

# VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE: ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATE

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## **Abstract**

The socio-professional sources of the vocational guidance are reviewed, in the world and in Latin America. It stands out that psychology, as science and as a profession, possesses vigorous links to this practice that, however, tends to its epistemic and praxic emancipation in some nations. The contemporary problems of the guidance are presented in their economic, politics, cultural and professional dimensions.

## **Sciences and professions**

The creation, by society, of sciences and professions is a complex phenomenon that involves economic and sociological factors. Sciences were originated in the desmembering that modernity has been producing over the philosophical knowledge. They cannot be separated from the material conditions which gave origin to them; among those that should be highlighted are the emergence of industrial technologies, the reorganization of capitalism over that industrial basis, the conformation of nationalities in Europe and America and the consolidation of bourgeoisie in the political field, with their repercussion in the juridical, academic spheres and, even if it doesn't look like it, psychological. It must be remembered that "uninterested" knowledge as a value, the researcher's emergency as a social character to be imitated and reproduced, or the challenge of the "spirit of authority" have been recent phenomena, inconceivable four centuries ago. The idea of progress, the occasion of ascending in the social scale through empiric discoveries or the proud showing of degrees in abstract knowledge are creatures of the industrial capitalism, of its implicit or explicit philosophies (atheism, liberalism, positivism, materialism, evolucionism) and of the full consolidation of the owners' classes.

The relationship between sciences and professions is as complex as that of the epistemic outlines, juridical and academic that are in their basis. If medicine, for example, leans on several sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, demography, etc.), and presents itself as an art, biology, whose chapters nurture the physician -physiology, genetics, anatomy, etc.-, arises in the academic world with posteriority, as a theoretical and investigative appendix of careers in medicine. The same can be pointed out in the relationships among the engineerings, explicitly professional and the sciences that sustain them, as mathematics, physics, chemistry. If sciences are more stable and older

than professions, it is under the requirements of the later that have taken academic embodiment with remarkable frequency. Professions, situational crafts, which are fluid and often improvised, are closest to social requirements, to economic and political urgency. Altering a logical order and frequently also other hypothetically chronological order, professions, daughters of sciences, precede them in fact with an assiduity that forces to consider this inverse relationship as a type of law that goes from the socioeconomic organization to the creation of technologies sui generis to palliate immediate necessities (this is, professions), and from there to the serene reflection and the disinterested research (sciences). In an ideal sense, it could be conceived the inverse order: to the human queries about the world phenomena would respond the creation of sciences, and to the practical instrumentation of the sciences would respond the professions, as being their applied branches. This historical review will start from the premise that postulates the priority of social order in the gestation of scientific knowledge and that of groups of interest (professionals) in the process of consolidation of sciences. In this context, the relationships between vocational-professional orientation and psychology will be proposed like a net in which it must be pointed out the social origins of psychology and their progressive transformation in a profession cultivated by agents which, in defense of their interests, produce public services in permanent conflict with other, coming from other groups of interest.

### **Functionalism and psychology**

Vocational and Professional Guidance, counseling, clinical, industry and educational psychologies, with their respective and numerous subchapters, are consequence of the creation of the degree in psychology, which happened at the end of the nineteen century in United States. (Vilanova, 1990; S. Sexton and J. Hogan, 1992) Although it is frequent to associate psychology's autonomous emergence to W. Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig (1876) or to the other, earlier, of G. Sergi in Rome (1873), scientific historiography effective today confirms the idea that it has been in United States where psychology was able to enter from the beginning in the university system, under the form of a career and a degree. It was also in the United States where it achieved the organization of the first and powerful professional union (1892), controller of publications, classes, congresses, research grants and ethic codes. This appropriation of knowledge and practices didn't have its replicates in Europe nor in Latin America until well entered the forties, this is, until North American educational apparatus, passing the War, began to be taken as a model outside its frontiers (Buss, 1979).

It is in the north-american university, then, where the psychologist begins to perceive himself as a helping professional, in foot of equality with educators, company

administrators, physicians or jurists, and begins his sometimes very hard union fights, with possessors of other helping disciplines. While the European university only conceived the psychologist like a pure researcher, dedicated to laboratorial discovery of universal psychic events, the American mounted for him a departmental system that allowed him, after having obtained a bachelor in sciences and a master degree in psychology (degrees of 4 and 3 years respectively), to opt for a highly specialized doctoral degree, whether in basic processes research, whether in one of the numerous professional areas (Foradori, 1954; Ardila, 1972; Alonso and Eagly, 1999).

