

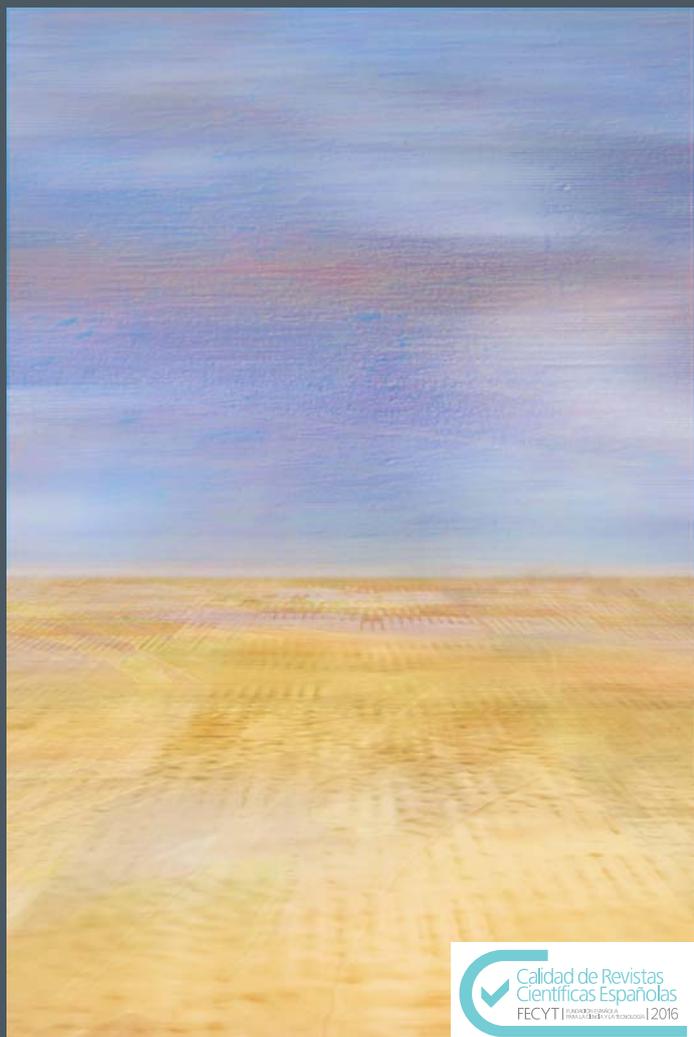
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La acción socioeducativa interdisciplinar en la etapa de educación secundaria. Situación y necesidades profesionales

The social education interdisciplinarity at the level of secondary education

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The socio-educational interdisciplinary action at secondary education level. Situation and professional needs¹

La acción socioeducativa interdisciplinar en la etapa de educación secundaria. Situación y necesidades profesionales

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Abstract

This article seeks to highlight the importance of socio-educational work at the level of secondary education, and it is carried out based on interdisciplinary proposals. To this end, a study was conducted, aiming to find out which professionals are doing socio-educational work in Spanish secondary education schools, what problems and needs they address, what functions they have and what difficulties they encounter in their day-to-day work. The results show that the schools that have taken on professionals from the social or socio-educational context, such as social educators, are more effective in attending to the social and educational requirements affecting the students and their families by offering more interdisciplinary responses and diversifying the socio-educational work.

Keywords: socio-educational action, secondary education, schools, professionals, interdisciplinarity.

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Resumen

El trabajo que se presenta busca poner de relieve la importancia del trabajo socioeducativo en la etapa de educación secundaria, realizado a partir de propuestas interdisciplinares. En este sentido, se ha realizado un estudio descriptivo correlacional mediante encuesta, con la finalidad de conocer qué profesionales se encuentran desarrollando tareas socioeducativas en los centros españoles que imparten educación secundaria, cuáles son los problemas o necesidades que atienden, qué funciones desarrollan y con qué dificultades afrontan en su trabajo diario. Los resultados apuntan que, aquellos centros que han incorporado profesionales del ámbito social o socioeducativo, como educadores sociales, atienden con mayor eficacia los requerimientos sociales y educativos que afectan al alumnado y familias, al ofrecer respuestas más interdisciplinares y diversificar el trabajo socioeducativo.

Palabras clave: acción socioeducativa, educación secundaria, centros escolares, profesionales, interdisciplinariedad.

Introduction

The research concern tackled in this work is focused on justifying and evidencing the need for diverse socio-educational agents to participate in schools, primarily at secondary education level. There are several reasons that have lead us to ascertain the relevance of proposing that, within the current transformation process that the education system is undergoing, encouraged by the social evolution of a more globalised, technologic, plural, and open world, one of the cornerstones is the reformulation of the educational agents currently present in schools. This also entails the need to incorporate new educational figures that cooperate and answer to the new educational and social demands.

The current challenges posed by different national and international documents, such as the Organic Act for the Improvement of the Quality of Education – LOMCE (2013) involve, among other relevant aspects, a special emphasis on the acquisition or a series of key competences that foster the personal, social, and professional development of the students in order to promote a correct socialisation and the students' participation in society. The key competences mentioned are mathematical literacy, scientific and technological competence, learning to learn, linguistic and

digital communication competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression, and social and civic competences. The latter, which constitute our study subject, involve the development of *skills and abilities to use knowledge and attitudes on society, understood from the different perspectives in its dynamic, changing and complex conception, in order to interpret social phenomena and problems* (Orden ECD/65/2015: 6998). To achieve this competence, it is necessary to train the students in aspects related to socially accepted codes of conduct, social skills and abilities linked to communication, and the attitudes and values that generate a citizenship who is able to respect cultural and social diversity.

