

The Doors that ‘April Opened’: Higher Education in Social Work in Portugal at the ISMT in Coimbra

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Abstract. The “Carnation Revolution” opened up Portugal to the world and ‘invaded’ the Schools of Social Work with an impact on the training of Portuguese Social Work (PSW) and Miguel Torga Institute of Higher Education (ISMT), allowing them to conquer academic and professional fields. This paper conducts a socio-historical analysis of training based on documents from the ISMT Archives and interviews with key personalities. It explores three significant periods that mark the evolution of training in PSW at ISMT in Coimbra: 1) 1974 to 1990: during this period, the secularization of training took place, education was democratized, and students gained social rights while participating in struggles for their training and profession; 2) 1990s: this period highlighted the recognition of the degree, which aided to the development of postgraduate training and research, expanding career opportunities and professional fields; 3) Post Bologna Process: this section addresses the changes imposed by the Bologna Process, which reduced the duration of training from five to four years in 2004 and further to seven semesters in 2007, resulting in substantial changes for training and the profession.

Keywords: *Carnation Revolution*, Social Work, Higher Education, Bologna Process

1 Introduction

This paper is the outcome of a research undertaken for the 83rd anniversary of Miguel Torga Institute of Higher Education (ISMT) and reflects the changes that took place in Portugal’s social work training, especially in Coimbra, as a result of the Carnation Revolution (April 25, 1974). We consulted ISMT archives and its Department of Communication and Audiovisuals (DCA) to access textual documentation, images and audios from the Social Work’s degree and master’s degree. We had some employees collaboration (long time workers), and we used ISMT periodicals, activists social workers testimonies and photographs to add value to the research.

Understanding Social Work training dynamics occur in specific socio-historical contexts, we will look at three reference periods that were decisive for the Social Work training changes in Portugal: 1) the revolutionary period with a direct impact on the organizational structure of the old Instituto Superior de Serviço Social de Coimbra (ISSSC), on the students’ association and on the organization of the Associação de

Profissionais de Serviço Social (APSS) dynamics; 2) the consolidation of democracy, the struggles and achievements for the 5-year undergraduate degree, the creation of master's and doctoral courses, the development of social and social work research and a professional career as a senior technician; 3) finally, we analyze the Bologna Process and the consequent restructuring of training in the different academic degrees.

2 The Carnation Revolution and Social Work in Portugal and Coimbra

On April 25, 1974, there was a military revolt against the colonial war (1961-1974), which was joined by the population, turning it into a revolution that became known worldwide as the Carnation Revolution. When the dictatorship was deposed, the colonial war ended, the opponents who had been in exile returned and the political prisoners were released, the so-called Ongoing Revolutionary Process, or PREC, began [1], [2]. The end of censorship and the information revolution, companies and banks were nationalized, land reform took place, popular associations and cooperatives proliferated [3], [4] replacing the traditional institutions of social control and, with them, the expressions of resistance to the dictatorial regime, which were already being felt in teaching and in the profession of social worker, erupted [5].

According to Rosas [6], the 1974/75 Revolution ushered in radical changes in the political face of the country. The revolutionary process paved the way for democracy, which was institutionalized in 1976 with the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (April 1976), which included universal human and social rights in its program and paved the way for the reorganization of state functions. The extreme and widespread poverty inherited from the Estado Novo, the depletion of the state's coffers due to the colonial war and an international crisis led the country to receive its first financing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and, as a result, to a major curtailment of its programs to promote universal social rights. Decolonization and the consequent return of thousands of Portuguese emigrants/citizens from the former colonies brought significant socio-political, economic and cultural challenges.

From the outset, social workers and the Higher Institutes of Social Work (Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto) joined the emerging movements, integrating the then hegemonic revolutionary process.

At ISSSC, students and teachers organized themselves in a School Assembly with direct participation, elected new academic and pedagogical management bodies and questioned training in all its dimensions. The teachers assigned to the previous regime were dismissed. The principal, Teresa Serra Granado, despite her work resisting the dictatorship, was removed. Professors and anti-fascist collaborators in the areas of law, economics and literature, who had been unofficially active at the ISSSC, took on a significant role in the revolutionary process, in political activism, in government functions and, others took a more active role in the life of the University of Coimbra (UC), leaving the Institute [7]. The attributions of the Course Assemblies were approved at the General Students' Meeting, assessments were suspended, internship reports were not carried out and internship sites were moved away from classical institutions. It was

understood that it was necessary to deinstitutionalize action, to move it to the communities, to cooperatives, residents' and workers' associations, oriented towards "collective action for social transformation" [8]. The aim was to mobilize populations, work with and encourage grassroots and workers' organizations to defend their interests and rights. In short, a late reconceptualization in Portuguese Social Work [9], [10].

