Relational approach, social service and work environment. The experience of curricular training at University of Molise[1]

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Abstract

Within the frame of the Social Worker university curriculum, the traineeship is a complex activity that manifests itself as the practical translation of the theory and of the professional social relationship. Moreover, this is also the possible «bridge» that University can build with the labour market through its so-called «Third Mission» activity. In this way, the (curricular) traineeship allows trainees to acquire the specific professional know-how competences and it allows trainees to become aware of the real contents in the Italian context of Social Works as «services to the person». Such system focuses onto the individual and his needs, as a whole, and intends to overturn the logic of social response. Indeed, any social intervention is expected to investigate the «personal conditions» of those who have or may have problems. «The project aims at enhancing the person's abilities in order to overcome the fragility condition and regain control of their life and autonomy» (Italy's National plan for social interventions and services 2021-2023, 99). By considering all these aspects and drawing on the theoretical framework of Social Relational Work and Relational Sociology, this paper wishes to investigate whether, and how, the trainees' experiences, of a specific Social Work training course, such as that of the University of Molise, have successfully built «bridges» so as to network with the local Social Services.

Keywords

Traineeship, social work, practice placement, professional relationship, Third mission.

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[1] The authors wrote together «Introduction» and «Conclusions». Mariangela D'Ambrosio wrote the paragraphs «Social work traineeship as relational work practice and social research: for a brief analysis of the theoretical framework» and «Assessment in curricular training: implications for practice placements». Daniela Grignoli wrote «Between theory and practice: Traineeship, as a placement and success tool» and «The experience of curricular internships in the Aggregate Degree Course in Social Work at the University of Molise».

Introduction

Social work, both as a whole and in its different pragmatic areas, needs to pay great attention to the person and its specific conditions of fragility and marginality. In fact, social work is a profession based, as stated by the Italian Deontological Code of the Social Worker and according to the International definition of Social Work, on practice and «is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing».[2] In particular, every social problem requires professional action of relational nature based on knowledge and skills. Such skills stem from the life, professional and personal experience of each expert. In this way, knowledge is transformed into an experience knowledge[3] anchored in a specific theoretical framework, such as that of Relational Social Work (Folgheraiter, 2004, 2017). The relationships are invisible, they are intangible goods and people cannot live without relationships: social relationship is necessary for social life.

Society means relationships and it is explained by relational logic. in particular, relational sociology serves within the new scenarios in which the prevalence of services and exchange systems (with a plurality of markets) configured as a network (society is considered as a «network of networks of relations») takes over. The network is not a collection of individuals in contact with each other, but is the sum of their relationships. The network paradigm, on the practical level, leads to a specific relational approach, meaning a form of intervention (social service, therapy, social policy) in/on society (Donati, 2022, pp. 8-31-100-104).

In this pragmatic approach, social work trainees have always been able to benefit from this relational way of learning which in its development becomes «opportunistic, unplanned and often serendipitous» (Hyams & Sadique, 2014, p. 440; Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

All this protects the social worker from the risk of commodification, which, unfortunately, greatly increased with the onset of the 2020 pandemic, as there was a significant decrease in «face-to-face» contact with social workers during this period.

Moreover, they takes the field and acquires specific competences and skills required by such profession (Gui, 2009). The social work trainee combines experience knowledge with theoretical-methodological knowledge learned during the formal (front-taught classes and laboratory) teaching activities. The formal curricular traineeship, therefore, allows

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[2] See the definition on IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers): https://www.ifsw.org/global-definition-of-social-work/.
[3] For more focused reflections on experiential knowledge see Polanyi's theory (1958).

the trainee to experience his/her future working environment. In fact, it builds a bridge between the University and the organizations that host the student, has the potential to expand the range of job opportunities for the future graduate in Social Work.

So that, theoretical education and practical training are the fundamental activities through which one can discover the «paths» in which to apply both what one is learning and what one has already learned through the experimentation of those unique relational practices connected to one's personal aptitudes and to the context of the specific organization (Donati,1997). Especially, those in which one has worked with a particular work team aimed, in a specific system of services of help, to the individual and to the community, at developing those peculiar links that connect the subjects involved in the «process of help».

One of the key points in networking is the placement activity, which in «opening up to the socio-economic context, exercised through the valorization and transfer of knowledge» (ANVUR, 2004-2011) has among its aims the one of responding to the need for accompaniment and inclusion into the labour market of Social Service graduates in a given area.

The Social Work curriculum is therefore a training pathway that finds its strengths by offering a curriculum in which professional traineeship are immersive and functional to the profession, as they are strongly connected to the territory and the community of aid services, and are the tools that best facilitate the meeting between supply and demand for labour.

Social work traineeship as relational work practice and social research: for a brief analysis of the theoretical framework

The «relational turn» analyzed from a critical angle, in the last thirty years (Donati, 1983), paired with the issues of our time, strive to understand the society as a relational system, dismissing the classical paradigms of sociology, holism or methodological individualism. Such an approach intends to investigate the different social phenomena through a societal theory (1991) which makes use of «specific methodologies and techniques whose purpose is to formulate contextual theories (as situated theoretical and empirical situated generalizations)» (Donati, 2022).