To specifically address the formative aspects that promote the development of social and civic competences favours the prevention of problematic situations which are inherent to the evolution of the students and their vital development at a personal, social and family level, all of which are development processes that interfere with the everyday reality of schools (González, 2016; Jiménez, 2016). That is why, together with the current educational challenges, there are channels to address contents related to health, peace education, environment education, equality between men and women or consumer education.

On this note, for schools to be able to attend to the emergent needs affecting the students and the members of the educational community, there are policies aimed at seeking educational quality and excellence, “not so much in terms of efficacy, but as a synonym of social equity” (Pérez, 2007: 8), with specific plans and programmes being designed to this end.

A need to respond to social demands. Socio-educational responsibility.

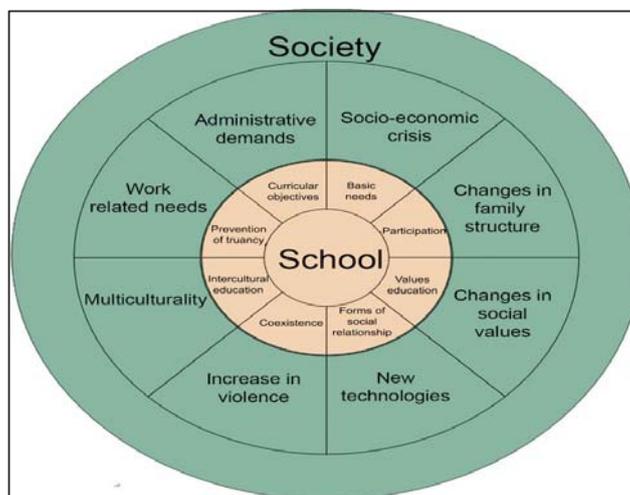
Facing the new challenges of a complex reality, and offering effective solutions to traditional and new social demands, necessarily involves thinking about how schools work, and who should take charge of the socio-educational duties (Bolívar, 2016).

To rethink the school space means to understand that we are immerse in a system with its own identity, which is composed of diverse sub-systems (students, teachers, leadership team, specialised professionals) who must be encouraged to coexist through the establishment of

interaction sequences and specific communication rules (Funes, 2011). However, the functioning of schools cannot be explained without considering that they are a part of their environment, which is society. Based on the assumptions of the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1987), we understand that the school constitutes a *mesosystem* within the *macrosystem* defined by the society and culture of the time.

As an open social system, it constantly exchanges energy and information with its environment, and positive feedback causes the schools to be in a permanent tendency towards change. The configuration of this system involves the construction of a coexistence model to address the variety of situations and reflections from the outside. Based on the inbound and outbound currents of information and communication, the school space and the society build lasting relationships. For this reason, the problems that schools face should not be analysed on the basis of their internal structure, thus disregarding their environment. The school system cannot offer solutions to isolated situations without taking into account the behaviour of the rest of elements interacting simultaneously (Kreuz, Casas, Aguilar & Carbó, 2009) (see figure I).

FIGURE I. Social factors and influences affecting school dynamics.



Source: prepared by the authors

The holistic and integrating approach of the General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1976) provides a coherent interpretation framework (Del Rincón, 2002) to understand the importance of the relationships and groups that emerge between society and school. Based on these relationships, society demands socio-educational answers in accordance with the context of the moment, which benefit the education and socialisation of the educational community. Society establishes a continuous feedback with the school, which determines the good or bad functioning of the system, in terms of it being able to adapt to social changes and advances, and initiating effective solution mechanisms.

Currently, two of the main concerns of the education system are focused on providing an answer to violent situations, thus fostering school coexistence, and on avoiding an increase of truancy, failure and early school leaving among secondary education students. Regarding the former, the last decade has seen important investments aimed at the study of the violence phenomenon and its more current evolution known as cyberbullying, which is a result of the mediation of new technologies and electronic devices, its prevalence at secondary education level, and its consequences on social and academic performance (Garaigordobil, 2011; Ortega, González, Froufe, Rodríguez, Sobrón, Calvo, Mohedano & Olmos, 2010; Mora, Ortega, Calmaestra & Smith, 2010; Ortega & González, 2015). Based on the results obtained in different studies, the current Strategic Plan for School Coexistence prepared by the Ministry of Education, which is included in the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation, establishes the following educational axes: inclusive education, the promotion of community participation, feelings and friendship education, preventive socialisation, violence prevention from an early age, and attention to the use of information and communication technologies.

Regarding truancy, failure, and early school leaving, there are also strategies to mitigate and lower the current 24.9% of early school leaving in our country, which puts us above the average of the rest of European countries (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2015). Diverse studies (Calero, Choi & Waisgrais, 2010; Centro Superior de Formación del Profesorado, 2013) have focused their attention on the determinants of the risk of school failure, the factors that cause early school leaving, and the attitudes of reject manifested by the students towards the system, heightened by the tensions typical of the educational interaction, which affect the learning process (Fernández, Venegas & Robles, 2007; Parcerisa,

2007). Avoiding the school failure and leaving of young people prevents situations that can lead to social exclusion, delinquency, difficulties to access the labour market and a risk of marginalisation (Capriati, 2016; Sáez, 2005). However, it seems that the solutions established so far might not be having the desired effect (Mena et al., 2010) or maybe there hasn't been enough research that encompasses all these aspects in the same line, which should convey what the socio-educational intervention in the school context is (March & Orte, 2014; González, Olmos & Serrate, 2015).