At the academic level, the teaching of the social sciences was given a boost and at the ISSS in Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto, a variety of books by previously forbidden authors began to arrive at the library: K. Marx, F. Engels, J. Luckács, Max Weber, Paulo Freire, Marcuse, Nicos Polantzias, Marta Harnecker, Lenin, L. Trotsky, Avelãs Nunes, Armando Castro, Mao Tsé Tung, Eugénio Rosa, among others, as well as reference authors in the reconceptualization of Social Work in Latin America [11].

One of the first struggles of the three institutes was to integrate the courses into the Public University [12], [13], [10], a process that began during the dictatorship. Internal correspondence, student records from the period and photographs provided to us show public demonstrations at the beginning of 1975 [14]. The first, organized by the ISSS of Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra in front of the Ministry of Education, was attended by teachers, students and staff, as well as professionals and members of the National Union of Social Service Professionals. The slogans were "integration or death"; "against Social Work at the service of capital" [11]. The aim of that movement was to disassociate the ISSS in Lisbon and Porto from the founding bodies associated with the Catholic Church and to fight for the right to public, secular, universal and free education. By Order No. 74/76, of July 14 [15], a bachelor's degree in Social Intervention was created at the Universities of Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto, however, the process never took effect and, in October 1976, this Order was suspended.

At ISSSC, the students' struggle was successful: they were able to join the student movement of the Coimbra Academic Association (AAC), securing exemption from tuition fees and access to the UC's social services. This relationship with the student movement provided them with a university student identity, allowing them to participate in the activities of the AAC's sports and cultural departments and actively participate in Coimbra's well-known student festival—the Queima das Fitas parade. They created the ISSSC Socialmente Students' Association newspaper and, in the 1990s, created their own cultural structures (music and theater), such as the Tuna Real Torga and the Torgas das Pedras Brancas Theater Group [16]. Also noteworthy were the National Meetings of Social Work Students (ENESS) from the early 1980s to the late 1990s. Resumed in 2016 under the name Movimento de Estudantes de Serviço Social [Movement of Social Work Students] (MESS), it was instrumental in holding the 2019 National Meeting of Social Work Students in Coimbra, jointly organized by students from the Miguel Torga Institute of Higher Education and the University of Coimbra.

3 Democracy, the development of training and the enhancement of professional careers. From ISSSC to Miguel Torga Institute of Higher Education

Conjunctures always have a strong impact on institutional dynamics. With the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (1976), the configuration of the Portuguese Rule of Law and Social State began, reinforced 10 years later with Portugal's integration into the then European Economic Community, now the European Union (EU). The EU's support policies led to a major increase in the development of social policies, particularly in the areas of social security, health, education and justice. European funding enabled the development of academic training and university exchanges. An example of this was the funding for Advanced Training for Teachers in Higher Education, to obtain Master's and PhD degrees, under the Operational Program for Educational Development for Portugal - PRODEP III, from which several ISSSC teachers benefited [14]. In this context, and because there were no master's or doctoral courses in Social Work, many social workers obtained their diplomas in other disciplines of social and humanities sciences.

On the other hand, funding for travel on teaching missions under what is now known as the ERASMUS+ Program, opened up Social Work training to levels previously forbidden by the dictatorial regime. From the second half of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s, socio-political conditions gradually led to a reconfiguration of the profession and Social Work training. In 1978, the Association of Social Work Professionals (APSS) was created and, once university integration had been achieved, a movement grew up that brought together students, professionals and academics and combined the fight for a degree with the fight for access to a higher technical career in public services [17], [18], [9]. From then on, it became clear that academic development, the construction of the Social Work discipline and teaching qualifications were indispensable [13]. The first results of this process were the recognition of the bachelor's degree of the Social Work study plans of the three institutes in 1989 and 1990 and then, in 1995, the authorization to award the master's degree. As a result of this process, in 1991 social workers achieved the career of Senior Social Service Technician (TSSS) [19] - and social workers were allowed access to other careers of Senior Technicians in the Public Administration, namely in the services of the Administration of Justice. The assessment of the process by the president of the APSS, published in the 1992 *Folha Informativa*, refers to the high point of the Portuguese Social Work, quoting "today the Portuguese Social Work is internationally recognized, not only for what it has achieved as a statute, but also for the work it does and the positions it occupies in the Public Administration." [20]. We can also read in the same document that the process of reconfiguring careers was neither swift nor uniform [20].

