

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN SPAIN: DOES HARMONISATION MAKE SENSE?

LA HOMOLOGACIÓN DE ESTUDIOS EN LA COMUNIDAD EUROPEA: PERSPECTIVAS DESDE EL PUNTO DE VISTA DEL TRABAJO SOCIAL

PAZ MÉNDEZ-BONITO ZORITA
Arizona State University
paz.zorita@asu.edu

ABSTRACT

The schools of social work in Spain are facing the task of adapting their programs to the changes proposed by the Bologna Agreement of 1999. The Agreement intends to create a homogenous system of higher education through the twenty nine member countries of the European Union. The target date is the year 2010. This article offers a historical perspective of social work in Spain in relation to its current academic aspirations. It also offers an analysis of the difficulties that arise from the adaptation of educational programs designed for a broad geographical area of great cultural variation. The author compares the vernacular altruist tradition of Spain, based on a Catholic world view, with the social work tradition, originally based on a Protestant world view. The article discusses how social work began adapting to the Spanish traditions and warns of the potential dangers involved in the current process of europeization of the profession.

RESUMEN

Las escuelas de trabajo social en España tienen la tarea de adaptar sus planes de estudio a los cambios propuestos por el Acuerdo de Bolonia de 1999, Acuerdo que trata de crear para el año 2010 un espacio común de educación universitaria en veintinueve países de la Unión Europea. Se ofrece una perspectiva histórica del trabajo social en España en relación a sus aspiraciones académicas de hoy. Se ofrece también un análisis de los problemas que le plantea la adaptación a planes diseñados para un ámbito geográfico no sólo muy amplio sino culturalmente variadísimo. Se compara la tradición altruista vernácula, basada en un talante católico, con la tradición del trabajo social, basada en un talante originalmente protestante. Se exponen, por una parte, el proceso de naturalización del trabajo social a España gracias a los recursos de la tradición autóctona, y por otra, los peligros potenciales derivados de la europeización —reverso de la naturalización— del trabajo social en un futuro cercano.

KEYWORDS: Spain, social work education. Spain, schools of social work history. Catholic influence in social work. Europeanization. Harmonization

PALABRAS CLAVES: Educación para el trabajo social en España, Escuelas de trabajo social en España, Influencia católica en el trabajo social, Europeización. Armonización

INTRODUCTION

The schools of social work in Spain are being faced with the challenge of harmonising their programs to conform to the Bologna Agreement. Change seems inevitable in the near future. This situation has added a new dimension to ongoing concerns about the nature of social work education, about the relationship between the university and professionals, and about the ties between the university and the culture that surrounds it. This essay offers a historical perspective of professional social work in Spain vis-à-vis its current academic aspirations, and secondly, it offers an analysis of the problems posed by the forces of harmonisation of programs of social work in Europe.

BACKGROUND

In 1999, representatives of twenty nine European countries signed in Bologna a declaration that committed them to the development, by the year 2010, of a 'common space' of higher education (Bollag, 2003). This 'common space' will require a thorough reform of higher education in many countries. This is the first reform ever undertaken at the European level, and will be, perhaps, the most profound of those experienced since the middle of the XIX Century. For example, it is proposed that the length of the educational program leading to the academic degree known in Spain as *licenciatura* be divided in two academic periods of three and two year respectively. The cycle of three years would lead to a degree similar the North American *bachelor* (what in the past were known in Spain as *grados medios* and now as *Estudios Universitarios de Primer Grado*). The second cycle would confer the Spanish *licenciatura*. A third cycle would be earmarked for doctoral studies. The proposal of reform intends, on the one hand, to trim and articulate vertically the degrees, so that each level might have academic integrity and public utility, and on the other hand, to harmonize academic credits and degrees across European states, facilitating their transfer from one to another.

There are many advantages of the Bologna proposal. (Bollag, 2003) To begin with, standardization has some appeal in the face of chaos and resistance to scrutiny of the national systems. Also there are powerful practical and economic reasons behind the Bologna Agreement. Dividing the educational periods leading to the various European degrees would allow students to earn academic qualifications in shorter and more realistic cycles, more accommodating to real life circumstances. The harmonisation of these degrees would give the students greater control over their educational assets and lower the cost of lengthy higher education programs, from which there is often a high drop-out rate. From the perspective of the European labor market, educated individuals would enter the labor pool earlier, with competencies which are equivalent from one country to another.