Particularly, the «relational turning point» aims at investigating the various social phenomena through the system of relations (Donati, 2013): the Relational paradigm considers, in fact, the subjects as acting in a reciprocal, communicative and symbolic dynamics of social life (Donati, 1991).

This relationship is expressed through the semantics of *refero*, such as through the relationship itself, which is symbolic-intentional, put into practice in order to search for a communication that is made up of specific intentions: «referring something to something

else within a frame of reference constituted by symbolic meanings at different types and degrees of intentionality» (Donati, 2013); the semantics of *religo* which supports the search for a wider social bond and the semantics of emergent effect as relationships always emerge in tangible contexts, with changing forms (Donati, 2013).

These principles, transposed from Pierpaolo Donati's theory, guide the Social Work training in its different aspects: in the *refero* dimension, the parties involved, i.e. trainee, social worker supervisor tutor, academic tutor, work team and professional community, work in a synergic way through constraints and resources, as it is linked to the teaching-learning goals, constituting the sense of action.

Within the dimension of *religo*, all the subjects operate in a systemic relationship of reciprocal conditioning that becomes crucial not only for the student's immediate experience, but it takes on significant meaning if the student consciously uses such knowledge to orient himself in the future world of work, preserving and activating new professional contacts.

In the emerging dimension, the professional Social Service internship becomes a flywheel for work practice and the world of the professions as a practical experience (relationally driven)[4] ensuing a transformation on the relationships' structures through/along with people experiencing such relations (relational system as a whole), allowing the intern to consciously understand the potential of skills acquired on the job and eliciting a setting of favorable social relations that are of use to create a more normal/satisfactory physiological state of relations, observed at a certain time.

Furthermore, if we follow the scheme proposed by Parsons (1951) and adopted by Donati, the professional traineeship in Social Work has an adaptive function because: (A) it allows the student to plan and coordinate his/her actions (in order to acquire professional skills and competences) opening him/herself up to the outside world and to different contexts (a competence that, these days, a social worker is supposed to master since the needs of people have become more and more complex and there is an intertwining of cultures); it has a function linked to the achievement of particular aims and objectives (G) connected to and required by the study paths as well as by the experiences that are being carried[5] out; it has an integrative function (I), for it recalls the system of reciprocal

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4   «Relational guidance refers to the social intervention that aims to change a state of affairs considered deviant/unsatisfactory/pathological through the modification of the relationships that originate it, i.e. by designing a morphogenetic process that produces a change in the relational context so as to achieve a more satisfactory state of affairs than the one observed at a certain moment» (Donati, 2013, p. 107). «The oriented relationship in the context of training is understood as a relational guide, that is an intentional action of connection, direction and development towards people to establish a network». It is the facilitating process on problems, instances, communications, strategies, relationships. In Folgheraiter, 1998, 2000, included in Raineri, 2003, p. 187. See, on this topic, also Donati, 1991.

5   In this respect, it sufficient to think about the different contexts/work environments in which the social work student can practice: the objectives change according to them and to the target group that comes to the service.

expectations of role (trainees and internal/external supervisor) and context required (also for the final evaluation); lastly, it has a latent function (L) as the field experience mediates the cultural and the ideological values and practices, as well as the professional ones, which are internalized by the student and resumed again in the future.

Vocational traineeships promote the acquisition and the elaboration of the social worker's specific principles (Parsons, 1951).[6]

Professional social work practices are a way of knowing and acquiring new and specific knowledge through relationships. Hence, «the purpose of the social relationship is, itself, a relationship between its inside and its outside, between what it indicates as its own direction (internal distinction-guidance) and what it depends on in its environment» (Donati, 2013). The relationship is also the expression of acting in a status-role, within a system of status- roles as illustrated above. In fact, the same relationship that is activated in the curricular vocational traineeship practice represents a connection between micro and macro systems in which all the parties involved play a specific role, in an effect of interdependence (or interpenetration) (Donati, 2013) that acts as an activator of rights/duties.[7] The Relational Social Work model (Folgheraiter, 2017, 2004),[8] in continuity, focuses on the «intersubjective action endowed with meaning» (Bortoli & Folgheraiter, 2021) of the social worker who works in groups and in systems, in an interconnected way to achieve shared goals (Bortoli & Folgheraiter, 2021). The trainee, entering into this perspective through practice, adopts a technical vision of social workers, at the basis of his/her know-how. One of the most interesting examples is the support-orientation-transmission of knowledge and skills link between the student and the supervisor-tutor. The latter becomes an effective relational guide (as relationally driven) because in the organizational network (agency, service) and in that of relationships he/she assumes a function of orientation, such as direction, as well as, internal and external observer, whose task, among others described, is to assess the ability to learn, to operate in the organization and motivation for the trainee.

