

Faces of Social Work Education in Europe.

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Social work education in Italy. The complex process of academisation.

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Introduction

- A strong *body of specialised knowledge* is necessary to all profession that strives for a recognition, to gain status, and to acquire greater discretion for their desired jurisdiction
- create a **distinctive knowledge base** presupposes the establishment and development of profession-specific education and research opportunities scientific journals, a theoretical framework and a research culture” (Dellgran & Hojer, 2013 :344)
- Having a *distinctive body of knowledge* and a *profession-specific education* are two distinctive characters of a profession

the *academisation process*

- is intertwined with the professionalization process
- Is linked to the establishment of social work as an academic discipline (*disciplinarianisation process*)
- This presentation will focus on social work education: Its origin, the pre academic period, the actual situation, the future

The pre – academic period

1) From Italian social work official birth date, after the II WWW (1946 - until the end of the Eighties

- a. private organizations, inspired by democratic values and social work principles -following the post- war UN aids.
- b. the majority of social work schools developed outside the universities with various structures.
- c. A variety of paths, with some excellences courses: small groups. Social work teachers. Some very weak
- d. The development of sw discipline is fostered by teachers associations
- e. Social work (education and profession) was not officially recognized

2) The period of “school with special purposes” (1982- 2000)

- a. social work education regulated at national level as a three years course to be provided by the universities within the Schools for special purposes (a ‘lower status than the degrees) The only educational path for SW
- b. Establishment of the national register (1993)
- c. Social work teachers often recruited from previous schools

Steps of recognition: a long way from 1985 to 2000

- 1985 - Social work education can only be delivered by Universities
- 1987 - Recognition to the professional title of “assistente sociale” linked to an established curricula of social work (three years)
- 1993 Establishment of the professional register, as mandatory. A self government body
- 1999- 2000 - Bologna Process and establishment of the **BA degree of social work** – in “Social work sciences” . And **Master degree** in “ Planning and management of social services - 2000
- Accordingly, professional register established two sections

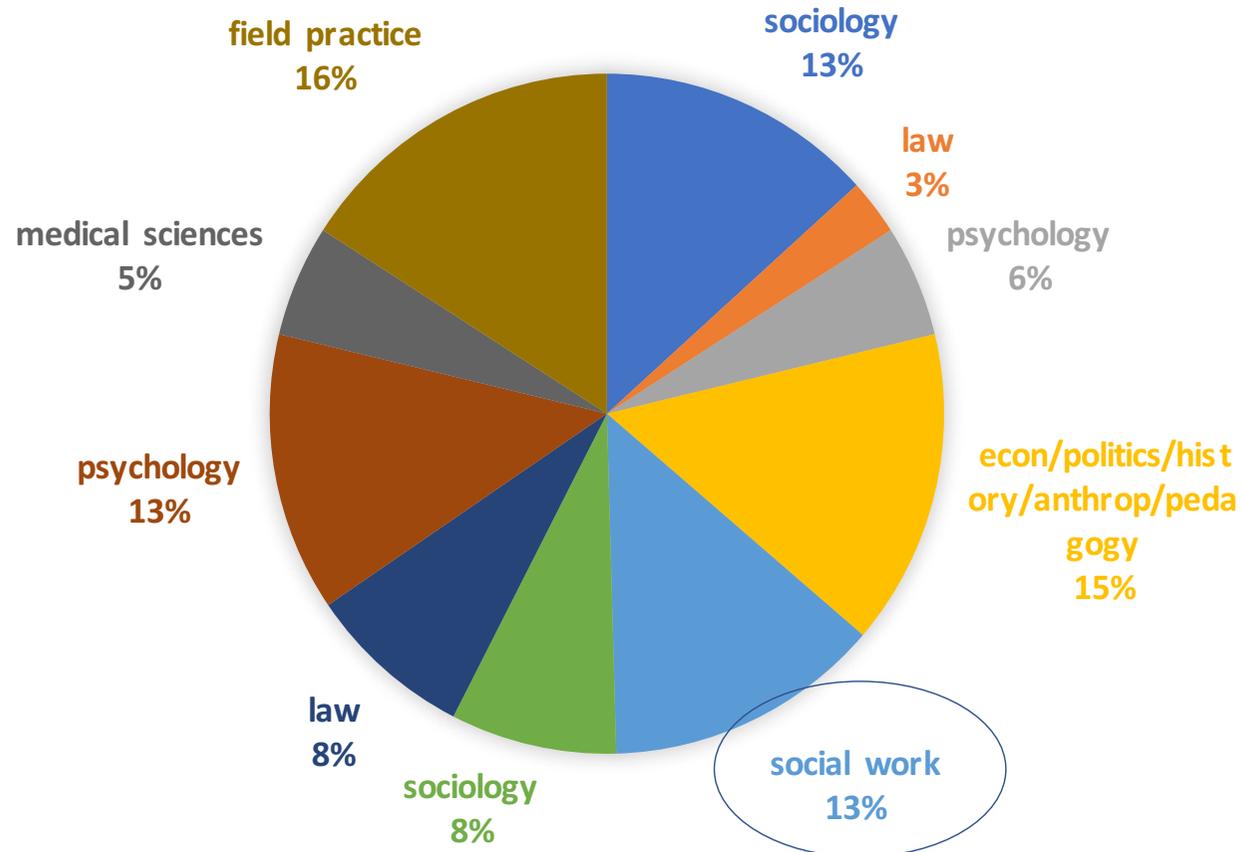
The academic period: swe in the University

