

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE: A STUDY OF GRADUATED IN THE U.N.L.P., THEIR INSERT IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD

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Summary

The studies on the formation of psychology's professors(2) were locating us in the construction process of the professional knowledge in professors but in psychologists that exercise the teaching too, visualizing the paper that built knowledge assumed between both environments (academic and professional) and the relationship between them.

From this perspective we consider to focus the investigation in the construction of the psychologist's professional knowledge graduated in the UNLP. The educational field is defined as the context to approach to this process. Then we observe that the number of graduated in psychology and students next to graduate who decide to finish the Faculty in order to work in the educational field is increasing.

The purpose of the project is to deepen in some of the aspects that make to the psychologist's professional development that has been inserted and/or is inserted in the educational field, contributing to specific knowledge regarding the construction of the professional knowledge. The historical, social and institutional crosses and their consequences take special relevance in that process.

The project refers to a qualitative investigation focus. We try to continue an understanding and interpretation logical starting from locating a study object: the development of the psychologist's professional knowledge.

Key words: Professional knowledge; Psychologist; Educational field

Introduction

Considering the references of Pacenza (2001) that in the case of the psychologists exist logical characteristics of the Psychology field that are effect of certain conditions and that influence in their practices, impacting in a particular way in their professional development process, we think that the psychologists(3) professionalization process of the graduated in the UNLP is crossed and influenced by a particular local configuration in the psychological field and even in the educational one and it has been linked in certain times.

On the world stage, in the beginnings of the `60 there were many references to a second scientific revolution that propitiated the conformation of a "learned society", framed in the postindustrial movement that was organized around the professional

competition. That second scientific revolution put of relief a new valuation of the knowledge and the scientific abilities, as well as its intervention in terms of productive force (Schön, 1998).

The configuration of the psychological field finds common factors in the western world and others "idiosyncratic" types which are characteristic of the "Argentinean case", Dagfal (2009). Among the common ones we can make a reference to the diffusion of the mental health speeches coming from Psychoanalysis and Social sciences in order to replace the hygienism. In the middle of a deep social transformation, the psychology developed clinical and preventive perspectives based on a new paradigm.

Most of the psychologists included in the analyzed sample(4) in this work begun their professional trajectories in a social, cultural and labor context with the mentioned characteristics.

The information of the psychologists interviews who were graduated in different times, it has allowed us to observe how the own logic characteristic of the psychology field crossed by social, cultural and political conditions, has impacted and it impacts nowadays in the psychologist's labor insert, particularly in the educational field.

Specifically in the county of Buenos Aires, the insert place of our graduated, the implementation of public policies in education, health and justice, improved the creation of positions and functions in such areas as educational formation, special education, vocational orientation, kindergarden education, minority, from where they deployed and built their professional knowledge.

The analysis of the material makes sense if we context it in the particularities configurations of the Psychology like discipline and profession, in our country in general and in particular in the UNLP. We consider also the relationship that establishes in this process the discipline with the educational field.

Development

The psychologist's "professionalization" process

The profession is understood as a structural unit of the modern society that condenses elements and processes of the social, politics and ideological reality where it is bounded, at the time that is formally established and legitimated by the sector that constituted it.

The conformation of the profession concept is linked closely to the professional formation as long as "group of social processes of preparation and conformation of the fellow, referred to precise ends for a later acting in the labor environment" (Fernández Pérez, 2001, p.4).

The formation process and the changes in the way of being and staying in the profession are called "professionalization". It is a process that is structured starting from the practical knowledge, it is based on the sense-meaning that is given to the work and it supposes the knowledge that guide the action-interventions, the interaction with the context of intervention and the ways that the being and staying in the profession assumes to be converted or not in a competent professional. This process of transformations and changes at personal and professional levels is not unaware to the social, institutional and cultural ones, considering all of them in historical contexts.

The configuration of the psychology like discipline and profession in the UNLP

Under this consideration we return to Vezzetti (1996) who outlines that the history of the psychologists in Argentina begins at the end of the fiftieth decade, with the creation of the university careers of Psychology and the rising professional organization, influenced by the tension of the psychology field with others, particularly Medicine and Psychoanalysis. Until that moment a psychology history was preceded as long as was incorporated as a discipline to the university teaching and also a psychological speech that arises like means to interpret the social reality and as knowledge that when being applied it can solve public order problems.