There are other advantages such as creating a single European consciousness, renewing the content of higher education programs, responding with greater flexibility to changing needs. This would allow universities in Continental Europe to compete with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in attracting Asian students. Asia is a rich market to which Europe, with the exception of UK, has limited access. (Bollag, 2003)

However, this harmonisation, as many other Europeanization initiatives, is often resisted, particularly in the academy. Bollag (2003) reports on the pervasive skepticism of academics about first academic cycle degrees. He also states that academics are questioning

the value and the soundness of a three year degree for either readiness for the labor market or for a second level degree. The resolution of these challenges will determine how educational plans will be structured and the nature of the content to be included.

THE 'LA LEY ORGÁNICA DE UNIVERSIDADES' (LOU)

On December 21st, 2001, the Parliament approved, and the King signed the *Ley de Organización de Universidades*, (LOU). The Spanish higher education legislation has decidedly opted for the Bologna Agreement. This is the most important reform after the Constitution granted autonomy and academic freedom to the universities. In the introduction, the LOU describes some of the changes that took place in Spanish higher education during the previous two decades. It mentions that the number of universities has increased threefold, that there are centers of higher education in almost every city with a population of fifty thousand or more, that over one hundred thirty different degrees are granted, and that a profound process of decentralization of higher education has taken place. However, the LOU also notes that the challenges continue because of the greater role the university must play in the social, economic and cultural development of the country. The university, says the LOU, must respond to the demands for globalization and to the ever increasing information of today. In its introduction, the LOU states that it aims to develop a new normative structure needed by the Spanish university system. The new structure is designed to improve the quality of teaching, research, and university management, to foster mobility of students and professors, to improve the creation and transmission of knowledge, to respond to the challenges of distant higher education and lifelong learning, and to competitively integrate Spanish higher education with the best centers of European higher learning.

A major development in the system is the greater autonomy and flexibility the LOU gives to the universities, particularly with regard to faculty hiring and retention, admissions, creation of centers of distance learning, and the establishment of foundations and other legal entities. The LOU grants greater authority to the *Comunidades Autónomas* (autonomous regional governments) than has been the case before. It fosters a culture of accountability and evaluation through the creation of a national agency for quality control and accreditation of universities, the *Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación* (ANECA). Interestingly, this innovation has already encountered its first political difficulty. The *Consejo de Coordinación Universitaria* (CCO), which is the highest coordinating body of the university system, has criticized the LOU for assigning to ANECA too much power in evaluating the universities—establishment of evaluation criteria, evaluation of curricula every six years, and decisions over suspension or revocation of diplomas that do not meet the criteria. The CCO requires that the autonomous governments—which after all, finance higher education—also have a say in the evaluation processes. (*El País*, 6 enero 2004)

There is not doubt that the LOU, by decentralizing responsibilities, opens the door to market competition, greater accountability, and greater mobility within and among centers. The LOU challenges the need to renew the old university, bent on centralization, resistant to change and reluctant to sharing privileges. Though the reform of 1983 was a vast improvement for the Spanish universities, the LOU moves Spanish higher education further, preparing it for the harmonisation of educational programs throughout Europe. The LOU explicitly states that it was designed to facilitate the adoption of forthcoming

European measures. The LOU includes provisions that will allow the Spanish universities to hire professors and researchers from member countries of the European Union.

SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVES IN SPAIN

Social Work made its definite appearance in Spain around 1957, based on a foreign altruist tradition, a tradition which is even today relatively foreign to the Spanish culture. Paradoxically, in spite of its origins, social work became quickly dependent on the native altruist tradition for nurturance. Social Work education, by the very nature of the profession, must be linked to the local cultures. In so far as harmonisation threatens links with the local cultures, it also threatens the fit between the profession and the society it must serve. The process of harmonisation of social work must be followed not only in the light of European demands but of local conditions to which social work must respond.

The culture of Spain has changed immensely since 1957. The social work programs no longer use the vocabulary that motivated individuals to go to the profession. The cultural evolution of Spain has been towards a convergence with the rest of Europe. However, if the differences between Spain and the rest of Continental Europe have been diminished, they have not disappeared, and in view of the demands of the Bologna Agreement, it makes sense to raise some questions about possible tensions between the cosmopolitan aspirations of Bologna and the local tradition of Spain.

