in specialist education (minors, special educational needs, health centres, addictive behaviour, penal institutions and people and groups at risk of exclusion, etc |
| 8 | MANAGEMENT | Manage structures, processes and programmes for community participation and action |
| 9 | TECHNIQUES | Use specific techniques for socio-educational and community intervention (group dynamics, motivation, negotiation, assertiveness, etc), socio-pedagogic procedures and techniques for intervention, mediation and analysis of personal, family and social realities |
| 10 | TECHNIQUES | Design and use of media, resources and strategies for socio-educational intervention and incorporating them into the various fields of socio-educational action |
| 11 | ASSESSMENT | Assess socio-educational intervention processes, media, resources and results. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chart 5. Most used teaching methodologies | |
| 1 LECTURE | Theory lecture and master class |
| 2 DEBATE | Commentaries on text and audiovisual material |
| Debates |
| Directed discussion |
| Seminars |
| 3 CASE ANALYSIS | Problem-based learning, learning directed at projects |
| Case study |
| 4 PRESENTATIONS | Presentation of students' work |
| 5 EXERCISES and PROJECTS | Classroom practicals |
| ITC Practicals |
| Project development |
| Problem and exercise solving |
| Working in small groups |
| Working in the classroom |
| 6 WORKSHOPS | Practical workshops |
| 7 TUTORIALS | Tutored group activities |
| Collaborative learning/Tutored work |
| Individual and group tutorials |
| 8 INDEPENDENT STUDY | Cooperative learning, learning contract |
| Independent study |
| 9 OUTINGS | Study outings |
| Visits to institutions and experiences |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chart 6. Most common assessment systems | |
| 1 EXAMS | Combined-type exam |
| Development exam |
| Test-type exam |
| Development tests |
| Tests on execution of real or simulated tasks |
| Continuous Assessment tests |
| Short answer tests |
| Synthesis tests |
| Tests |
| 2 ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES | Classroom practical activities |
| Commentaries on texts |
| Case studies |
| Presentations by students |
| Individual and group classroom practicals |
| Oral presentation |
| Tutored work/Collaborative learning |
| Classroom work |
| 3 GROUP ACTIVITIES | Group presentations |
| Group work |
| Group work: presentations |
| Group written work |
| 4 PORTFOLIOS | Learning files (Portfolios) |
| Individual portfolios |
| Group portfolios |
| 5 COURSE WORK | Reports and memoranda |
| Group case or course work |

1. This calculation doesn’t include the seats offered by the two online universities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)