Given the dynamic nature of society, and considering that "schools is expected to resolve practically all the problems that cause concern" (Marchesi, 2000: 232), it is essential to reflect on which *professional capital* (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014) we currently have within the education system acting as a connecting link between society, family and school, and which can contribute with answers and solutions to traditional school-related concerns such as the abovementioned ones, and other emerging problems that require specialised attention.

Method

This situation leads us to propose the following research aims:

- to pinpoint the situations or issues that require a specialised socio-educational intervention in Spanish secondary education schools;
- to find out which professionals are currently taking care of the socio-educational needs of schools, and to analyse the work they do,
 - to verify whether there are any differences according to the job position that professionals hold and the socio-educational functions they perform,
 - to examine which socio-educational functions are responding to the situations or issues that occur most frequently in schools and,
 - to determine which difficulties hinder the daily work of the professionals involved.

The research design was selected on the basis of the aims proposed, it falls under the category of *non-experimental* methodology (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002) *ex post-facto* (Arnal, Del Rincón & Latorre, 1992), and it is a descriptive-correlational study with an electronic survey.

Instrument

The instrument employed for this study is an ad hoc questionnaire combining the use of Likert-type items with open-ended questions. We decided on a self-administrated survey through the use of the Internet (Díaz, 2012; Torrado, 2009). Unlike other procedures, this system granted us a greater access to the population under study and a quicker data collection. The questionnaire was designed with Google Drive and sent to schools in a personalised e-mail through a PHP page.

The study variables were organised in the following content blocks:

TABLE I. Composition of the data gathering instrument

Category		Variable	Value
Independent Variables			
Socio-demographic data	Professional profile	Sex Job position	Nominal answer
	School context	Socio-educational professionals Occurrence of intervention/problematic situations	Nominal Answer Scale answer (0-3) Open answer
Dependent Variables			
Socio-educational work	Socio-educational functions	Frequency and importance of the performance of socio-educational functions	Scale answer (0-3) Open answer
	Difficulties	Difficulties related to the socio-educational labour	Scale answer (0-3) Open answer

Content validity was ensured through the assessment of the formulation of the items by expert judges, and the *internal consistency of the instrument* was measured through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each of the scales that compose the questionnaire. The results of this test show evidences of reliability, with values over .7 in all cases.

Sample

The population under study is composed by the professionals working in Spanish secondary education schools, whom we have named “socio-educational intervention agents”, and the heads of said schools. According to the information gathered through the Ministry of Education, and checked against the Education Departments of the Autonomous Communities, we know there are 7209 schools, but not the number of professionals working in each school. That is the reason why we do not know the real size of the population and, consequently, we consider it to be unknown, so we perform a calculation of the size of the sample with maximum variability ($p=q=0.005$); a confidence level of 95% ($z=1.96$) and an error of 5%, finally obtaining a sample of 385 subjects.

Based on a convenience non-probability sampling, the *participating sample* was composed of a total of 1054 professionals, out of which 440 are intervention agents from 378 schools, 76% are female and 23% male. 57% of the professionals are guidance counsellors. The participating sample was also composed of 614 heads of 568 schools, 59% of which were male and 41% female. Moreover, 70% of school heads also acted as teachers.

Procedure

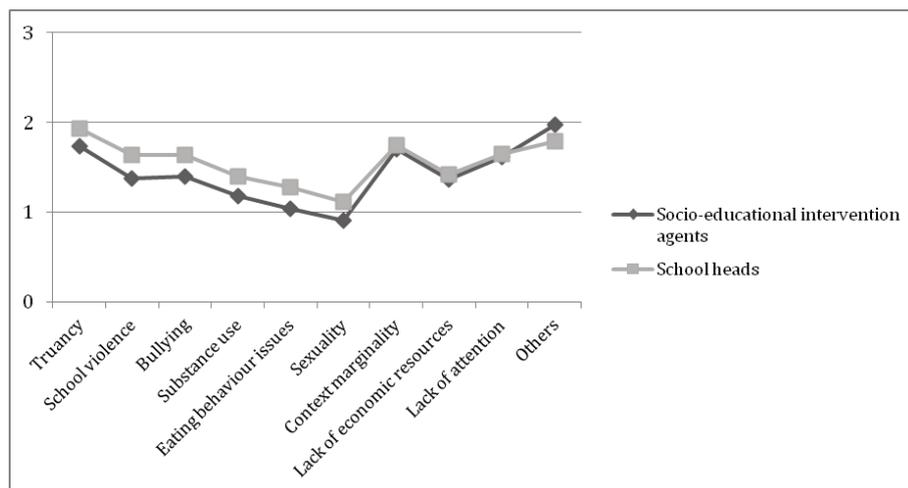
The data analysis was carried out through the calculation of the descriptive statistics of central tendency and dispersion. This served as a basis to decide the most appropriate tests for further analysis, which were a correlational analysis with the Pearson coefficient and an inferential study. The hypothesis testing was conducted through non-parametric tests, specifically the Median test, after the normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk) and homoscedasticity (Levene) parameters were tested. All the analyses were carried out with the statistical package SPSS v.21. Complementarily, a content analysis (Tójar, 2006) was conducted with the answers from the open-ended questions. For a better understanding of the results obtained, the computer programme Gephi 0.8 was used.

Results

Situations or issues that demand socio-educational intervention

Regarding the occurrence of situations that require socio-educational attention, both agents ($X > 1.37$) and school heads ($X > 1.42$) state that specific actions are required for certain situations that directly affect students, such as *truancy*, *bullying* or *school violence*. They also demand specialised interventions for situations derived from the context in which the school is located, such as the *marginality of the environment*, *the lack of family attention to the children* or *the situations derived from a lack of family resources*.