Another element to keep in mind in this discussion is the history of the relationship of the schools of Social Work with the university. According to Molina (1994), today's schools are mostly the heirs of the private schools created in the first half of last century and recognized by the *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, the national education authority. In 1981, the schools had the option of becoming part of a university—public, private or belonging to the Catholic Church—or to be independent entities, though attached to a public university to ensure equivalence of the educational programs. Shortly after, in 1983, the *Ley de Reforma Universitaria* was promulgated. That meant that a little after the schools had achieved at great effort the classification of university centers, the recently approved programs came again in need of further revision. The feeling of precariousness did not seem go away, in spite of the fact that the reform offered advantages to the schools of social work, such as the recognition of 'Social Work and Social Services' as an area of knowledge on its own right. Molina cannot avoid a bitter note about the relationship of the schools of social work with the university when she comments that the same universities and academic departments that for thirty years denied recognition to social work are now eager to exploit its possibilities because it can provide employment to academics from other disciplines. (Molina, 1994).

SPANISH ALTRUIST TRADITION AND SOCIAL WORK.

There are two main altruist traditions in Spain, the Liberal and the Catholic. The first, has not been well explored from the point of view of social work, but in general it can be said that until the 1960's, had remained removed from the demands of social needs. The Liberal altruist tradition should be differentiated from the concrete efforts of the State to meet the needs of its citizens. In Spain, after the Civil War (1936-39), the State adopted a series of social policies that offered certain social protections to the citizens. However, these measures, predating the establishment of a democratic government, cannot be

attributed to the tradition of Liberal altruism mentioned above, as it cannot be attributed the network of welfare services created, for example, in the former Soviet Union.

Catholic altruism, on its part, has its roots in centuries of concrete and local service to the needy. It has depended on a solid network of religious communities, capable of providing structure and resources of all kinds for its charitable work. This tradition gives a vigorous account of its own philosophy and of the ultimate meaning of its social pursuits. In Spain, social work was grafted in this tradition, with important consequences for the type of people recruited to the profession, for the content of the educational programs, and for the type of faculty committed to social work education. Vázquez comments:

The initiative to professionalize social work began in the Catholic sector. Consequently, during many years, the content of the programs of study, the development of the schools of social service, and above all, the orientation given to professional activities have a marked confessional quality. To do justice to its origins, those who study Spanish social services cannot ignore the confessional quality of its genesis. (1970:40)

The Catholic schools of social work graduated in a matter of a few years almost ten thousand professionals. These professionals occupied more than five thousand positions in Catholic organizations, and as many in private and public institutions (Molina, 1994). Many of those professionals, immersed in the social teachings of the Church, utilized the reliable research sponsored by *Cáritas* and other Catholic organizations. Those professionals are still working today, leaving their imprint on the profession. Through them, many characteristics of Catholic altruism still survive today. Do those beginnings have anything to offer to the future evolution of social work?

SOCIAL WORK AS A PROTESTANT CREATION

Social Work is a Protestant creation, and though mainly Anglo-Saxon in origin, it was soon adopted by Northern and Central European countries. Protestant individualism and a scientific approach to human problems were not strange to those countries. Social Work relied on both worldviews: a scientific outlook on the one hand, and on the other, a conception of the human being as an essentially autonomous subject, less engaged from concrete historical communities. Given the coherence between social work and the cultural milieu of those countries that in Spain are called “Nordic,” it may be assumed that the center of gravity of the evolution of European social work is located more in Protestant Europe and North America than in Mediterranean.

In the USA, which in many ways sets the paradigm for the profession, Social work is a secular project. Not only social work education thrives in state universities, but even in universities of religious auspices the programs of study must follow norms designed by an accrediting body, the Council of social work Education (CSWE), whose philosophy is ostensibly non-religious. And yet, an examination of the *Code of Ethics* (1996) of the National Association of Social Work, reveals that is a Protestant inspired document (in the sense of what Aranguren has called *talante Protestante*.) For example, the Code states that ‘Social Workers recognize the importance of human relationships’:

Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change ... Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities. (NASW Code of Ethics, 1996, p. 6).

