

Educating Social Work Students for Policy Practice



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Nature and Extent



- **492** accredited BSW programs
- **231** accredited MSW programs
- Number and types of policy offerings vary across programs
- CSWE Accreditation Standards (EPAS) require policy content in both BSW and MSW curricula

Proposed Curriculum Standards



2015: (Draft 2)

Engage in policy practice.

Social workers

- Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services
- Critically analyze and promote policies that advance human rights and social and economic justice

Compare To...

1984:

Social Work Purposes

- “Legislative advocacy, lobbying, and other forms of social and political action, including providing expert testimony, participation in local and national coalitions, and gaining public office”

Social Welfare Policy & Services

- “Prepare them to exert leadership and influence as legislative and social advocates, lobbyists, and expert advisors to policymakers and administrators.”
- “Gain an understanding of political processes and learn to use them in ways that will further the achievement of social work goals and purposes”

Primary Challenge



Meeting our simultaneous and sometimes conflicting responsibilities to:

- Equip all graduates with policy practice skills and the motivation to incorporate them into their professional practice
- Prepare a cadre of highly skilled policy practice professionals

Underlying Reality



The profession isn't fully committed to the idea that policy practice is an integral and essential part of social work

Bifurcation of Micro and Macro



- Silos within the curriculum rather than an organic whole
- Students have difficulty grasping the relevance of policy to other aspects of SW practice
- Reinforced by divided faculty
- Students identify with a concentration, rather than as social workers
- Marginalizes macro practice (including policy)

Emphasis on Micro Practice



- Deans, directors, field directors, ambivalent about fit between policy practice and generalist education
- Direct service as “real” social work
- Not given equal weight in field placements
- Alumni report feeling least prepared for policy practice

Insufficient Faculty Expertise



- Policy classes taught by faculty who lack experience
- Less likely to use experiential /service learning
- Non-policy faculty may be uninformed and fail to draw connections
- Some may propagate misinformation or be negative or dismissive
- Field faculty face barriers to cultivating policy placements

Student Enrollment



% of students in social policy concentrations:

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1.2	1.1	1.3	1.0	5.2

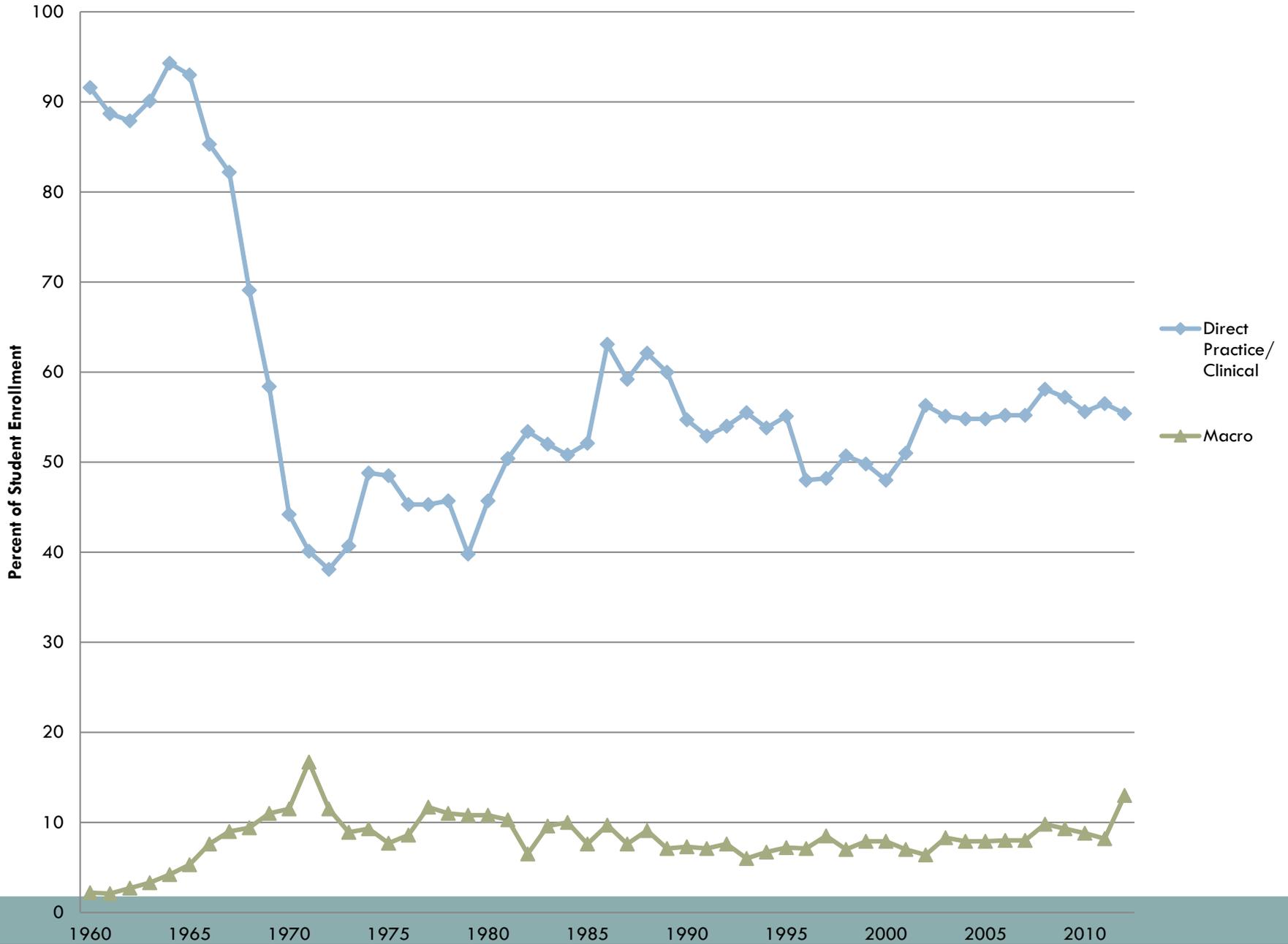
Student Enrollment



% of students enrolled in macro concentrations:

YEAR(S)	MEAN %
1960-1969	5.7
1970-1979	8.0
1980-1989	8.8
1990-1999	7.2
2000-2009	8.1
2010	8.8
2011	8.2
2012	13.0

STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN CLINICAL/DIRECT PRACTICE & MACRO CONCENTRATIONS



Student Enrollment



Contributing factors:

- Most entering students want to work directly with clients
- Failure to engage students during BSW/foundation year
- Micro before macro message
- Allure of clinical practice
- State licensing laws
- Concerns about employment and earnings

Competing for Employment



Necessary Skills

- Understanding budget processes
- Communication
- Creating infographics
- Strategy development
- Writing
- Strategic use of media

Necessary Skills

- Persuasion
- Legislative analysis
- Advocacy
- Policy implementation
- GIS technology
- Manipulation of census data

The Good News



- Policy practice is a fixture in CSWE Curriculum Standards
- Growing body of literature on how to teach policy practice
- Great models available for both classroom and field
- We know how to respond to many of the issues and challenges identified

The Good News



- Critical Conversation on Influencing Social Policy
- Congressional SW Caucus
- Congressional Research Institute for Social Work & Policy (CRISP)
- Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice
- Policy, Action & Research Collaborative
- Social Innovation & Engagement Conference
- Macro Social Work Student Network
- Policy Conference 2.0

What We Need to Do



- Explore new recruitment strategies
- Creative, flexible models for classroom & field
- Build community; increase visibility and power
- Connect to community agencies, advocacy organizations, other units on campus, new partners
- Continue to educate about the importance & relevance of policy practice to social work

Thank You