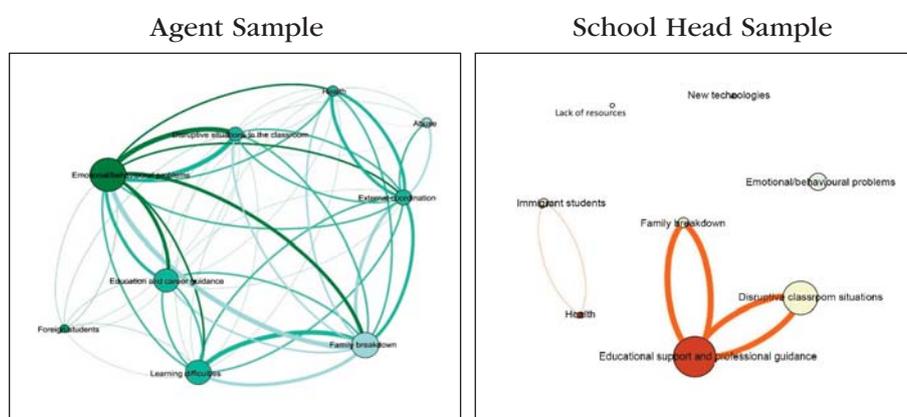
FIGURE II. Global mean of the socio-educational intervention situations (range 0-3)



Besides the abovementioned issues, both participating samples indicate that there are other situations that require specific attention on the part of the professionals working in secondary education schools. In order to carry out the content analysis, the answers were grouped by similar meanings related to the topic of *socio-educational intervention situations*, resulting

in nine final categories² for the sample of agents and eight for the sample of school heads. As it is shown in figure III, the categories of *emotional and behavioural problems among students*, *academic and professional guidance needs*, and *educational support*, obtain the highest frequency. Agents also mention *family breakdown* and *student learning difficulties*, and school heads refer to *disruptive situations in the classroom*.

FIGURE III. Graphical representation of the socio-educational intervention situations



The results show that when agents mention that disruptive classroom situations require specific socio-educational intervention, they also mention the emotional and behavioural problems of the students as situations that demand specific action. Likewise, when family breakdown is brought up, another two situations are also noted: student learning difficulties and the coordination with external agents. In turn, the school head sample shows strong relationships between the need for educational and professional guidance and both family breakdown issues and disruptive classroom situations. However, we cannot determine whether some situations are a consequence of others, because the content analysis does not reveal cause-effect relationships specifically.

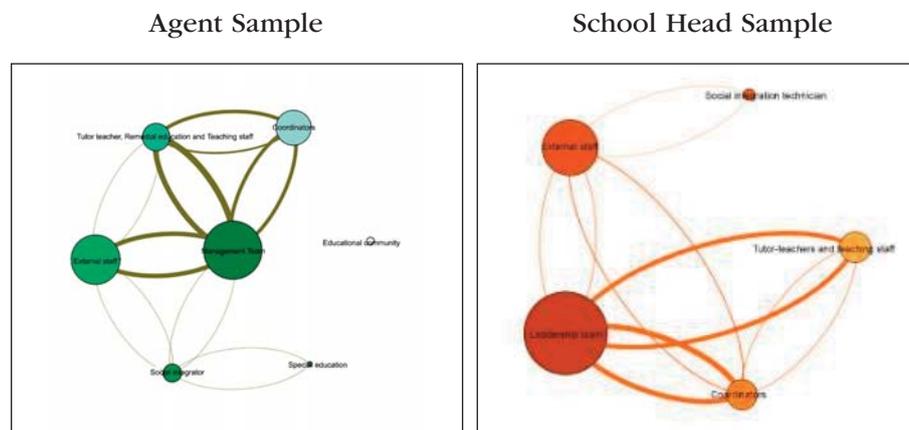
⁽²⁾ The prepared matrix was incorporated to the programme Gephi 0.8, a tool that allows us to obtain the categories with the highest frequency of response in a graphic way. Likewise, it allows us to visualise the relationships among the different categories through curved lines of different widths, depending on the intensity of said relationships.

Socio-educational intervention agents

Currently, the main professionals overseeing the development of socio-educational actions in secondary education schools are the Guidance Counsellors, as it is stated by 95.9% of agents and 97.5% of school heads. However, other professionals performing socio-educational duties are teachers (72.7% agents, 78.8% school heads), Therapeutic Pedagogy specialists (63% agents, 68% school heads), Hearing and Speech specialists (25.5% agents, 31.4% school heads), Social Educators (25.9% agents, 18.7% school heads) or Community Service Teachers (22.7% agents, 18.9% school heads).

Likewise, 26.6% of the agent sample and 25.8% of the school head sample pointed to other professional figures in charge of socio-educational work in schools, either in a specialised way or as a complement to the action carried out by other professionals. Again, the answers obtained were grouped according to meanings related to the topic of *professionals in charge of the socio-educational action*, both internal and external to the schools. Seven categories were defined for the content analysis in the agent sample, and five in the school head sample.