There is nothing to object in those words. And yet, from a philosophy in which human relationships are intrinsic goods, the fact that they are defined instrumentally in the Code, is foreign to the Catholic ear. From a Catholic point of view, human relationships are valuable not just for the well being that they may bring. In fact, valuable relationships often include suffering and forbearance. Human relationships are understood as including not only well-being, but also pain and self-denial. Even the concepts of 'well-being,' 'rights,' 'justice,' so important in the deontological codes of the profession, are empty of meaning if disengaged from the tradition ('historically extended, socially embodied argument') that defines them and applies them to specific situations (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 222; 1988). Summing up, the profession, at least a powerful sector of it, presupposes a world vision born and developed in the Protestant West. It reflects a sensibility that has been foreign to Spain during centuries and which not even now is entirely understood.

NATURALIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK IN SPAIN

Social work in Spain has required a 'cultural translation;' this was a difficult job. The difficulty comes from the differences between the Catholic and Protestant ethos (Aranguren, 1965) in relation to notions of individual autonomy, self-determination, the role of the family and the State. The *talante católico* ('Catholic ethos'), in contrast with the *talante protestante* (Aranguren, 1965), includes social, spiritual and moral supports that people in crisis can hold on to, without wounding their dignity or threatening their autonomy. Individual success and well-being is not fully enjoyed by the Catholic if those around him or her are not part of it (Novak, 2004). For Catholics, well-being is never absolutely individual, but relational, mediated, or shared.

Discussing the Catholic culture, Tropman (1985) identifies six characteristics. The first is the Catholic ambivalence towards wealth. In a culture in which voluntary poverty is part of the path to spiritual perfection, wealth is not a reliable indicator of spiritual health. Moreover, in such a culture, social Darwinism cannot serve as a guide for social engineering. Tropman states, 'Certainly, [the Catholic] tradition would not suggest that those who are poor have any serious flaws of character or moral deficit. Rather, the poor are like the rest of us—only without money' (p. 15). This is a fine observation. I remember a Spaniard, in his nineties, who a few years ago, when asked what it had meant for his family to live in poverty (his salary being the minimum wage) he answered with great surprise, 'We have never been poor, we just did not have money.' For him lack of money did not qualify as poverty.

The second characteristic, according to Tropman (1985), is the view that work is just an instrument. Work is good, it helps sustain the family, it is a duty, but the identity and dignity of the person does not depend on it, a clear contrast with Protestant culture. Though Tropman does not discuss it, Catholics differentiate between work and vocation. Some tasks are vocational, some other tasks belong to the world of work and profession. The first, regardless of how humble, have a greater dignity than the second, and they demand fidelity, devotion and a disposition to serve. Work tasks, on the other hand, are rewarded by the just measure.

A third characteristic is the Catholic tendency to invest efforts and resources in the family well-being, and to make of the well-being of each member a common enterprise, rather than perceiving personal success as a project by the individual and for the individual (Tropman, 1985). How often the youngest of the family owe their education and professional status to older siblings who willingly pooled resources on their behalf?

This tendency, although not an exclusively Catholic trait, certainly seats well with the Catholic world view.

A fourth characteristic is the strong tradition of charity in Catholicism, a tradition 'more vigorously developed and of longer duration than that which might characterize the Protestant Ethic.' (Tropman, 1985, p. 16). 'Good works' are a necessary ingredient of 'the good life' here and now, and a requirement for 'the blessed life' afterwards. 'Good works,' rather than work, define the Catholic ethic, while the work ethic, as Max Weber observed (1988), defines in great measure the Protestant ethic.

The Catholic tradition of charity is not only evident through private organizations, but also influences state institutions. Tropman mentions Saint Vincent de Paul as having inspired the social vocation of thousands upon thousands of individuals. But even looking back five centuries, one cannot forget the Catholic from Valencia, Luis Vives, whose *De subventionem pauperum* (1526) was the foundation for the first welfare policies in Europe. Even though Vives's ideas were opposed by some Catholic thinkers of that time, such as Domingo de Soto, a Dominican friar, the opposition was not based on fear that government's help would be extravagant, undeserved or corrupting, but on the fear that state regulation would decrease the freedom and the right of those in need to ask for help wherever they wanted and wherever they found it (Molina, 1994). At any rate, Vives's concept of expecting the state to respond to social needs is consistent with the fifth Catholic characteristic mentioned by Tropman, familiarity with Church hierarchical bureaucracies that distribute goods and services. This concept makes Catholics, in general, receptive to the idea of state intervention in solving social problems, a fact observed and documented by Wilenski (1981).