- An issue discussed at that time, with advantages (recognition of a higher status for professionals and development of social work discipline..)
- And concerns of loosing peculiarities of social work schools (connection with practice, wide space to social work methods and theories, social work professional teachers)
- After negotiations, social work courses were included in Sociological departments but wasn't recognized as an autonomous discipline (it is considered as a branch of sociology – ‘applied sociology)

BA and MA curriculum structure

- Defined at national level, with minimal requirements
- Bachelor curricula – 180 credits (CFU)
 - Basic disciplines (36 cfu) : sociology (15), law (3), Psychology (6), economics, politics, history, anthropology , pedagogy (12),
 - Characterising disciplines (54): **social work (15)** sociology (9), law (9), psychology (15), medical sciences (6)
 - field practice – Mandatory, at least **18** credits
 - Remaining can be allocated freely by each university

MANDATORY CREDITS - 113/180)



BA and MA curriculum structure -

- Master degree curricula – 120 credits
 - Characterising disciplines (48): sociology (15), law (12), psychology, pedagogy, anthropology, philosophy (12); economics, politics and statistics (12)
 - fieldwork placements – **10** credits
 - Remaining (62 credits) can be allocated freely by each university
 - no social work discipline is required

Social work schools in Italy

- Italy: around 60.000.000 habitants – 42.000 registered social workers
- 38 universities (out of 100 in Italy) deliver 42 Bachelors in Social Work and 38 Master courses
- Some courses (BA) has limited access. Number of students ranges from 180 to 30 per course – [1.300 enrolled 1st year nationally)
- Doctoral schools: changing picture. First PhDs, late '90 – since then almost 60 phd SW students. Very few enrolled in the Universities

An unsatisfactory picture ...