A rational understanding of the emergence of vocational guidance as psychologists' chore will allow for a brief evocation of functionalism, the psychological system inspired by darwinian evolutionism and by John Dewey and William James' philosophical pragmatism. As for the authorized opinion of James Angell, who in 1906 presented to the American Psychological Association a set of postulates and corollary that conformed the functionalist ideario, which is distinguished from the "old psychology" (mainly Edward Titchener's experimental introspectism) by some theoretical and methodological emphases, among those:

Psychology is based on real life events, and it is useful in order to respond to requirements of education, work, mental health and recreation.

1. Psychology doesn't study static entities or atoms, but processes (thought, emotion, behavior, memory, etc.) phylogenetically gestated in order to execute some adaptative purpose (in a darwinian sense).
2. Psychology is more of an applied science than of a pure science; searches the social relevance of the phenomena it studies; it is not dogmatic (monoparadigmatic) and it is in intimate contact with neighboring sciences (biology, sociology) and with evolutionism scientific philosophy.
3. Psychology methods are multiple, although longitudinal observation of the process genesis is the most appropriate resource. Genotype explains phenotype.
4. Psychology is the key to explain the most diverse human events: mental pathology, learning delays, person's adaptation to work, moral maintenance during war, etc. This utility for life transforms it into the most relevant among human sciences, functionalism being the net of concepts that articulates the theoretical production to social service.

In this atmosphere,- in wich utilitarianism, materialism, methodological eclecticism and managers and politicians' high budgets for university chairs are amalgamated-, arises, at the beginning with scarce differentiability but then with its own academic and union canons, Vocational Guidance. The next section will be dedicated to its university and social periplus, for which we have now a summary context.

## Vocational Guidance

It is usually taken as a reliable historical source Henry Borow's work (eds.) *Man in a World of Work*, published in 1964 in Boston, since it summarizes expert points of view for the demarcation among vocational orientation, counseling and psychotherapy, being this an arduous enterprise in the motley socio-professional north-american context (Schertzer and Stone, 1968). According to Borow, a probable beginning of the area is psychologist Jesse Davis's personal performance, in 1898, at the Central High School of Detroit, helping students which demanded psychopedagogical assistance and professional orientation. Other hypothetical foundational landmark could have been the speech that in 1899 pronounced the first president of the University of Chicago, William Harper, announcing the coming of the very much needed specialists in educational guidance at College level. The listing of founder events proposed by Borow continues in the following way:

1906: Eli Weaver publishes *Choosing a Career*, first magazine in the world dedicated to this topic.

1908: The Vocational Office of Boston opens its doors, with Frank Parsons as a director.

1909: William Healy founds the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute in Chicago. This entity has as its goal the occupational reorientation of marginal youth, more than psychotherapy practice.

1909: F. Parsons's postum writings are published (*Choosing a Vocation*), dedicated to the relationships between motivated work and the ways for its achievement.

1910: The first North American Congress in Guidance is held, unique, for that reason in a planetary scale, in the city of Boston.

1911: The University of Harvard organizes the first Vocational Guidance university course, in charge of Meyer Bloomfield.

1913: In Grand Rapids, the National Association of Vocational Guidance is founded, in which the counselor's conditions of formation are set.. If this chronology is taken in times that preceded and postceded the Great World War, one has:

1938: United State's Office of Education creates in its interior, the Service of Information and Professional guidance, with Harry Jager as the director.

1939: The novel *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* is published.

1942: The first *History of the Vocational Guidance is published*, written by psychologist John Brewer.

1946: The George-Barden Law authorizes the use of federal funds for vocational guidance.

1951: The American Association of Counseling and Student Guidance is founded.

Although, like it was indicated, the history of the American University should be

appealed for the localization of the pioneer acts in vocational guidance, the creation in Europe, Canada, Japan and Latin America of degrees in psychology makes practically impossible a fair and policentric enumeration starting on the fifties. However, and continuing Borow's chronology, the report that Gilber Wrenn wrote in 1962 on the request of the Commission on Guidance of Northamerican Schools, should be mentioned. Its title was *The counselor in a changing world*, and it proposed the training criteria for the vocational counselor, approved by Congress in 1964 and also unpublished in relation to the other nations of the world.