The Catholic attitude towards personal failures is sharply different from the attitude derived from the Protestant ethic. Tropman (1985) suggests that in the Catholic ethos there is a greater acceptance of the cycle of offense and forgiveness, and therefore the need to accuse tends to be weaker. It is also attenuated by a rich iconographic and sacramental culture, which provides psychological, social, and theological mechanisms for acknowledging the failures and seek protection in the hope of forgiveness. All of this offered through the senses of sight and hearing. Who can ignore the dramatic force of the *Via Crucis*, the processions of Holy Week –not only in Spain but in all the Spanish speaking world? In many cultural expressions the moral weakness of every human being is acknowledged, as well as the desire and hope for protection and help. Summing up in the words of Tropman,

Clearly an ethic that does not overvalue money, that puts work into an instrumental perspective, that understands that the condition of people is a changeable one, and that even crimes and sins they personally commit do not adhere to the infrastructure of their character, will be supportive (or at least more supportive) of distressed individuals, than an ethic that sees personal success and financial gain through work as indicative of high quality character and that sees character as central and frequently immutable. It would be difficult to be helpful in the latter case. Aid would be considered illegitimate and, as the definition of pauperism suggests, the very acceptance of aid is thought to weaken the character of the recipient. (Tropman: 17).

Until the last quarter of the XX Century, the Catholic ethos as described above, was operative in Spain, and people with some instruction could more or less give an account

of its origin. Moreover, within social work, this ethos, this *talante*, was the strong motivator for the creation of schools of social work as well as for the development of social areas and institutions where social work could exercise its mission. Let the first school of social work serve as an example. It was founded in 1932 in Barcelona, under the auspices of *Acción Católica*. After the Spanish Civil War and the long post-war period, the creation of schools does not begin in earnest until 1957, when their number increases immediately. In 1964 Spain has 29 schools affiliated with Federación Española de Escuelas de la Iglesia de Servicios Sociales (FEEISS) (Molina, 1994). The investment of effort, zeal, and resources in the creation of schools in such short period of time was enormous. Spanish *Cáritas*, religious orders, such as Saint Vincent de Paul's, a number of dioceses, and various Catholic movements were integral part of this fervent action, action that was anchored in a decidedly Catholic narrative.

Although not as extensive, one needs to mention other foundational efforts parallel to those of the Church (Molina, 1994). *La Sección Femenina*, a branch of the political party in power, created five schools of social work. Between 1962 and 1972 other schools were founded by institutions independent of the FEEISS: The Red Cross (Lleida), the *Opus Dei* (Pamplona), the *Diputación de Oviedo* (Oviedo), the Trade Union (Huelva), Politechnical (Santander), the Ministry of Labor (Zaragoza), the Ministry of Education and Science—the only official school (Madrid), *La Caja de Ahorros*—a kind of credit union (Logroño). At any rate, out forty two schools, thirty were sponsored by the Church, “which gave them their Catholic flavor” (Molina, 1994, p. 71). Moreover, not all schools independent from FEEISS were free of the Catholic influence. The school of Pamplona, for instance, was founded by the *Opus Dei*, and the schools of *Sección Femenina*, at some moment of their existence took the name of “*Escuelas de Santa Teresa*” (Molina, 1994), even though they existed under the auspices of a political party. The ideological difference between the schools of the FEEISS and those of the *Sección Femenina* is not so much one of Catholic vs. non-Catholic, but rather one of variations within Catholicism.

Up to 1970 the profession was unknown to most people. Even its members had difficulty defining it. In spite of this, and even without the prospects of a visible labor market, the profession attracted hundreds of women with a social vocation. The rhetoric was often of Catholic inspiration, which easily and seamlessly derived towards a pro working-class and leftist discourse. Wilenski (1981) has observed that in those countries that have political Catholic parties, these have a greater influence in the development of the welfare state than the political parties of the left. Wilenski attributes this to the deeply rooted tradition of institutional structures in Catholic countries, a tradition that predates the centralized state. We could say that Socialism and Catholicism coincide in general in regard to social issues. They coincide with regard to certain values, such as solidarity, equality, universality and, to some extent, with regard to the concept of private property. The Catholic concept of private property is closer to the Socialist's point of view than to the Protestant one.