FIGURE IV. Graphical representation of the people in charge of the socio-educational action



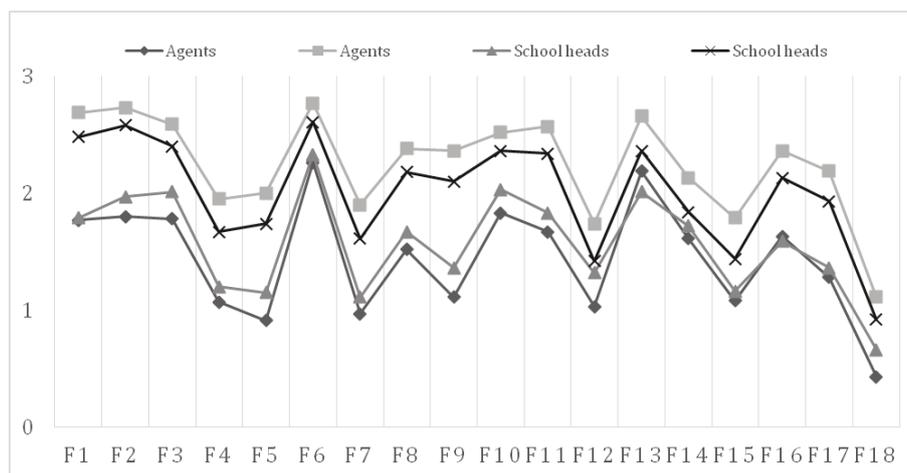
As we can observe in figure IV, the categories with a higher frequency of response were Leadership Team, External Staff and Coordinators (of

coexistence, school level, extracurricular activities, etc.), which allows us to verify that both agents and school heads consider that the Leadership Team constitutes an essential figure in the development of socio-educational activities, and that when they mention the Leadership Team, they usually mention two other categories, External Staff and Coordinators. Two of these categories – Leadership Team and Coordinators – are intensely related to a third category – teacher-tutor, compensatory teacher or teaching staff-; therefore, it can be determined that they constitute professional figures that are coordinated in the socio-educational labour.

The socio-educational work in secondary education schools

In order to describe the aspects that define the professional activity of intervention agents in secondary education schools, we proceed to interpret the assessment of the functions (frequency of execution and importance given) that define the socio-educational work.

FIGURE V. Global mean of the *socio-educational functions*, in importance and frequency of performance (range 0-3)



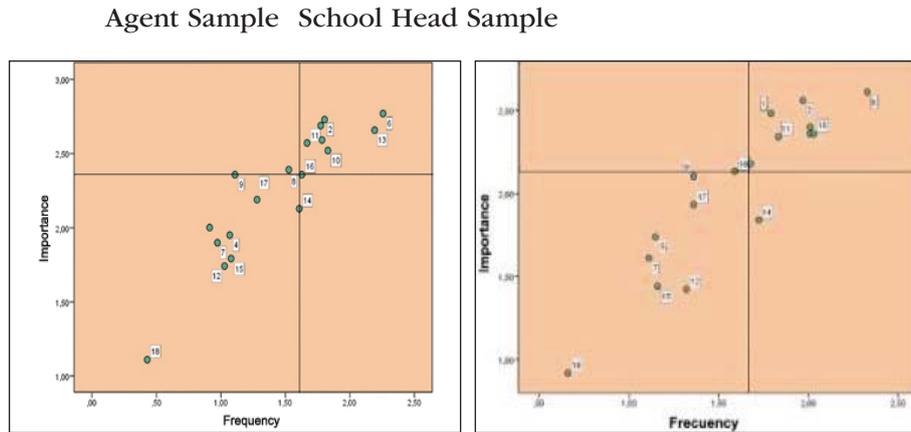
The data obtained suggests that the most frequently performed functions, and also those considered more important by agents and school heads, can be organised around three aspects:

- a) *aimed at working with students*: through the design and development of attention to diversity programmes (F6) and actions to prevent and control truancy (F11).
- b) *Aimed at fostering school coexistence*: through conflict mediation and resolution processes (F2) and the coordination of activities from the plan for the improvement of school coexistence (F3).
- c) *Related to prevention, counselling and guidance processes*: through the detection and prevention of risk factors for unfavourable socio-educational situations (F1), socio-educational counselling and support for the educational community (students, families and teachers) and the development of student guidance programmes related to professional and labour integration topics (F10).

Figure VI shows how, in the agents' opinion, the functions performed with a low frequency but which are granted a high level of importance are the promotion of the relationship with families through the organisation of schools for parents and information programmes (drug addiction, school failure, bullying, inclusion problems, etc.) (F9), and the training of student skills through the design and development of programmes, seminars, workshops, talks or interpersonal communication activities (violence prevention, social skills, act.) (F8). However, according to school heads, it is the counselling activities related to the teaching-learning process (F16).

Conversely, there is a function often performed by the professionals but which obtains a low level of importance in both samples, and that is the "teaching activity" (F14).

FIGURE VI. Frequency-importance relationship from the median of the functions



Socio-educational functions and job position

A Median test reveals the existence of statistically significant differences (s.l. .05) in the performance of fifteen out of the eighteen functions proposed for the five professional profiles studied. In order to determine between which groups said differences occurred, a side-by-side comparison between pairs of functions was conducted, as it is shown in table II.