The academic and professional events that have been related could be enlarged based on primary sources, but such historiographic task is beyond the purposes of this work. The complex relationships among the educational psychologist's roll -and, frequently, the industrial one- and vocational guidance can be approached from the first focus of interest -the psychologist's roll - or from the second -the V. G. in itself -, given that the correspondences between them are not isomorphic. It should be taken into account that V. G. was born, in its country of origin, as a professional activity bonded to several disciplines at the same time: education, psychology, sociology, psychiatry, counseling as a smaller but autonomous career. Helping practices place's inside psychology careers in United States during the first half of the century has obtained special attention in A. Blanco, C. Di Doménico and G. Pineda (1993) writings, dedicated to summarize the American congresses on academic training. The review of these congresses' reports allows to notice the successive direction changes in the North American professional psychology and to infer the vocational guidance destination -as an specialty- on each stage. However, a historical screening according to our interests will center in the Latin American world and, inside it, in our own academic and union traditions.

### **Latin American and Argentinean context**

The emergence of Vocational Guidance in the United States, as that of the own psychology, obeyed very complex structural factors -social and economic ones-, the elucidation of which requires the participation all social sciences experts. In this work it is important to remember that the West's most powerful industrial bourgeoisie is the one which was in charge of transforming into interventive technology the aseptic arsenal of knowledge coming from those "laboratories of brass apparatuses", born in Germany but in any place expanded (quantitatively and qualitatively) like in the United States. Kurt Danziger, in a book already mentioned, reports the underdevelopment of the North American university system in relation to the European at the end of the XIX century, and the effort of the directing classes to over-compensate the professionalization

absence in superior education. Harvard, for example, possessed only 19 Ph. D. among their 189 faculty members, while Columbia had hardly 6 over 88. In that context, little costed to accept Thorndike's proposal of creating a science capable to intervene in "the complex activities of civilized society, and the motives that control work and capital's actions"(1979). The "social reform" movement, which occurred in the first decades of the century, which was dedicated to consolidate a capitalism with "harmonized" social classes, fomented the creation of institutions of public help, stately regulated, in which the recently conceived professional psychologist found spaces to work in. One of those spaces, maybe the most important one, was the orientation in the educational and labor fields.

The Latin American context requires the same mention to the structural factors underlying the psychology's appearance, and with it, vocational orientation appearance. In Rubén Ardila's opinion (1986), from the beginning of the 50's, moment of the widespread creation of psychologist's careers in the region, also in Latin America it is necessary to speak of a second industrial revolution and of a consequent focusing in organizations -not in individuals and their abilities -, in human resources understood as a capital and in motivated work as a productivity's guarantor. In this sense, and leaving aside the deep classes' difference that tipifies it, Brazil has been, as the battering ram of capitalist industrialization, the initiator of professional orientation. F. Seminerio (1978) was one of the speciality's historians, as well as one of their pioneers followed by the versatile E. Mira y López, -founder of the continent's most complete Institute of Selection and Professional Orientation-. Born in Santiago de Cuba (1896) and deceased in Brazil (1964), Mira y López, former chief of the Psychophysiology Laboratory of Barcelona's Institute of Professional Guidance in 1919, created in 1947 in Río de Janeiro the Institute of Selection and guidance, and the following year organized the first Latin American counselor and psychotechnician training course, with strong repercussion in the whole subcontinent. Brazilian psychologists, the first ones in obtaining legal recognition of the profession (1962) appropriated the intellectual and institutional inheritance of Mira y López, mainly of the Brazilian Association of Applied Psychology, born in 1949 and of the prestigious magazine *Arquivos Brasileiros de Psicologia Aplicada* (Ardila, 1971).

According to O. Espín and R. Renner, the vocational orientation has been, like in the United States, one of the first areas that obtained public recognition and governmental support, developing, therefore, swiftly (1974). In Ardila's opinion (1986) there are in Latin America two basic orientations: the one centered in clinical strategy, which has in R. Bohosla<sup>y</sup>sky its most typical exponent (1970) and other, "modern and global", procurator of a more holistic approach that Bohosla<sup>y</sup>sky's (the later based almost exclusively on

