

HISTORY

OF SOCIAL WORK

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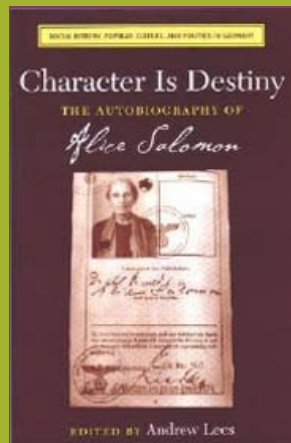
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1929 Alice Salomon

Internationalisation of social work education



Alice Salomon (1872-1948), a Jewess who converted to Protestantism, was one of the first women to study economics in Berlin. Afterwards, in 1908, she established the *Soziale Frauenschule* (the Social Women's School), the first to offer professional training in social work. To achieve this, Salomon relied on her experiences as a volunteer in the *Mädchen- und Frauengruppen für soziale Hilfsarbeit* (Girls and women's group for social unskilled labour) (1893). About two decades later (1925), she started the *Deutsche Akademie für soziale und pädagogische Frauenarbeit* (German academy for social and educational women's work), which was however taken over in 1933 by the Nazis who expelled Salomon and its Jewish employees. The original Soziale Frauenschule changed its name in 1932 to the Alice Salomon School and more recently into [Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences](#).

Alice Salomon was a key figure in the development of social work in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Starting from her feminist perspective, her influence had an impact on the social rights of women, the peace movement and the recognition of female professional work. Like others in the first wave of feminism, she saw care for the poor as one area in which women could meaningfully do paid work. The idea of *geistige Mütterlichkeit* or 'social motherhood' was a resource for social care that was exclusive to women. Although upper-class women could be good at social care, their backgrounds did not always prepare them for the practical aspects of such work. This made formal training necessary which could bring together professional development, personal development and emancipation.

Within this framework, Salomon focused on a methodological way of caring. She stressed the importance of care plans based on research. At the same time, she argued for 'the art of helping', creatively drawing upon a diversity of sources of aid. The aim was to change the circumstances and attitudes of clients.

In 1926, after a study visit to the USA in 1923-24, Alice Salomon published her most important book: *Soziale Diagnose*. Based on a European perspective, it was her version of Mary Richmond's work on social diagnosis. In a very personal way, Salomon linked care with pedagogical coaching. In this way she – and others – launched the typically German development where *Sozialarbeit* (social work) and *Sozialpädagogik* (social pedagogy) were closely related.

Salomon played an important role in the establishment of an international approach to the organisation of social work education. She maintained a myriad of international contacts, not only within the US but also for example in Belgium with M. Mulle of the *École Central du Service Social* in Brussels, and in the Netherlands with M. Moltzer of the Amsterdam school of social work. It was Moltzer who in 1928 launched the idea of an international association of social work education. Salomon made that idea reality, together with René Sand – a Belgian pioneer of international social work. The International Committee on Schools of Social Work (ICSSW) was launched in June 1929 in Berlin with Alice Salomon as first chair. It later changed its name to [International Association of Schools of Social Work \(IASSW\)](#), the name it still carries today.

In 1937, Alice Salomon made an international comparison of more than a hundred social work education settings. Her conclusion was that the differences in methods and curricula had to be reduced, despite the need to adjust social work to the local context. In the same year, Salomon was evicted from Germany by the National Socialists. She emigrated to the USA where she became relatively lonely and isolated. She died in August 1948.

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This initiative also exists in Dutch, where it covers the history of social work in the Netherlands, in Flanders, and internationally.

See www.canonsociaalwerk.eu

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-  Wieler, J. (1988), [*Alice Salomon*](#). *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 2(2), 165 - 171.

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-  Feustel, A. (2006), [*The significance of International Relations and Cooperation in the Works of Alice Salomon*](#), translation originally published in *Ariadne. Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte*, vol. 49 (2006), pp. 24-29
-  Lees, A. (Ed.) (2004), [*Character is destiny. the autobiography of Alice Salomon*](#). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
-  Hegar, R. L. (2008), [*Transatlantic transfers in social work: contributions of three pioneers*](#). *British journal of social work*, 38(4), 716-733. (accessible only for those having a subscription to the journal)

Links

- [Alice Salomon @ Wikipedia](#)
- [Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany](#)
- [Alumni of Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany](#)
- [IASSW: International Association of Schools of Social Work](#)



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