The vocational traineeship aims to create and intersect moments of alternation between study and work in order to facilitate professional choices on the basis of a direct and operational knowledge with the business activities present at territorial level.

Experimentation in the labour market, in other words, allows the student to understand what it means to operate in a network (Folgheraiter, 1998) within a context and a territory, in the system of communicative and relational exchange which is made up of a plurality of institutional subjects. Similarly, these are the entities who, in the university context or rather in the degree course, already guide and support him/her.

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[6]   In this article, Parson's AGIL scheme has been transposed to the vocational training in Social Work.
[7]   It is possible to reflect on the responsibilities of the parties involved in the social work training. If the system is not in balance and if it is not coherent, it can generate conflicts, frustration and failure to achieve the set goals.
[8]   In this regard, see the ethical/deontological foundations of the social work profession.

«Social networking, in fact, is (itself) a methodology whose relational essence is expressed in a reciprocal effect: the professional operator improves the network and the network improves the operator, in a virtuous circle that continues as long as the problem — so to speak — needs that relationship to be tackled. The resulting advantage to the practitioner from having a network cooperating with him is evident, in terms of greater cognitive openness, greater emotional support, greater distribution of workloads, impact strength, etc. [...]. The advantage that comes to the network from having an operator who offers guiding services is also evident, in terms of a greater objective experience of discomfort, greater distance and sense of perspective, greater rooting in the system of services and community, greater scientific knowledge where necessary, etc.» (Folgheraiter, 2007c).

Therefore, vocational training is the expression of a «practice of situated learning» (Zanutto, in Tognetti Bordogna, 2015) because it is connected to places, times, skills, activities and relationships, it is significant for it develops the professional identity which is never static but rather dynamic (Olivetti Manoukian, in Tognetti Bordogna, 2015). It is, therefore, made multiform by networks[9] that represent the structure of Social Services. All these elements recall, in a wider reasoning, the social work training as an expression of social research that uses «the scientific method, that is the adoption of a procedure characterised by the repeatability, controllability and publicity of the research process» (Palumbo & Garbarino, 2006).

The trainee, when he/she decides to orientate his/her experience in a working field, has the duty to collect as much information (such as data, news) about the sector in which he/she is inserted in order to structure a final report or a Project work that contains approaches, techniques, strategies, tools and methodology of social research.

By analyzing the latter in its different steps, it is possible to get a better understanding of the steps for drafting the final report.[10]

In social research practice (social researcher), four (or five) stages are conventionally identified: research setting; data collection; data encoding and processing; analysis and interpretation of the data (drawing a conclusion) (Palumbo & Garbarino, 2006). In the structuring of the traineeship (social worker), however, distinctions are made: the information-knowledge phase (of the institutional, territorial and professional area); the design phase; the observation phase; the operational phase; the evaluation (and verification) and personal[11] reflection phase; (termination of intervention).[12]

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9   A network method emerges in the feedback between internal organization, university and professional objectives that are also relational (Folgheraiter, 1998).

10   Although much depends on the objective of the research, its subject matter, the type of processing and analysis it intends to carry out on data, as well as the epistemological assumptions adopted (Palumbo & Garbarino, 2006, p. 54).

11   See *Structure of the traineeship project for students in Social Service and Social Policy* by Unimol, retrieved March 30, 2022, from https://www2.dipeconomia.unimol.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Struttura-del-progetto-di-tirocinio-formativo.pdf.

12   Social worker and researcher have in common the method-logical approach.

Situated within this context, data collection can be defined as a cognitive-exploratory process of the practical traineeship experience similar to what social research does with the researcher. This is due to the fact that it involves, simultaneously the client and the object of the research, the student, the university and the course of study represented by the secretariat staff and the academic tutor, alongside with the supervising tutor, namely the social worker of the agreed territorial agency/service. In this preliminary phase of social research, the aims, basic hypotheses and expectations are also defined (Palumbo & Garbarino, 2006) which, transferred to the concrete experience aiming at achieving the set results, are mediated by the trainee through practice. As for the project phase, it could be said that the trainee aims at structuring his or her research by applying the techniques and tools of social detection to the people followed by the tutoring social worker or the target group accessing the service (Palumbo & Garbarino, 2006, p. 67).

Also, this statement stems from the results of the presentations carried out during the First Italian Conference on Social Service Research, promoted by the Italian Society of Social Service in 2017, at the University of Turin, attended by the essay's authors. Therefore, «the research is nourishment for the profession and the operational practice» (Sicora et al., 2018). In this framework, where social working equals social researching, there is a substantial continuum between the training experience, the intervention path and the research methods. In this perspective, we intend to emphasize the importance of incorporating within social work, a cognitive dimension right from the start of the training experience, sided by the student's own discovery and creativity (Neve, 2013).