psychoanalysis) and the former well represented in A. Mansilla's proposal (1973). This author combines clinical behavioural elements, psychometrics and strategies of adaptation from counseling, to South American social atmosphere. Ardila also reminds that the transcendancy that governmental organisms grant to guidance (academic, vocational-occupational, professional and personal) reflects in important publications as *La orientación educativa y profesional in Chile, Guatemala, Panama and Venezuela* (1967), on the part of O. E. A. and in events like the Latin American Congress of Orientation whose *Memorias* have been published by the International Association of guidance (1971). As G. Marín consigns it (1987), psychodynamic psychotherapies and psychometry constituted, in the region, psychology and psychologists' points of consolidation, which in their conflicting and precarious beginnings assumed themselves as psychometers or as therapists. Vocational guidance, having the psychologist as its impeller and practically only officious possessor, shows in its beginnings this double slope, in some nations dissociated in development phases (from therapy to psychometry, or vice-versa), and in others integrated in eclectic strategies. If the sources of both resources are revised, it isn't hard to identify pedagogues' actions in the psychometric field and those of physicians in the psychotherapeutic one. Pedagogues, physicians and philosophers were the educators of the first Latin American psychologists, in the fragile departments that, housed in Philosophy, Humanities or Arts academic structures, gestated the university degree in the '40 and ' 50.

Argentina, although with its own profiles, shares the association of professional guidance with the creation of the university degrees, typical of Latin America. As H. Klappenbach has indicated (1994), from the end of the '30 and because of the Second World War, a precarious industrial development had begun headad to the imports' substitution. This process accelerated starting from the military blow of 1943, as for the creation of the protective's National Council of Postwar, as mainly for the two five-year industrial promotion plans (1947 and 1953) designed by Perón's government. The purposes of these plans were to increase industrial productivity and the equilibrium among social classes. In that context, the bases of the Argentinean labor sector are enlarged with migrants of rural areas and the necessity to reconvert and modernize a type of manpower not very qualified for industrial requirements was imposed. The legal translation of these facts can be noticed, among other aspects, in the inclusion in the Constitution of 1949 of the professional guidance, presented as a social roll that the goverment must protect in order for youths to channel their natural aptitudes in professional activities and, by de way, foster social development. Within that frame, Klappenbach notes (1996), the psychotechnia and the vocational orientation will conform the conceptual marrow of the first centers of psychologists' formation: Tucumán's, liderado for

Benjamín Aybar and Oscar Oñativia; Mendoza's, planned by Horacio Rimoidi, trained out of the country, and San Luis's, liderado and organized by Plácido Horas.

At this time, thus, and as L. Rossi has suggested it (1995), some attempts from the beginning of the century, like the movement of labor guidance born in the Congreso del Trabajo of 1923 and the incipient emanated psychometry of Víctor Merchant and Horacio Piñero's laboratories, reflower in a more appropriate social ground.

The typical speculative pathologism of Argentinean positivism and Coriolano Albertinni's style vitalist philosophism that prevailed in the teaching of psychology in Argentina, are substituted by the specificity that impose the psychometric studies, the industrial sociology, the standardization of foreign mental tests and the progressive entrance of properly psychological literature. These topics are already noticed in the Congress reunion of 1954, in Tucumán, in which the creation of the degree in psychology is approved, and they constitute the reason why the Argentinean government accepted the creation of the first curricula, in which design experts in guidance and psychometry always participated (Roselli, 1983; Rossi, 1994).

Although the Argentinean vocational guidance is in the base of the foundation of psychologist's careers in the '50 for the socioeconomic reasons that were mentioned, there are antecedents, attainable from diverse sources, that explain the presence of the specialty from beginnings of the century. Based in A. Foradori (1944) and in R. Gottself (1969), only some are indicated:

- Instituto de Psicotécnica y Orientación Profesional. Impulsed by socialist lawyer Alfredo Palacios and with Carlos Jesinghaus's direction it is created, with government support, in 1925. Gregorio Fingermann, a pioneer of Argentinean psychology, succeeded Jesinghaus, who had been W. Wundt disciple, the only one residing in Latin America. Jesinghaus had affirmed, in a Work Congress carried out in Rosario that the vocational-occupational guidance was destined "to improve economy and public health." As Dina Edelmuth has observed (1997), the Instituto de Psicotecnia and Orientación Profesional constitutes an almost unknown antecedent of the creation of the psychology career in Buenos Aires, since its graduated in psychotechnic were the first psychology professionals which extended their activity outside laboratories and at the margin of philosophy as discipline.
- Laboratorio de Psicología, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas. Dedicated mainly to professional guidance, created in 1926 by José Alberti in Buenos Aires.
- Laboratorio del Instituto del Profesorado de Paraná. Also organized by Jesinghaus, in charge of educational guidance and initiating it as a tradition in the country, from 1927.
- Instituto Psicotécnico Dirección de Escuelas de Mendoza. Created in 1940, and in

charge of vocational guidance; directed by pedagogue Irma B igl ian i, and as it shows, with state funds.