TABLE II. Median test

Higher performance	Lower performance	Higher performance	Lower performance
11. 1 Detection and prevention of risk factors		11.11 Programmes for the prevention and control of truancy	
Social Educator	Counsellor ($\chi^2=9.204$; p.0.0024)	Social Educator	Teacher ($\chi^2=18.535$; p.0.000)
	Teacher ($\chi^2=7.936$; p.0.048)		Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=23.706$; p.0.000)
Community Service Technician	Teacher ($\chi^2=18.100$; p.0.000)	Community Service Technician	Counsellor ($\chi^2=25.157$; p.0.000)
	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=15.654$; p.0.001)		Teacher ($\chi^2=21.579$; p.0.000)
	Counsellor ($\chi^2=27.833$; p.0.000)		Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=26.891$; p.0.000)
11.2 Mediation in coexistence conflicts		Counsellor ($\chi^2=27.444$; p.0.000)	
Social Educator	Counsellor ($\chi^2=20.521$; p.0.000)	11.12 Extracurricular activities	
	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=14.992$; p.0.001)	Teacher	Counsellor ($\chi^2=8.396$; p.0.038)
11.3 Organisation and coordination of the Coexistence Plan		11.13 Socio-educational counselling and support	
Counsellor	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=8.678$; p.0.032)	Social Educator	Teacher ($\chi^2=10.220$; p.0.014)
Teacher	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=8.025$; p.0.046)	Community Service Technician	Teacher ($\chi^2=10.430$; p.0.012)
11.4 Organisation and management of cultural services		Counsellor	Teacher ($\chi^2=20.554$; p.0.000)
Social Educator	Counsellor ($\chi^2=14.988$; p.0.001)	11.14 Teaching activities	
	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=11.711$; p.0.006)	Teacher	Social Educator ($\chi^2=40.513$; p.0.000)
Community Service Technician	Community Service Technician ($\chi^2=23.673$; p.0.000)		
Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=10.103$; p.0.015)	Counsellor ($\chi^2=33.316$; p.0.000)		
11.8 Development of communication programmes		Therapeutic Pedagogue	Social Educator ($\chi^2=37.625$; p.0.000)
Social Educator	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=19.329$; p.0.000)		Community Service Technician ($\chi^2=21.737$; p.0.000)
	Teacher ($\chi^2=8.994$; p.0.027)		Counsellor ($\chi^2=29.671$; p.0.000)
Counsellor	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=9.235$; p.0.024)	11.15 Tutoring a group of students	
11.9 Organisation and development of schools for parents		Teacher	Community Service Technician ($\chi^2=8.273$; p.0.040)
Social Educator	Teacher ($\chi^2=9.201$; p.0.024)		Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=10.667$; p.0.011)
		Counsellor	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=10.466$; p.0.012)
Counsellor	Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=7.907$; p.0.049)	11.16 Counselling related to the teaching-learning process	
11.10 Guidance programmes		Counsellor	Social Educator ($\chi^2=14.236$; p.0.002)
Counsellor	Social Educator ($\chi^2=28.727$; p.0.000)		Community Service Technician ($\chi^2=10.290$; p.0.013)
	Community Service Technician ($\chi^2=23.802$; p.0.000)	Therapeutic Pedagogue	Social Educator ($\chi^2=13.157$; p.0.003)
	Teacher ($\chi^2=26.042$; p.0.000)	11.18 Control of the students using school transportation	
Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=22.947$; p.0.000)	Social Educator	Counsellor ($\chi^2=31.296$; p.0.000)	
		Community Service Technician ($\chi^2=8.141$; p.0.043)	
		Teacher ($\chi^2=8.202$; p.0.042)	
		Therapeutic Pedagogue ($\chi^2=15.611$; p.0.001)	

The data suggests that *teachers* and *therapeutic pedagogues* mainly perform teaching activities, extracurricular activity development and tutoring student groups. They also cooperate by taking responsibility for functions from the Coexistence plan.

In their turn, *guidance counsellors* assume functions which are mainly related to guidance and counselling, the coordination of the Coexistence plan, the elaboration of communication programmes and the attention to parents through the schools for families. Additionally, they share the tutoring of groups of students.

Lastly, other professional profiles, such as social educators or Community Service Technicians, implement activities aimed at the detection of risk factors, the mediation of coexistence-related conflicts, the organisation of cultural services, the socio-educational guidance and support for the educational community, or the control of students using school transportation. They also cooperate with guidance counsellors in the development of communication programmes or the organisation of schools for families.

Socio-educational functions and intervention situations

Aiming to link the socio-educational functions performed with the situations subject to intervention, we conducted an analysis with Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficient (Mateo, 2004; Pardo & Ruiz, 2005). As table III shows, even though the values obtained show a moderate intensity in all cases, it is determined that in order to attend to the problems that occur more frequently in schools, the agents perform duties aimed at mitigating their effects through the *detection and prevention* of risk factors and truancy, since they can be the cause or the result of some circumstances manifested in schools, and through mediation actions aimed at the resolution of conflict situations.

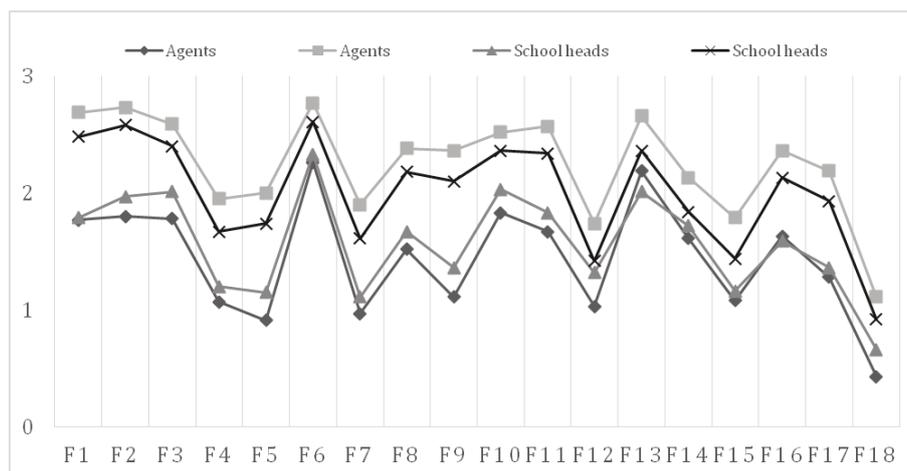
TABLE III. Relationships between the most frequent intervention situations and socio-educational functions, measured with Pearson's coefficient