The «social work» as a science (social work theory) studies the ways, the possibilities and also the solving technicalities towards concrete social problems within the society itself and as a social work practice (Folgheraiter, 2007a, 2007b). The link between social research and practical traineeship is more and more evident even before experiencing the social worker's role; by translating into practice the theoretical teachings, the trainee carries out an activity of active observation that moves from problems and questions to the development critical knowledge (Nappi, 2001).

In this regard, the student can opt for a quantitative approach using surveys, polls, questionnaires, experimental surveys, etc., a qualitative approach using structured, semi-structured, unstructured interviews, life stories, focus groups, remote or participant observation. Finally, he/she may also choose a mix of the two methods.

For the trainee needing to gain experience in the field, as well as for a good social researcher, this stage involves participant observation (observation phase).

Since it deals with concrete relationships, very often complex, this technique allows to read and interpret data, information and relationships — actions coming from the surrounding environment. This implies a focus on the attention on the micro-culture in which one is inserted, on the «cultural identity» (including the values, the ethics of refer-

ence of the service[13] agency), on the formal and non-formal rules present in the working context and on the professional activities of the operators with the «users».[14]

Once again, an adaptation process that is reciprocal and active[15] is activated.

Finally, the analysis and interpretation of data corresponds to the operational phase in terms of transformation and modeling of the information collected with the aim of deriving not only a description and interpretation of what has been investigated, and also of translating it into usable knowledge on which, subsequently, orientate personal professional action (and from which the whole community can benefit).

This step also summarizes the evaluation and personal reflection phase which for the social work trainee is a moment of further enrichment.

A scientific language, therefore, that lends credibility not only to the experience by validating it, but even to the entire social work profession, which is equipped with the appropriate «toolbox».

Assessment in curricular training: implications for practice place-ments[16]

Evaluation is an integral part of social research, of the duties of the social worker and the social service trainee. On the other hand, «evaluation, as a whole, is the set of activities useful to express a judgment […] from the social aim which is based on research, communication, negotiation between different parties» (Bezzi, 2007).

According to Raineri (2015) there are two types of evaluation for the vocational traineeship in Social Work: the «certifying» one, of a formal nature, which has the task of certifying the competences matured and acquired by the student and the «formative» one aimed at learning. During this last phase, the tutor sends feedback on what the trainee is learning or has learned during his/her practical experience, which, in turn, can be focused on professional tasks and skills (Raineri, 2015).

In its different moments (*ex-ante*, *in-itinere* and *ex-post*), the evaluation directs the work and recaps the writing of the trainee's final report or project work on a double track, since he/she is also evaluated at an internal tier by the organization through the supervising-tutoring social worker and externally through the academic tutor and the lecturer in the examination session.

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[13] The so-called «organizational climate».

[14] Think «community of practice».

[15] The trainee, during the experience in social services, will orient his or her degree of initiative towards directiveness or non-defectiveness, which are condition styles of both social research and social work (especially non- directiveness, which is also applied in casework).

[16] The following paragraphs represent, just an historical memory, a note of how courses in social work, following a relational approach, have co-built with and for their trainees.

Once again, an assignment of specific tasks to each actor involved takes place: the student-trainee, through the evaluation, can understand his/her potential and areas to be improved, the supervisor can measure positive and critical points of his/her service and his/her way of transmitting practical[17] knowledge, whilst the University can evaluate the organizational and didactic efforts made with a view to further amelioration.

These different levels communicate and use specific tools; among these, herein we propose the evaluation form for the professional skills of the Social Work traineeship[18] and for the Project work[19] activity developed by the University of Molise (Unimol), in the «Aggregate Degree Course in Social Work».

There are four areas for the social worker tutor to investigate: ability to learn and motivation; ability to support directly and indirectly; ability to respect professional ethics; ability to operate in the organization.

There are, in fact, other specific sub-areas for each category that investigate the willingness to learn, the ability to plan, implement and verify interventions, to use the relationship as an intervention tool, to respect the user's right to self-determination, to organize one's own work and the ability to collaborate with other operators, etc.

At the final stage, of the practical traineeship experience, the social worker's tutor will provide a final global assessment giving the lecturer a more descriptive assessment during the examination.

This evaluation practice, in its different forms, is important and strategic, as it also guarantees internal monitoring of the activities that the trainee is carrying out, providing continuous and guaranteed supervision; in addition, it enables the adjustment of critical elements that are becoming apparent. The evaluation, therefore, appraises the professional skills, the learning tasks and the professional competences acquired, yet it is also integrated and based on qualitative elements such as the relationship between all the players involved in the internship. The focus is both on the relationships between people and on the university system's (course of study) and the organizations' governance taking their own responsibilities (Raineri, 2003).

In fact, one of the students' goals is to understand their experience from the angle of their future job placement: «Do I really want to do this? Am I committed to that goal?

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[17] It should be recalled that the Code of Ethics, in art. 48, states: «The social worker is committed to the didactic supervision of trainees, within the limits of the organization in which he/she works. The professional, in this context, acts to promote the best integration of the trainee in his/her work group; to safeguard the trainee from situations that may threaten his/her safety; to reinforce in the trainee the awareness of the value of the deontological rules, of the Order and of the participation in the life of the professional community; to stimulate in the trainee the development of a critical sense, committing him/herself to share his/her evaluations».