The last decade of the 20th century was thus one of great professional and academic expansion. On the one hand, profound changes occurred in the labor market for Social Work. An indicator of its development is the opening of public tenders and the number of vacancies for the TSSS career between 1991 and 1999. Susana Pires' research reveals that after the creation and regulation of the TSSS career, thousands of vacancies were

opened between August 1991 and the end of 1999, distributed among the Ministries of Health, Labor and Solidarity, Justice, Education, Planning and Internal Administration, Agriculture, National Defense, Finance, Public Works, Transport and Communications, as well as in the scope of Local Public Administration, for all career and hierarchical levels [21].

On the other hand, Social Work courses had a regular intake of hundreds of applicants and internships from all over the country at all the services, essentially in public social policies. The relationship of cooperation between the institutes, public services and professionals was very strong.

With the award of the academic degree, the ISSSC's curriculum was changed from 4 to 5 years in 1990 by Decree-Law n.º 15/90 of January 9 [22]. Specialty branches were created in 1993. Theoretical, methodological and technical training had its foundations in the social sciences and Social Work, and Social Work research was included in the discipline, orientation seminar and research practice. Thus, from 1990/1991 to 2003/2004, the study plan included 5 years of training, but from 1993/1994 and 2003/2004 it operated with branches of specialization in the last two curricular years. These were: Social Security, Health, Justice and Probation, Counseling and Human Resources Management by Ordinance 692/93 of July 22 [23]. Reversing the trend of generalist training that had dominated since its creation, the ISSSC was the only one to implement specialized training

In 1998, new courses were created and, as a result, the ISSSC was renamed Miguel Torga Institute of Higher Education (ISMT).

4 Research in Social Work and the development of postgraduate training

As Martins summarized, "at this socio-historical juncture, the professional project incorporated the qualification requirements of those who work with the expressions of the Social Question, Human Rights and Social Rights, Social Policies, promoting academic development and the construction of the disciplinary area of Social Work, and research was then included in the list of significant advances in Social Work in Portugal [18]. In 1985, the first (four-monthly) Social Work journal, *Intervenção Social*, was created and, in 1986, international cooperation with the Postgraduate Program in Social Work at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP Brazil) started the first master's degree course in Social Work for Portuguese academics and professionals. In 1987, the students of this course created the "Núcleo de Investigação em História do Serviço Social Português" [Research Center in the History of Portuguese Social Work], which was the origin, in 1993, of the first scientific association in Social Work (Diário da República, III Série, 29/9/1993) - the "Centro Português de Investigação em História e Trabalho Social (CPIHTS), accredited by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia" [Foundation for Science and Technology] (FCT) in 1999 as a Research & Development Unit, the first in Portugal in the area of Social Work.

Within the framework of cooperation with Brazil, the first Masters and PhDs in Social Work were awarded. The first doctor, a professor at ISSSC/ISMT, defended her

thesis in 1993 entitled *Genesis, emergence and institutionalization of Portuguese Social Work*. Professors from other institutes soon followed.

The inclusion of Social Work in Portuguese Higher Education and advances in the qualifications of teachers and professionals thus ensured a new level of academic, scientific and intellectual exchange and cooperation, both nationally and internationally. Recognition was obtained for the creation of master's degrees from 1995 and doctorates from 2003. In 2020, 3 doctoral courses and 11 master's courses were accredited in Portugal [24].

At ISMT, it was with the collaboration of professors and researchers from Portugal, Spain and Brazil that, in 2000, the first three-year Master's degree in Social Work was awarded as part of the professional and academic qualification project. In total, the bachelor's and master's degrees in Social Work in Portugal then amounted to eight years of higher education.