SPANISH CULTURE TODAY

It could be argued that current Spanish culture is post-Catholic, and that Social Work need not pay attention to something that is already in the past. Should this be so, the Europeanization of the educational programs would have against it one less cultural

difficulty. However, it is possible to suspect that the Catholic sensibility, though attenuated, still remains. Is it worth paying attention to that sensibility? Is there yet a Catholic *talante*? Should the education of social workers consider it?

Two European surveys on values, carried out in 1981 and 1990, showed fundamental changes in the Spanish religious profile (González-Anleo y González Blasco, 2000). The researchers confirmed the strong impact of secularization (Elzo et al., 2000). For instance, today almost half of Spaniards rarely go to church. Every ten years the proportion of Catholics that regularly attend church decreases about ten points. Among those younger than 25 years –the generation of “change,” only 5% goes regularly to church more than once per week. The greatest decrease is among those 35 to 44 years old ¿Does it mean that the Catholic sensibility has disappeared at the same pace that the visible expression of Catholicism? Is the Catholic *talante* a meaningless variable from the point of view of social work?

The questions above require more than a simplistic answer. Although only 35% of Spaniards perceive themselves as practicing Catholics, 82% says to belong to the Catholic religion. For many, no doubt, this is only a symbolic belonging. However, it cannot be ignored. González-Anleo y González Blasco argue:

Symbolic membership is important. It is part of the personal identity and it distinguishes the religious individual from the decidedly irreligious one. Symbolic membership remains as potential religious capital of the person, because religious values may persist for a long time in the consciousness of the individual, even after having been rejected, and also after the vanishing from the environment the theological foundations which logically justify them. Thus reasons Merton about an idea of Troeltsch's: 'Spiritual forces exert a dominant influence even where they have been absolutely rejected.' (2000:185).

In effect, the persistence of Catholicism is noticeable in festivities and in rites of passage, and also in a cultural resistance to remake the religious map of Spain even after the declaration of the State as non-confessional. “The opening of the ‘spiritual market’ ... did not have any impact in the configuration of the *confessional* map of Spain. The number of irreligious people has increased 5%, but the numbers of Protestants and Muslims have barely increased.” (Italics in the original) (González-Anleo & González Blasco, 2000, p. 186). According to these authors, secularization in Spain has been somewhat hurried, incomplete and irregular. These authors remark that popular Catholicism is the reason why “religious memory,” so faded in other countries, still remains in Spain (p. 200). Scholars have noticed the vigor of this Catholicism and its role in the “remaking of religious identity.” They mention as examples the Holy Week of Sevilla, the Marian devotions of “El Rocío,” “Our Lady of the Forsaken” in Valencia, the “Pilarica” in Zaragoza, and many others (González-Anleo & González Blasco, p. 200).

The Survey of European Values confirms that, in spite of the many changes that have taken place, the political attitudes of people continue to be associated with the level of religiosity. González-Anleo y González Blasco (2000) identify the following characteristics of practicing Catholics: 1) a greater social integration, shown in greater confidence in social institutions; 2) a greater level of associationism; 3) greater participation in volunteer and charitable work; 4) greater ethical rigor; 5) greater importance of family and conjugal fidelity (only small minority accepts abortion); 6) less interest in politics than other groups,

although this groups shows greater satisfaction with democracy than the typical Spaniard; 7) greater satisfaction with their own life and work than the other groups; and 8) though surprising, less trust in people. Another important aspect from the cultural and social point of view is the confidence that the institutional church inspires in responding to social problems. Only one third of Spaniards think that the church is capable of giving appropriate answers to social needs.

From the point of view of social work the data discussed above are very relevant. First of all, they suggest the persistence in Spain of a *talante* shaped by Catholic values; second, they suggest that such *talante*, even in the Spain of today, is related to attitudes and behaviors in which social work has a particular interest; third, the *talante católico* is stronger among women, precisely the group to which the social worker has greater access; fourth, at least one socially vulnerable group, the elderly, feels strongly Catholic; fifth, the family (an institution about which social work has a particular interest) holds as yet to an ideal of Catholic origin; sixth, unequal distribution of Catholic sensibilities alert us to the fact that Spain is sociologically a complex country and not pliable to generic approaches and solutions. If it is not pliable to generic approaches from within, it is less likely to be even less pliable to generic approaches from without, such as a Europeanized social work.