[18] Retrieved March 30, 2022, from https://www2.dipeconomia.unimol.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Giudizio-finale-dellAssistente-Sociale.pdf.

[19] Retrieved March 30, 2022, from http://dipeconomia.unimol.it/dipartimento-di-economia-gestione-societa-e-istituzioni/didattica/corsi-di-laurea-triennale/scienze-del-servizio-sociale/tirocini-e-stage-2/vademecum-modalita-alternative-allo-svolgimento-dellattivita-di-tirocinio/.

Did the curricula training really help me with this?».[20] This is the chief aim of a curricular internship in order to support the intern student in the transition from studying to working.

In this respect, evaluation is re-elaboration, giving meaning to feedback (Freeman, 1985; Ford & Jones, 1987; Brodie & Williams, 2013) also because the practical traineeship experience must develop the critical capacity to reflect on one's own professional actions (Raineri, 2015; Rogers & McDonald, 1992) and be useful to make more conscious choices in the future or to orient oneself in the labour market.

Between theory and practice: Traineeship, as a placement and suc-cess tool

Vocational training (and social work) recalls the role of the person in social policies as well as in social relations. It is the broader individual-society nexus that today translates into the new «democratic» welfare state in which greater responsibility and empower-ment of citizens is encouraged.

Beveridge himself had already pioneered this welfare hypothesis, and in his writings he predicted a new welfare concept achieved through a new social subject (civil society), with new rules (in its self-organized form and in volunteering). Similarly and more recently, other statesmen and social scientists moved in this direction claiming, for example, that the amount of «non-commodifiable activity» produced by the self-organized civil society (Third Sector) is capable to respond «to new needs of social life, through activities of high solidarity participation» (Ardigò, 1990). And, in this framework, the Italian sociologist Pierpaolo Donati proposes Relational Sociology (2004) (Grignoli, 2017). New welfare must be able «to fulfill a social space in which there are no exclusions, because everyone has resources and rights necessary to maintain relationships of interdependence (instead of dependence) with everyone» (Castel, 2011). A social space in which people, with their complexity consisting also of their «resources and their family and territorial context», co-design an «active social protection» (Italian Law n. 328/2000) (Grignoli, 2017).

This is also true for the student commencing the traineeship because he/she be-comes part of an active citizenship process which is made explicit through participation in decision-making processes, planning and implementation of choices and opportunities.

In fact, the intern has a certain degree of power and can choose between different alternatives (linked to the possibility of opting for a Social work organization/service or field in agreement with the University and the specific Department), has the opportunity to develop a personal and professional profile, and has the possibility to work in the field of social services. Furthermore, negotiation and mediation with the relevant administra-tion and the organization's officials. In this way, he co-creates co-creates its own trainee-

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[20] The reference is precisely to the University's Third Mission.

ship. Empowerment, which recurs in the concrete experience of the professional social work traineeship, does not merely concern the relationship between the student and the administration, but also the institutional relationship between the different spheres and territorial and local actors that represent the specific community in which the experience takes place. Therefore training, together with the experiential part, is a metaphor for policies of activation and empowerment, «participatory democracy», self-learning and orientation/enhancement of cultural and training processes to which it can adhere as an active part, producing change.

The curricular training in Social Work, as an integrated path between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, enables the students to understand how to contribute to remove the causes of needs, through the activation of personal and social resources. This condition promotes the utter and autonomous people's self-fulfillment, facilitating the citizen-institution relationship, linking the individuals' needs to the system of services and vice versa, in a modifying process on institutions, mainly considered in the services context (Canevini, 1987).

May this be a synthesis and a solution between political guidelines and Social Work curricular training?

The answer is difficult but possible. In particular, if all the actors involved, including the institutions are aware that they have an impact on Welfare as well as on people: the trainee in Social Work, in other words, enters the organization that deals with the helping relationship, expression of social policies, and has an impact on people and on the system in which he/she is inserted.

This is the relational Welfare (or State) (Canevini, 1987) that interfaces with a civil economy, not overwhelmed by the market.

Furthermore, the social work traineeship, as a «pact», a «contract» that has at its centre reciprocity and shared aims, in a space of individual but even more social interest (Donati, 2011) whose impact translates into the production of the common good that then becomes a relational good. In this sense, the trainee's experience in the private social sector (or III Sector) acquire a vital importance as civic, solidarity and socially useful non-profit aims are pursued, which are consistent with the work of the professional in the Social Services.[21] In fact, interns in associations, social enterprises and cooperatives have the opportunity to interface with fragile people and to understand, thanks to the internal tutor, which actions to put in place to support them in an «active» way.

The professional traineeship can then evolve into a real placement tool[22] in its original meaning, i.e. as a set of activities that promote integration into the world of work, which is also made up of relationships.