Situations	Functions	r
10.1 Truancy	11.11 Development of programmes for the prevention and control of truancy	.654
	11.1 Detection and prevention of risk factors for unfavourable socio - educational situations	.438
10.2 School violence	11.2 Mediation in coexistence conflicts and their resolution	.464
	11.11 Development of programmes for the prevention and control of truancy	.427
10.3 Bullying	11.2 Mediation in coexistence conflicts and their resolution	.468
	11.1 Detection and prevention of risk factors for unfavourable socio - educational situations	
10.7 Context marginality	11.1 Detection and prevention of risk factors for unfavourable socio - educational situations	.530
	11.11 Development of programmes for the prevention and control of truancy	.456
10.8 Lack of economic resources	11.1 Detection and prevention of risk factors for unfavourable socio - educational situations	.458
10.9 Lack of family attention to children	11.1 Detection and prevention of risk factors for unfavourable socio - educational situations	.489
	11.11 Development of programmes for the prevention and control of truancy	.404

Difficulties related to the socio-educational labour

According to the opinion of agents and school heads, there are some shortcomings that hinder the development of the socio-educational labour, which are related to the lack of economic resources to carry out activities, and the lack of infrastructures (space and time) for the attention of students and families, as shown in figure VII. Likewise, we detect a poor professional definition of the socio-educational labour due to the lack of definition of the professional tasks of the staff in charge of socio-educational actions, together to a lack of professional recognition.

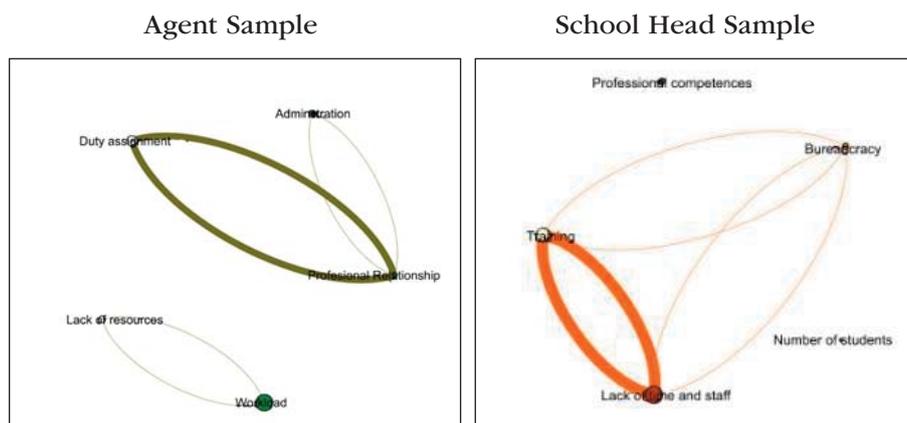
FIGURE VII. Global mean of the problems for the development of the socio-educational labour (range 0-3)



It is necessary to note that, while the assignment of teaching duties was not considered as a difficulty, the analysis of socio-educational functions revealed that it was a *task frequently performed* by agents despite being considered of *little importance* by both participating collectives, which leads us to deduce that, in a way, the excessive load of teaching duties hinders the development of other socio-educational actions.

Agents and school heads mention *other problems* or difficulties that allow us to understand the reality of socio-educational work. After the content analysis, it was noted that the lack of clarification of the functions and the assignment of duties that are beyond, or not related at all with the socio-educational labour, can result in professional coordination problems.

FIGURE VIII. Graphical representation of the problems for the development of the socio-educational labour



The agent sample shows a relationship between the lack of personal resources to attend to the socio-educational work and the workload. This relationship makes sense, as the lack of professionals causes the active socio-educational professionals to feel that the high number and diversity of intervention demands that they must face is a difficulty added to their work. They also mention as a difficulty the little time they have in each school, on account of their status as itinerant staff. In this regard, the aspects that hinder the socio-educational labour are the lack of resources available and the lack of relationship and recognition on the part of other professionals. This can be due to the habit of creating specific job positions for socio-educational actions that are temporary and discontinuous, aimed solely at the resolution of emergent and unusual problems.

In their turn, school heads detect as a difficulty the limited training of the professionals specialised in socio-educational intervention regarding the functioning of schools and teaching bodies. The lack of time and staff is also one of the biggest difficulties for school heads, given that the professionals are not assigned to a single school, and therefore they spend only a few hours in each of them.

Result discussion and conclusions

Outlining the composition of the professional capital composing the educational fabric of secondary schools across the country, and establishing their role in the performance of the socio-educational actions that answer to the educational and social requirements, was no easy feat. Out of the process followed and the results obtained, we address the following issues with a forward-looking perspective:

Efforts are being made to respond to socio-educational intervention needs

This study has revealed that the education system must provide answers to a highly diverse set of problems and needs derived from the daily social and contextual reality, which interfere in the day-to-day dynamic of schools and, consequently, in the coexistence of their members. It has also been noted, as other studies have already suggested (Cuadrado, 2010; De la Fuente, 2009; Martínez & De Andrés, 2011; Martín, Rodríguez & Marchesi, 2005; Mora et al., 2010; Ochoa & Peiró, 2010; Rodríguez, 2008; Viana, 2012), that the efforts of the professionals are mainly aimed at addressing two of the concerns mentioned at the beginning of this article: attending to school violence situations and avoiding the increase of truancy, early school leaving and failure among secondary education students.