In 2024, ISMT's Master's in Social Work already has 21 editions. The research driven by this cycle of advanced training strengthens the production of knowledge in different thematic areas of interest for academic training and professional practice. Scientific papers, dissertations and articles in books and journals are produced and published by teachers, and master's students, some of which are available in ISMT's digital repository (<https://repositorio.ismt.pt/home>).

5 The Bologna Process and Social Work training at ISMT

The Bologna Declaration established the European Research and Innovation Area to support the knowledge-based economy, under the banner of the Europe of Knowledge. Higher education, seen as a way to develop the economy, reshapes its "actions, projects and higher education policies (...) according to political and economic interests" [25]. The Lisbon Strategy (2000) clearly defined this in the first chapter entitled 'Employment, Economic Reform and Social Cohesion': "These changes [globalization], which are affecting every aspect of people's lives, call for a radical transformation of the European economy (...) the need for the Union to define a clear strategic objective and approve a stimulating programme to create knowledge infrastructures, foster innovation and economic reform and modernize social protection and education systems". Thus, it determines the creation of a European Research and Innovation Area.

The reform of higher education, guided by a process of internationalization of the classification of areas of education and training, was guided by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), conceived in 1977 by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. With these guidelines, Portugal regulates the training offer by Ordinance 316/2001 [26]. In this classification, Social Work is included in the area of education and training Social Work and Counselling, in the study area of Social Services, in the large group of Health and Social Protection. The issue of research in Social Work refers to other references - the National Action Program for Growth and Employment 2005/2008, defined in the Fields of Science and Technology (FOS) and replaced it in 2007 by the Classification of Scientific and Technological

Domains. Thus, Social Work research is part of the Ethnology and Social Affairs sub-area of Sociology [25].

Launched in 1999, the process that gave rise to it led to a reform to standardize academic training in bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees and diplomas by 2010, in order to create a system of equivalences and facilitate student mobility and employability within the European Community. The Bologna Declaration standardized university education into three cycles of study: 1st cycle - bachelor's degree; 2nd cycle - master's degree and 3rd cycle - doctorate, with the 1st and 2nd cycles lasting five years and the three cycles being completed in a maximum of nine years.

At ISMT Social Work, the first restructuring of the degree course to bring it into line with the PB took place in 2003 (Ministerial Order no. 463/2003 of June 3) [27], with the curricular plan being reduced from five to four years. With intense internal debate, the specialty branches of the degree, which had been in place since 1993, were abolished, returning to the generalist training that generally characterized Social Work training in Portugal.

Faced with these demands, internal debates were held with the students, the team of Social Work professors and other scientific areas that were part of the degree. In February 2006, with the aim of building a collective position on training in the 1st cycle, the ISMT held a meeting with the students. In February 2006, ISMT held meetings with representatives of the Portuguese Centre for Research in History and Social Work (CPIHTS), the Centre for Research in Social Work and Interdisciplinary Studies (CISSEI) and the Association for Research and Debate in Social Work (AIDSS); with representatives of professional organizations - the Association of Social Work Professionals and the Union of Social Work Professionals (SPSS); and with professors from other Higher Education Institutions - Instituto Superior Serviço Social de Lisboa (ISSSL), Instituto Superior Bissaya Barreto (ISBB) (DCA-Arquivo ISMT). These meetings resulted in the APSS taking a public stance on the Bologna Process and Social Work Training: Degree(1st cycle) with the 4 years of training. This position was endorsed by CPIHTS, CISSEI, AIDSS and SPSS.

However, in Portugal, the requirements of the Bologna process for the first cycle of training (the bachelor's degree) forced a maximum duration of six or seven semesters, making the four-year proposal mentioned above unfeasible and forcing each higher education institution to decide on a duration of six or seven semesters. At ISMT, the decision was seven semesters for the Bachelor's degree, with an internship in the last two semesters. As for the master's degree, it would last three semesters with a final dissertation, a format that is still in force today.

Following this reform, the ISMT Social Work course's pedagogical project was also influenced by two more factors: "the adoption of global standards and the implementation of the higher education assessment and accreditation system in Portugal" [28]. The compulsory external and periodic evaluation of courses resulted from the creation, in 2007, of A3ES, a private law foundation set up by the state to ensure the evaluation and accreditation of Portuguese higher education institutions and their study cycles.