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[21] It should be remembered that also in the private social sector it is necessary to have specific professional profiles such as that of the social worker. See Law 328/2000 called Framework Law for the implementation of the integrated system of interventions and social services.

[22] In Italy, university Placement Offices were regulated by the so-called Biagi Law (Law no. 30 of

On the other hand, it is also true that universities have all moved towards the so-called *Third mission*:[23] «the set of activities through which universities enter into direct interaction with society, flanking the traditional missions of teaching (first mission, based on interaction with students) and research (second mission, in interaction mainly with the scientific or peer communities). With the Third Mission, universities come into direct contact with subjects and social groups other than the established ones, and thus make themselves available to modes of interaction whose content and form are highly variable and context-dependent» (ANVUR, 2013).

The modalities through which the Third mission is realized are, on the one hand, the valorization of knowledge that can be reconverted into pragmatic work («knowledge capitalization», Etzkowitz, 2002, 2004) and, on the other hand, the production of public goods, that create social well-being as in the case of the trainee in Social Work.

It is the model of the «triple helix» proposed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1997) at the end of the 1990s that represents, more appropriately, the relationships between universities, businesses and the state («the helixes»): these institutional spheres act in interdependence, synergistically and in tune, through strategies that intersect objectives and aims (Barile et al., 2015). A model that can work if «these three fundamental prerequisites are met: a more incisive role of the University in innovation processes; the establishment of virtuous collaborative relationships between the three institutional spheres; the temporary "substitution" of roles between the three subjects considered» (Barile et al., 2015, p. 10).

Thus not merely networking but also creating new connections (Barile et. al., 2015) linked to the needs and supply also of the territory.

The student can experience the job for which he is training «theoretically» and intertwine these acquisitions thanks to the guidance of the Placement office present in the universities.

At the Unimol, the latter plays a strategic role as it strengthens the relationship, in its dimension of interactivity, in the local and national context; it detects the job profiles constantly sought by companies; it identifies the need for skills; it consolidates the constructive and positive relationship between the university and companies; it facilitates the accompaniment of students and graduates towards the labour[24] market.

The ultimate aim of the curricular traineeship is to support the intern in the transition phase between studies and the start of employment.

2003); Legislative Decree 276/03 legitimized universities to carry out intermediation activities in order to facilitate the entry of their graduates into the world of work by encouraging their active role.

[23] The first mission of the university concerns the relationship with teaching activities and interaction with students; the second mission, on the other hand, concerns research, based on relations with the scientific community and other researchers and university structures.

[24] See the Service Charter of the *Unimol*. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from https://www.unimol.it/ente-e-impresa/ilo-placement/job-placement/carta-dei-servizi/, p. 7

Traineeships and organizational mediation as a metaphor for the «entrepreneurial university».[25] In other words, the traineeship acts as a link between training offered by the universities and practice in the working environments, especially for a profession, that of the social worker, which works in multiple and complex contexts, responding to the needs of the people who inhabit the territory.

The experience of curricular internships in the Aggregate Degree Course in Social Work at the University of Molise

Following this fil rouge, the University as a «laboratory of integration» appears to be the driver of a wish for social relations capable of giving life to social contexts in which the particular interest of the individual is linked to the common good, and in the name of «educational responsibility», it co-creates different professions that with their capabilities (Nussbaum, 2012) resolve problems (Grignoli, 2016), satisfying the needs of the new labour market. In this frame, the Unimol has always expressed a desire to connect with the territory and to respond, as far as possible, to the needs of the latter, offering a comprehensive preparation to its students, rich in experiences and possibilities.

This desire is also evident in the offer of professional traineeships, which are affected by the projects, conventions and memoranda of understanding in place with many subjects in the Molise region, as «practice of situated learning» (infra: 5). Among these, strategic for the orientation and work practice of students in Social Work as well as for the profession itself (reciprocal relationship), as an example, is the agreement for the conduct of internships for students enrolled in the degree course in Social Work Sciences. Stipulated between the Aggregate Council of Degree Courses in Social Work and the Professional Association of Social Workers – Molise Regional Council (Croas).[26]

In this «situation», in art. 1 of the Document, letter b) provides for «the activation and creation of a long list of social worker tutors enrolled in Croas, the Regional Register of Social Workers of Molise, interested in the activities of didactic supervision and monitoring of the professional training of enrolled students, both in online mode and in presence, as established by the University and in agreement with Professional Asso-

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[25] See the PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan). Retrieved March 30, 2022, from https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/PNRR.pdf. Consider, therefore, also the current pandemic moment indicating on the labour market and access to vocational training, between presence and distance.