- Oficina de Psicotecnia y Orientación Profesional de la Comisión Nacional de Aprendizaje y Orientación Profesional. Consolidated in 1940 with a psychotecnia division, in charge of Gregorio Finger mann. Created by engineer Gómez Araujo, this public office speaks about government support to guidance before Perón's government.

- Sección de Psicotecnia del Instituto Cultural Joaquín V. González de Rosario. Founded in 1940, this entity has among its pioneers: Erminda B. of Lambruschini and Carlos Lambruschini, inspirers of the first psychology career, planned fourteen years later in Rosario.

Many other outstanding institutions are quotable, and together they highlight the gravitation that the vocational and professional guidance had in the establishment of Argentinean psychology. More times than not with government support, the V.G.. was glimpsed in the country and in the rest of Latin America like the connection link between the educational system and the world of work, two areas that no government can disregard. As it has been said, most of the government support obtained by the first university grades are owed to the prestige that psychological knowledge won thanks to this kind of activity.

From the counselor's point of view, many obstacles had to be overcome since the degrees were created. The technology available didn't exceed the purely psychometric approaches, centered in differential and factorial psychology and psychographology principles. As A. Lopez Bonel I i has observed (1989), it was necessary to widen the reference frames including theoretical contributions coming from evolutionary, clinica, personality and motivation psychologies. Who chooses, how and why, were data as important as those given by intelligence, aptitudes or interests tests.

### **Contemporary crossroads**

Vocational guidance seems to abandon, progressively, its anchorage in the psychologist's profession to be exercised thus, by professionals and technicians of very diverse lineage. At the same time, it is noticed a distancing from adscriptions, sometimes dogmatic, to some omni-explanatory system. M. Casullo and A. Cayssials (1994) based in B. Thompson, F. Borgen and C. Celso, plead for the adoption of a "postparadigmatic" attitude, this is, for a bigger emphasis in interventive effectiveness that in the adhesion to aprioristic models of the mind. Anyway, the evaluation of intervention's effects tends to validate or to reject theoretical proposals, or to partially reformulate them.

The current unfolding lines of the discipline are signed for economic, cultural,

professionals, educational and political factors. As it has been analyzed by A. G. Watts (1999), the development of the guidance is uneven, in the international plane, because of varied factors. Industrial and "postindustrial" expansion, for example, promotes the development of this practice promoting of individual election; pre-industrial communities, with their manpower scarce division and their tradition of prescribed roles usually allow themselves the absence of the service. Democratic systems, at the same time, and not the totalitarian ones, conform the ground where vocational guidance germinates and expands. In them it is also conceivable a type of social mobility that doesn't obey only to structural factors but to values and beliefs, as those that social actors "building their own destination" hold. The professional corporations also impact, according to Watts, in guidance's destinations. Thus, its developers' conditions as educators, psychologists or managers mark defined biases to the chore, sometimes incorporating it to school services, other times linking it with the labor market or with the persons's self-fulfillment (p. 208). In any case, it should be recognized that this discipline, on the contrary of others as "personal-social" counseling, social work or human relationships (RRHH), possesses a plurality of axes of interest, definitions often antagonic and diverse expectations from governments.

In relation to this last thing, it is important to remember, as S. Conger (1999) has made it, that the world agencies of social and economic development usually make recommendations about the public utility of the orientation. The International Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as much as the UNESCO, has prioritized the social-industrial aspects over the psychological ones, although without forgetting these. In general, these entities advise the union of responsibilities between the labor authorities and the educational ones, they propose a basic currículum for the counselor profession, they prefer the extension from the service to the whole population and not only to those subjects with decisional conflicts, and they suggest governments to provide wide infrastructures –human and material - for the establishment of the service. The transnational organisms as OECD or UNESCO define vocational guidance as a chore as continuous and renewable as education itself; at the same time, it is frequent that they request systems of formal evaluation, this is, studies about processes and results' effectiveness.

The vocational orientation discusses, then, its own epistemic space, its place in the education and work worlds, its institutional insertion ways and its links with ideological and political interests. Without discussing its relevance, there are problems still alive that could be identified in the origins and born, mainly, from the cultural and professional heterogeneity of its territory. Latin America also harbors these disciplinary problems that have been accentuated by political disruptions, by its educational systems

in consolidation, by the precariousness of its economies and by its persistent social asymmetries.

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