Due to the determinants of external evaluation and accreditation, the scientific area of Social Work occupies around 68% of compulsory training. This is followed by Psychology, Sociology and Economics. We also have Law and History. The internship (in

the last two semesters) has been maintained, together with research practices supervised by social workers, and it has been possible to maintain the research component. There was an increase and diversification of teaching methods and practices, as well as assessment in individual, group and collective learning contexts and in the context of training and professional practice, in order to develop students' skills and abilities. With regard to the teaching staff, the obligation to strengthen the scientific area of Social Work led to five social workers at ISMT, professors who already had doctorates in Psychology, History and Communication Sciences, doing a second doctorate in Social Work. We can thus affirm the quality of the training, production and dissemination of knowledge of the teaching staff and, at the same time, the guarantee of the necessary ratios for the courses to function.

The scientific coordination of the bachelor's (1st cycle) and master's (2nd cycle) courses is carried out by Doctors in Social Work, a requirement for appointment to the position. In addition to their other duties, they are responsible for conducting and coordinating the work to be carried out in order to draw up the documentation required as part of this process (self-evaluation guides, reports), with the participation of all the Social Work teachers. As a result of this evaluation, the 1st and 2nd cycle courses were accredited for the maximum period (six years).

6 Academic Exchange and Internationalization of ISMT Social Work Courses

As previously discussed, exchange and internationalization have had a fundamental impact on the process of academic qualification and the consequent development of post-graduate training and research. ISMT's Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Social Work have welcomed and monitored various international academic and scientific exchange and cooperation initiatives, ensuring the development of research projects, doctoral and post-doctoral internships from Brazilian universities under the terms set out by the Brazilian agencies, CAPES-MEC and CNPq, as well as integration into international research networks, organization and participation in seminars with Portuguese and foreign universities. Topics of relevance to training, professional work and the organization of the category, research and knowledge production are studied, among many others that have resulted in joint international publications.

The internationalization of ISMT's Social Work has diversified and expanded with its participation in the founding, organization and coordination of the Ibero-American Social Work Research Network (RIAIS). This was created in Spain in 2016 at the 8th Congress of the European Council for Social Research in Latin America (Ceisal). It includes researchers from nine countries (Brazil, Costa Rica, Spain, Portugal, Uruguay, Chile, Puerto Rico, Colombia and Argentina). Today, the professors are part of international research projects coordinated and funded by Brazilian universities.

Between 2014/2015 and 2018/2019, ISMT's Social Work degree course welcomed 32 professors and researchers from Spain (4), Poland (5), Romania (3), Brazil (19) and one from Bratislava [28]. The COVID-19 pandemic only interrupted the face-to-face

dynamics of international activity, with work continuing and research and internationalization expanding using telematic means.

7 Conclusions

The conservative heritage inherited from the Estado Novo was submerged in the face of the revolutionary force of PREC, giving rise to a hegemonic rejection of the institutions and professional practices established in Portuguese Social Work. Social workers allied themselves with the emerging popular movements. The Higher Institutes of Social Work (Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto) adopted procedures of direct democracy, deciding in assembly on the construction of their management bodies, scientific-pedagogical procedures and uniting in favor of the integration of the social work institutions on public university. At the same time, as joining this movement, the students began their own struggle for integration into the university student movements. In Coimbra, they managed to integrate into university student institutions (AAC of the UC), their cultural and sports departments and benefit from social action services.

However, the period after the 1976 Constitution opened the door to new concerted actions between social workers, teachers, professionals and their associations and students: the aim was to move on from higher education to the award of an academic degree, which would allow professionals to gain a place in the professional career equal to any graduate of Portuguese universities. The achievements made at the time are part of a complex of political, economic and social changes in Portugal. The fragile training in social sciences in Portugal placed social workers in a privileged position in the construction of the welfare state and its impetus with the entry into the European Union in 1986. The last two decades of the 20th century were, for Social Work, a period of institutionalization of the academic and research career on the one hand and, on the other, an opportunity for professional career development throughout the rich period of development of public and universal social policies.

The neoliberalism that has taken hold in the Western world has led to the construction of a useful European Research Area and to higher education and university training being geared towards developing skills for the job market. The training time for the 1st and 2nd cycle has been reduced overall by three years. However, the first years of master's training and doctoral courses (3rd cycle) have opened up the possibility of research in Social Work, also supported by Research Centers and disseminated in academic publications of relevance to the Social Service.

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