[26] Agreement retrieved March 30, 2022, from http://dipeconomia.unimol.it/dipartimento-di-economia-gestione-societa-e-istituzioni/didattica/corsi-di-laurea-triennale/scienze-del-servizio-sociale/tirocini-e-stage-2/convenzione-ordine-assistenti-sociali/. It should be noted that the compulsory courses, such as *Principles and fundamentals of social work*, *Methods of social work and group work I*, *Organisation of social services*, etc., are taught by registered social workers who actually work on the territory and who, therefore, also guide the contents and teaching methods with reference to their professional experience.

ciation of Social Workers – Molise Regional Council»; in letter e) of the same article, it is expected that there will be «cooperation between the various Regional Associations as well as the National Council of Social Workers), between the professors of the degree courses at Unimol, between professionals from the world of work and research, between the associations and bodies of the third sector of the territory of Molise and elsewhere, in order to activate paths of study, training and research».

The role of the degree course, of Professional Association of Social Workers – Molise Regional Council and of the teachers (internal and external tutors, social workers) becomes, therefore, crucial in order to ensure a traineeship experience that is as global, oriented and synergic as possible: social research and training that enhance the student by providing him/her with professional tools from both a technical-ethical and from a planning point of view, in relation to his/her future job.

This collaborative reciprocity between institutional actors, as a «laboratory of integration» moreover, emerges through the implementation of professional activities (art. 4 of the Agreement) in the Social Service, where projects are combined with experimentation on the territory.

Since 2016, indeed, the project activity called *Profilo di Comunità* (Community Profile) has continued, launched together with Molise Regional Health Agency, Molise Region, Social Territorial Area of Campobasso and Aggregate Course in Social Work with a view to the new management of professional traineeships as well as to the positive impact on the Community. The community profile considers both needs and resources and the full range of issues affecting communities. Molise community in terms of social research and social work research, identifying project ideas and, therefore, specific interventions based on the social and territorial diagnosis carried out.

Vocational training (and social work) recalls the role of the person in social policies as well as in social relations. It is the broader individual-society nexus that today translates into the new «democratic» welfare state in which greater responsibility and empowerment of citizens is encouraged.

A concrete and successive example of this is the Permanent Technical Table for Social work created within the «Aggregate Degree Course in Social Work» which, since 2018, has provided a comparison and consultation between different institutional actors on the regional territory, identifying other interlocutors, in order to integrate proposals and projects on and for the community by activating paths able to turn the students into the protagonists of their careers.

In this regard, there are many relationships with the professional community of social workers and all the social workers of the Molise Region: it suffice to think to the Collaboration Agreement with the Regional Social Policy Planning Department with a project entitled *Young people of Molise and the transition to adult life* and the Project on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020, entitled *MOlise Verso l'InTegrazione*, with the Municipality of Isernia as Lead Partner. The trainee, within the framework of

these initiatives, plays an active role, has the opportunity to do social research and to learn and to use the professional techniques of the social worker, by acknowledging and evaluating potential social impacts, in a constant and evolving supervision guaranteed by the degree course, in accordance with the training objectives set by both the traineeship and the project.

The synergic element, connected to the community, is found in the constant collaboration with the two main Local Social Services Network (ATS)[27] of the region, namely the ATS of Campobasso and the ATS of Isernia with which, as already mentioned, the course of studies is carrying out interesting activities, initiatives, in-depth seminars on the social world tout court involving students as well as operators.

These models are closely connected to the relational paradigm as they place relationships between people at the core of social work in order to avoid their accommodation in facilities that may still be thought of as isolating them from real society. Thus, it is a new way to consider and to practice Social Work and his vocational training.

A further tool that allows young people to reflect upon job opportunities is community service, an expression of those relational elements of a solidarity character dear to social service. «The Civil Service raises employment and employability levels, reduces the inactivity rate, and helps to reorient the professional choices of young people who participate in it». Thereof, this is the view of the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis, which estimates a 12% increase in the employability of volunteers after the Civil Service (2021).[28]

The University's commitment, in particular that of the Centro Orientamento e Tutorato (COrT), is still expressed in the publication of specific calls for tenders such as those addressed to the figure of the «Orientation Tutor» with the aim of implementing *in-itinere* tutoring activities aimed at orienting and assisting students throughout their studies and making them actively participate in the training process within the study courses.

Students in Social Work are also interested in these opportunities and some of the trainees have experienced some of the activities required by the profession: «social secretarial» skills (in guiding, as a tutor, the requests of the assisted), mediation of requests and any conflicts, relations with the organization through the writing of documents and ad hoc reports, and teamwork. In terms of orientation and student care, the degree course participates in the Projects for the Orientation and Tutoring Plan, *SERVIZIOSOCIALE POT*, with the aim of helping secondary school students (4th and 5th year) to make an informed choice about their university career and complete it in order to experience the environment work as soon as possible.