However, there are other needs that require specific and/or specialised professional attention, such as emotional and behavioural problems among the students, the guidance of students for a proper planning of their life projects, problems derived from the lack of family attention to young people due to a possible disinterest or delegation of educational functions, or the lack of economic resources and the consequences of family breakdown as problems derived from the context, such as the marginality of the school surroundings.

There is no doubt that most of these situations are derived from certain social or contextual issues, and that they require specialised attention. The answer provided by school professionals takes concrete form in the development of functions primarily aimed at the detection and prevention of risk factors, and at the prevention and control of truancy. This is a highly adequate work, which is focused promoting coexistence and

conflict resolution, programming cultural and community services, establishing direct relationships with external social agents, providing academic guidance and support, developing guidance programmes for students, families and staff, and activities for the attention to student diversity. It is clear that both agents and school heads feel that there should be more emphasis on the counselling on matters related to the teaching-learning process, the attention to families through schools for parents, the organisation of information programmes, and the training of the interpersonal communication skills of students, all of which are aspects reflected among the educational principles of the already mentioned Strategic Plan for School Coexistence.

Rethinking the professional figures of the technical teaching staff

It has become evident that the socio-educational labour is generally shared between school professionals and other external agents. The analysis of the different professional profiles under study reveals that, while teachers and Therapeutic Pedagogues undertake teaching and extracurricular duties, guidance counsellors assume functions related to counselling, both on socio-educational issues and the teaching-learning process. In their turn, Community Service Technicians and social educators oversee the detection and prevention of risk factors, the attention to the absenteeism issue and the conflict mediation and resolution. Schools that do not have this last profile demand a greater attention from external professionals, who usually are social educators from local administrations, entities, or specialised services.

As it can be concluded, the professionals in charge of socio-educational intervention respond to a diverse profile, which depends on the professionals hired in the context of the different Autonomous Communities (Ballester & Ballester, 2014; Díez & Flecha, 2010; Flecha & Larena, 2008; Muñoz & Gelabert, 2013) to attend certain problematic situations or needs (Castillo, 2013; Galán, 2008). The last professional mentioned above, the social educator, is not currently recognised by all Autonomous Communities as a figure working within schools. Conversely, they constitute a temporary and discontinuous figure, not always belonging to a single school. This aspect seems to be a direct consequence of assigning specialised professionals to schools only to

implement remedial actions (Castillo, 2013; Vega, 2013) to solve certain problems. Nonetheless, the results allow us to affirm that these figures are assuming socio-educational duties more frequently than other professionals, thus responding to school situations that require specialised interventions.

It is noteworthy that in the Autonomous Communities where this figure is not recognised, the difficulties for the performance of socio-educational functions as expressed by the school professionals are related to a lack of staff, a lack of definition of professional functions and the importance of having specialised staff within schools. In the Autonomous Communities where the figure of the school social educator is regulated, such as Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha or Andalusia, school heads require a higher number and temporal availability of these professionals in order to foster the duration of socio-educational projects.

Bearing all of this in mind, we admit that the socio-educational labour currently constitutes a complex process, and therefore it requires planning on the part of educational administrations for the definition and clarification of the professionals who should oversee this kind of activities, the materialisation of the actions and strategies that should be considered, and the delimitation of the aspects that should be worked on.

There is no doubt that the lack of definition of the professional profile or profiles responsible for the socio-educational action is associated to a lack of a clear definition of socio-educational work and the functions that must be performed according to the results obtained. In this respect, it is necessary to establish collaboration channels to solve the situations for which the schools demand qualified professional assets. The socio-educational labour must be contemplated as an action to be developed by all the agents of the educational community. Nonetheless, we understand that it must be specifically trusted upon a team of professionals in charge of the planning, definition, and implementation of socio-educational actions in each school. Based on the results obtained we conclude that there is a need to define the professional profile that must compose these socio-educational teams, so that they are configured in the same way in the different educational contexts, in order to establish the actions typical of this socio-educational labour in a common way across the Spanish territory.

Nowadays, nobody doubts the efficacy of coordinated interdisciplinary work as a basis for an efficient teaching culture (Tribó, 2008). However,

it is a challenge to incorporate new and diverse professionals into secondary education schools, thus increasing the quality of education and improving the schools' internal ability for change (Martínez, Krichesky & García, 2011). As we have mentioned, only some Autonomous Communities in our country have focused their efforts in including social education professionals in the teaching staff of their schools, this way they prioritise emancipatory learnings (Pineda & García, 2014), allowing the students to mature and become adults who can face society. These professionals have a socio-educational profile and are able to adapt their intervention to the psycho-pedagogical level of the students and to join forces to establish coordinated actions with all the agents involved in the educational process, meaning the school, the families and the community (González et al., 2015).

We are aware that the inclusion of new emergent profiles in schools is no easy feat, but it entails a conscious welcome process on the part of the teaching staff and leadership team, and it also requires a knowledge of the functions performed by these professionals in order to avoid overlaps or subordinations in the professional labour (Teixidó & Brucart, 2009). The educational community sees these professionals in a positive light, regarding them as agents that contribute with a know-how that is complementary to the student attention process. In this regard, it is obvious that the integration of new profiles in the schools of pioneer Autonomous Communities is proving to be a successful process, although generalisations cannot be made. In the search for the improvement of the education system, we deem it essential to delve into the study of the interdisciplinarity resulting from a greater inclusion of educational and social intervention professionals.

In conclusion, in a society that generates new demands for specialised socio-educational intervention, we should highlight the importance of conducting studies such as this one, in that it provides valuable information to build on the results from the reality of education in order to configure and define the socio-educational action in schools.

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