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES OF HARMONIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION ACROSS THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

How does the *talante*, the sensibility of a country, limits the advantages of a European educational harmonization? One should be concerned that harmonization may: 1) create a greater cultural distance between the points of view of the social worker and those of the population at large; 2) suffocate or displace the native resources of help; 3) impose definitions of social problems as perceived from Central and Northern Europe; 4) result in unwittingly replacing a world view by another. These concerns are related to what has been observed in the USA. In that country there is a distance between the culture of the profession—liberal and “progressive”—and the traditional and religious cultures from which many social work clients come. On the one hand, social work students, in passing through the university, often loose their traditions, their inherited world view. On the other, they are taught to be sensitive towards the cultures of their clients, with the paradox that sometimes they must learn from the books about their own, cultures that they were taught to abandon in exchange for their university degrees. One must ask oneself if the harmonization of social work education carries similar risks in Spain, or even greater risks, since the cultural differences (linguistic, religious, legal, symbolic, of narratives and habits) among the European counties are deeper than those that can be observed within the US, in spite of its fifty states and its ethnic diversity. The idea of a standardized social work education through the European Union does not seem realistic, given the cultural content that must inform social work education.

THE GOAL OF EUROPEANIZATION AND SOCIAL WORK IN SPAIN

Spanish social work owes a great deal to Europe and to a number of international organizations. European social work and international institutions backed the profession in Spain during the many years when it was ignored by the universities. Outside the Catholic Church, social work had a hard time in gaining a minimum of official recognition. The

universities truly ostracized social work as a field of study. Yet, it was the universities that were better equipped to understand the humanistic dimension of social work. Only little by little the schools of social work have been able to find a place, albeit marginal, in the university. However, the evolution of the profession and of the university itself indicates that the university will be more and more the home of social work. The Europeanization of social work will be an element that strengthens the status of social work in the university.

While many academic departments complain about their Europeanization, social work has a long history of achieving national legitimacy through European legitimacy. For instance, in 1967 the *Federación Española de Asociaciones de Asistentes Sociales* (FEDAASS) was created (Las Heras, 2000). The political regime of that time did not recognize associations whose main purpose was advocacy. But FEDAASS became a member of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in 1970, and made its own the aims of the international group. The IFSW has been the voice of the profession at every international forum where issues of social welfare are discussed. It has consultant status in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and in UNICEF, as well as in the European Council and in Amnesty International. This international backing helped Spanish social work gain consultant status during the 1980's in the Social Welfare Councils of the Autonomous Governments (*Consejos de Bienestar Social en las Comunidades Autónomas*) of the country. Spain did not enter the European Community until 1986, but Spanish social work had already benefited for some time from a network of European relationships and support.

The aspirations of the Bologna Agreement have been latent for many years among European social workers. The Resolution 67/16 of the European Council about "functions, education and status of Social Workers," advances the idea of harmonization of diplomas, and recognition of equivalent ones (Las Heras, 2000). In 1975 a linking committee between the IFSW and the European Union was created. One of its goals has been to establish the basis for the free movement of social workers within the European Community. Spain became part of this committee in 1986. On December 21 of 1988, a Directive of the Council of European Communities recognized three year professional diplomas. With this, social workers' professional mobility across the European Community was sanctioned. The *Real Decreto 1665/1991* of October 25, 1991 regulates the system that sanctions the three year university diplomas of the member states of the European Union (BOE, November 22, 1991). The Europeanization of social work is further enhanced by the IFSW's ethical principles and criteria of social work, in which the Codes of Ethics of the member countries are based (Las Heras, 2000, p. 31)

CONCLUSION

The harmonization of social work education through the European Union has clear advantages for the mobility of people with university diplomas. The Spanish legislation has been diligent in getting ready for the year 2010. The country itself hears the European call, and feels that it must end the isolation and diminished international status it had during half of the XX Century. Harmonization favors those aspirations. Social work, a minor profession, has also something to win with greater access to an international arena. That arena is home to NGOs and supranational bureaucracies that are quite

independent of slow and sometimes unjust political processes of the nation states. During Franco's Dictatorship, social work profited from the backing of the Catholic Church, the International Catholic Union of Social Services (UCISS), the IFSW, the European Community, and other supranational organizations. Social work, as other marginal groups, cannot but remember the advantages of blurring and crossing borders, and in the case of social work in Spain, of being heard beyond the Pyrenees.