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[27] Social Territorial Ambits.
[28] Documents summarizing the research data. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from https://oa.inapp.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12916/3299/INAPP_DeLuca_Feri_Gli_%20effetti _del_Servizio_Civile_oc cupabilit%C3%A0_giovani_2021.pdf?sequence=1; https://oa.inapp.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12916/906/INAPP_Infografica_Servizio_Civile_2021_2021.png?sequence=1

For this reason, cycles of pre-university orientation workshops in Social Work are planned, with the aim of developing awareness of one's own inclinations, vocations and professional aptitudes through interactive, participatory and self-assessment methods: university lecturers and school teachers draw up a plan of specific teaching activities within which social work methodologies and techniques and a multidisciplinary approach are proposed. During the current academic year (2021/2022), the Aggregate Degree Course in Social Work has reached over 40 students exclusively within Campobasso city, who have had the opportunity to understand how social workers relate to each other in the group dimension, which is key to the success of interventions of a social and/or socio-medical nature. This was designed and implemented with a view of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has inevitably changed the functioning and effectiveness of team work through the intensive use of social media. The lecturers specialized in the professional subjects brought their expertise to the students in order to train them to the working system which the social worker is part of. In order to understand the effectiveness of this intervention, a questionnaire was delivered to verify how the students, involved in the project, perceived the experience of dealing with university lecturers, also regarding the topics dealt with in the course in the area of Professional Social Service.

Among the main results: 54% considered the course very positive; 54% of the students considered the course very useful; the methodology used for 97% of the respondents seemed adequate, as it was defined by them as interactive and involving. To the question, «what is the motivation that prompted you to attend this course?», 57% (the highest percentage) stated that the main motivation for participating in the course was to deepen the issues related to Social Sciences with an impact on their future working life thereby 44% said they wanted to enroll, at the end of the course, in the Degree Course in Social work.

Finally, with regard to the world of profession, «A graduate in Social Work can access a variety of jobs, which of the following would you like to get?»: 39 % stated that they would like to become a social worker, which means that they can work in different ways and in different work contexts; 36 % stated that they would like to become an employee in public service structures in the social area, in national and international public organizations, in third sector non-governmental organizations and in); 25% stated that they wished to become a professional in the third sector and personal services, either in association with others or independently.

This small research carried out at the end of the POT experience is important because it suggests that it orients the students to the academic pathway and makes them responsible as for the work choice, made more aware and with more knowledge and skills. There is also a returning benefit for the degree course which, in this way, can offer teaching and training oriented to the territory and diversified experiences of knowledge and professionalism.

The curricular traineeship is, therefore, much more than a simple experimentation in the field: it is the set of all the actions put in place between the university and institu-

tional and economic players of the territory, between organizations, as well as national and European opportunities to be seized, all of this allowing the student to learn what is most useful to his/her academic and professional identity as a social worker.

Conclusions

The professional traineeship within Social Work curricula represents the synthesis between learning and acting, between the training process and the professional action where the acquisition of technical tools for the future work of the student is fundamental. In this sense, the proposed theoretical relational model is key to assess the extent to which social service courses, opportunities, and programs are actually built on a relational social model. This is true as the Social Work training allows students to experience how diverse the relationship is within its professional dimension but also within its human and social connection: an increasingly complex and challenging relational dimension, but one that is ever closer to «human dimension». In particular, The social work with its action research in which each person constitutes a resource to pursue their own life projects as well as those of the community members, and to satisfy the needs expressed from below after community reflection has as its foundation the aspect of relationship and in its making it wants to reaffirm the conviction that the social network, characterised by dialogue (Ferrucci, 2010) and by voluntary collaboration, leads to the production of common goods (Donati & Colozzi, 2005) and, in this way, to support the institutional structure of civil society and social security (Grignoli, 2017). This idea of social work that can be defined as co-creative and contextual (Grignoli, 2019). In fact, the Social Worker has always operated in complexity and today, even more, it is necessary to clarify the multidimensionality of the profession. Although the process was started before that event, the current pandemic period, in fact, is producing rapid changes in the field of personal services. The impact of technological science in aid work must also be mediated through a professional methodology explored during the training practice, which requires the efforts of all actors involved in academic training, so that it can be used as a current and future resource, starting from the critical historical moment we are living. Therefore, there is a need to capitalize on the training experience by accompanying the student in the concrete scenario through ad hoc projects, placement policies and in-depth study of Social Work tools between tradition and innovation, within clear theoretical- methodological frameworks that reflect reality and can be applied to work with discomfort, fragility and social inequality to implement, as a consequence, a treatment that acts as a social emancipation. Within this context, the university, the degree course in Social Work, professional bodies and local authorities all have a central role: provide the student in Social Work, through the system of relationships implemented in the curricular internship, with stimulating opportunities for comparison where to deepen knowledge and acquire

skills that are valid for his future in the work world (Domakin, 2015) and for the entire professional community. To the operator this means to move with flexibility, focusing on the individuals' strengths; to group-work and assign tasks which are customized to the students' abilities (Luppi, 2019; Ciceri, 2017). Thus, the challenge is to both train future professionals and provide students with flexible and open-ended relational tools in their academic and work lives. This is not always possible due to the autonomous organization of the universities and the evolution of society. Yet, it is right on these risky issues that decision-makers, within a shared political framework, need to intervene in order to truly appraise the change taking place in society.

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