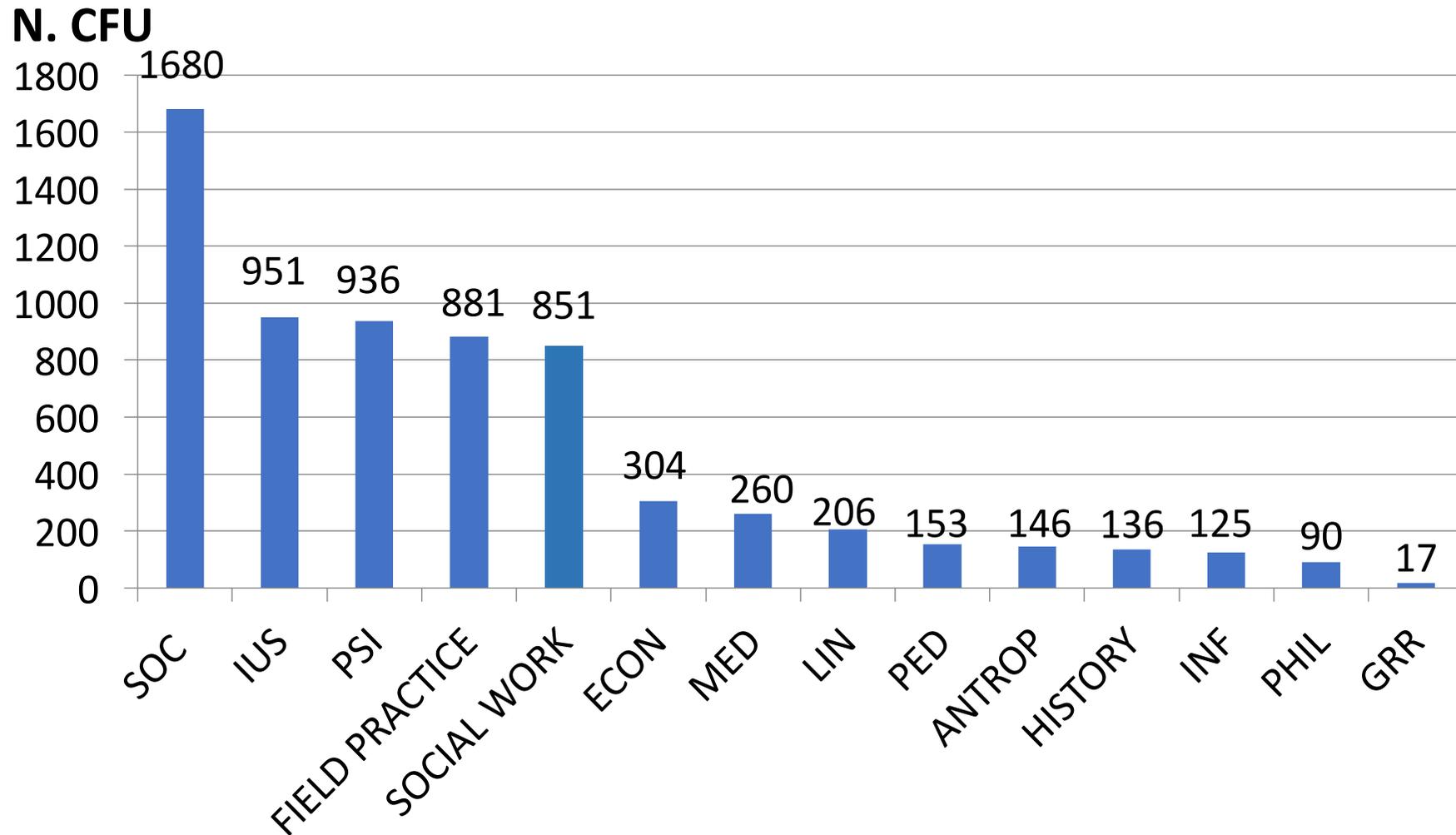
- The ministerial requirement gives a picture quite unsatisfactory
- But Universities have the space (the credits left) to modify the structure of the curricula-
- [Autonomy and competition among Universities enforced after 2010' reform]
- An heterogeneous and diversified picture all over the country: regarding subjects taught, and teachers/scholars involved

Social work discipline and the academic body

- ‘A study carried out by the Italian Association of Social Work educators (AIDOSS), aimed at describing the disciplinarianisation’ of social work – The establishment of social work as an academic discipline - (Hojer & Dellgran, 2013)
- Aims at knowing
 - The balance between SW disciplines and the other subjects
 - The state of art regarding the recruitment of social work teachers.
- The study examine curricula of two academic years (2013-14 and 2014-15)

Social work and other disciplines

42 BA courses deliver an amount of 7560 CFU credits of which 851 (11.25%) are related to social work disciplines.



Social work educators in Italy

- 75% of the social work educators are 'contract teachers → high level of precariousness and low salaries.
- 23% (33 out of 141) belongs to other disciplines and don't have specific knowledge in SW
- Established academics are rare

	contract or tutor'	Researcher	Associate professor	Full Professor	TOT
Social worker	97	7	3	1	108
non social worker	9	13	6	5	33
	106	20	9	6	141

Signs of changes: Light and shadows

- some universities are increasing the number of credits assigned to social work and seek to recruit Soc work academics.
- Slow increase of social work scholars qualified as professors (and hopefully employed) – but still weak community
- Publications increase
- More social workers in PhD programs – But less Phd programs specialised in social work
- Italian society of Social Work Research
- Shortage of resources increase competition

Some learnings from the Italian experience

- It is not enough that social work courses are taught in the University – there is the need to
- Need to consider the ‘politics of social work knowledge’ (Hojer):
 - **from the within** → strengthening the recognition of social work as a specific discipline and strengthening the vital connection between practice, research and education -
 - **With the outside** → negotiating with neighbour disciplines, considering that reduced financing increases competition –
- Need to cultivate and foster **strong alliances** between profession and discipline. Separation will not strengthen social workers
- We have an history of more than 100 years that can tell us something...

References

- Höjer, S. & Dellgran, P. (2013) Academication of social work in Sweden and China. *China Journal of Social Work*. 6 (3) 344-352.
- Campanini, A. (2015) Social Work Education in Italy, History and the Present Scenario. *The indian Journal of Social Work*, 76, 1, pp. 57-74

With good luck for all of us

Thank you for your kind attention