However, the bulk of social work does not take place in Brussels or in Geneva, but in towns and neighborhoods and regional areas. It is carried out in particular languages and dialects rather than in a lingua franca. It deals mainly with contexts and with cultural values, some of which are apparent and some of which are not. The labor mobility of the social worker beyond its linguistic sphere is not realistic, for it is not the social work diploma the one that competes in the market, but its bearer. The social worker is a cultural worker, a specialist in particular contexts. The harmonization of social work education will be useful in those specialties that deal in international contexts, for instance, human rights, immigration, international social movements, among others. It is the duty of the schools of social work in Spain to use the Europeanization of social work education with the same wisdom that the first schools of social work were able to renew native altruism, grafting and naturalizing a practice that had been born beyond the borders of Spain.

REFERENCES

- ALBER-LLORCA, M. (1996): Renouveau de religion locale en Espagne, en Davie y Hervieu-Léger. (Eds.) (1996). *Identités religieuses en Europe*. La Decouverte, París. (235-252).
- ARANGUREN, J. L. L. (1965): *Catolicismo y Protestantismo como formas de existencia*. En *Obras Completas*. Editorial Plenitud, Madrid. 4-211.
- Boletín Oficial del Estado* (15 de marzo de 1964): Reconocimiento de las Escuelas de Asistentes Sociales.
- Boletín Oficial del Estado* (24 de agosto de 1981): Real Decreto de 20 de agosto 1850/81.
- Boletín Oficial del Estado* (22 de agosto 1990): Acuerdo del Consejo de Universidades de 19 de junio 1990.
- Boletín Oficial del Estado* (25 de octubre 1991): Real Decreto 1665/1991.
- BOLLAG, B. (26 sept., 2003): European Higher Education Seeks a Common Currency. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. A-52-54.
- DE MIGUEL, A. (1997): *La sociedad española 1996-1997*. Editorial Complutense, Madrid.
- El País.es* (6 ene. 2004): Evaluación de Carreras. Página de Opinión.
- ELZO, J. Y ORIZO, F. A. (2000): (Eds.) *España 2000, entre el localismo y la globalidad: La encuesta europea de valores en su tercer aplicación, 1981-1999*. Universidad de Deusto, Deusto.
- GONZÁLEZ-ANLEO, J. Y GONZÁLEZ BLASCO, P. (2000): Religión, Valores, Ritos y Creencias. En Javier Elzo y Francisco Andrés Orizo. (Eds.) (2000). *España 2000, entre el localismo y la globalidad: La encuesta europea de valores en su tercer aplicación, 1981-1999*. Universidad de Deusto, Deusto. (182-213).
- LAS HERAS, P. (2000): La construcción histórica de una profesión. *Pasado, presente y futuro del Trabajo Social. II Foro de Trabajo Social*. Universidad de Comillas, Madrid.
- Ley Orgánica de Universidades. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 24 dic., 2001.
- MACINTYRE, A. (1984): *After virtue* (segunda edición). University of Notre Dame Press,

Indiana.

- *Whose justice? Which rationality?* (1988): University of Notre Dame Press. Indiana.
- MOLINA SÁNCHEZ, M. V. (1994): *Las enseñanzas del Trabajo Social en España, 1932-1983: Estudio socio-educativo*. UPCO, Madrid.
- NASW (1996) Ethical Principle: Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. *NASW Code of Ethics*. Washington, DC.
- NOVAK, M. (4 marzo, 2004): The Reagan Catholics. Who they are. Where they come from. How they think. How to reach them. <http://www.nationalreview.com/novak.novak20040304901.asp>
- TROPMAN, J. E. (1985): The “Catholic Ethic” vs. the “Protestant Ethic”: Catholic Social Service and the Welfare State. *Social Thought*, 12(1). 13-22.
- VÁZQUEZ, J. M. (1970): *Situación del Servicio Social en España: Estudio Sociológico*. Instituto de Sociología Aplicada, Madrid.
- WEBER, M. (1988): *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (Translated by Talcott Parsons). P. Smith, Gloucester, Massachusetts.
- WILENSKI, H. L. (1981): Leftism, Catholicism, and Democratic Corporatism: The Role of Political Parties in Recent Welfare State Development. En Peter Flora y Arnold J. Heidenheimer. (Eds.) *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*. Transaction Books, New Brunswick.