In our case, the Psychology career in the UNLP is created in 1958 although the discipline came occupying a central place in the academic field from the beginning of the century. It stands out particularly, Victor Mercante's work. He worked from 1906 and during twenty years for the consolidation of an experimental psychology, an unavoidable fundament of a scientific pedagogy. It is important to highlight this aspect that makes a local configuration of the discipline field: the psychology-education relationship. In other universities as the Buenos Aires one, the positivist tradition around the discipline was related with the medical clinic.

In the '40 decade, while the academic psychology was characterized to be eminently theoretical and markedly non positivist especially in the most outstanding universities, in the county of Buenos Aires, the State develops an applied psychology inside the educational field, not centered in the pedagogic point but in the professional orientation.

In 1948 the Institute of Educational Psychology and Professional Orientation of the General Direction of Schools is created. In 1949 it becomes a Provincial Direction and then the Psychology and School Social Attendance Direction. In that context the students of the last year of the primary school were classified according to their aptitudes, physical conditions and intelligence to be able to carry out an appropriate "professional advice", starting from an upgraded psychology by the adoption of

statistical methods and the employment of psychometric and proyective tests. For this purpose, a school for "technicians in psychology" was created to form the teachers that became in that way Educational Assistants, "lance tip" of the psychology in the educational system (Dagfal, 1998).

Some years later the psychology consolidates its bases in the school stage from the application of development and social maturity scales to the children that enter to first grade, contributing to impose the homogenization logic as approaches of school organization.

The studies plans of the recently created Career of Psychology included, in the case of the UNLP, grade specializations in educational, labor and clinic. The first plans orientation was plural and eclectic. The experimental paradigm that governed the subjects of the basic cycle (sustained especially by Fernanda Monasterio¹ and linked particularly to the application in the educational field) was converting quickly to an eclectic synthesis that included the phenomenology, the existentialism, the French psychology and the psychoanalysis crossed by social restlessness as axis (Dagfal, 1998).

In the country, at the end of the fifties and beginning of the sixties took place some debates that opposed the experimental and naturalistic perspectives of the psychology to other ones influenced by the psychoanalysis and the social sciences. Those influences had bigger incidence locating the Argentinean psychologists out of the investigation circuits, at the time that inspired more or less by psychoanalytical kleinian positions, they were overturned to the private clinical practice and to work in other areas like the education, the orientation. (Dagfal, 2009).

The clinical practice tendency created a permanent debate between psychologists and doctors about the place of the first ones in relation to the psychotherapeutic treatment. The psychologists fight for the exercise of their profession begun in the sixties and extended to 1985 when the Psychologist Professional Exercise Law was promulgated. The interruption of the democratic life among 1976 and 1983 affected the psychologist formation due to the suspension of inscriptions and closing of careers. With the returning of the democracy and the reopening of the careers in 1983, the search of autonomy inside the universities strengthened the professional profile in the formation without leaving aside the scientific activity.

Professional practices and professional knowledge construction in the psychologists

The professional practices are considered as one of the intermediate ways of knowledge among the daily and scientific knowledge. The comparison of the scientific knowledge with the daily one requires to assist to "the epistemological peculiarities of the social sciences, of the technical knowledge and of the professional knowledge, where we can find academic and discipline knowledge such as a tacit know-make one" (García,1997,p.65).

To face a given problem, the professional shows an important ability in his activity: the knowledge of the taking decisions process and its regulation (de la Fuente Arias, 2003). This knowledge would be progressive and personally built when the professional practice has to be significant and functionally to solve real problems. This knowledge would have a strategic experience component and it would require the application of many sources of simultaneous information to identify, to evaluate and to intervene appropriately in a problem. "It is not a mere mechanical application of some academic general principles, but, rather, the generation of a new reprocessed knowledge, starting from the real and contextual conditions of the professional situation in question, in an inductive way, until building the own explanatory principles. For their construction it requires to have developed heuristic scripts and real strategies of resolution of different problems. Definitively, a process of professional investigation or investigation on the own action, where the personal abilities to facilitate the professional acting are included" is being supposed for that kind of construction (de la Fuente Arias, 2003, p.5).

Schön (1998) refers to the ambiguity of the word "practice". The author points out that in some occasions this remits to the type of things that are done, to the type of people that is involved, to the variety of cases that are supposed. But he also mentions an experimental or repetitive activity in order to increase a competition. The author thinks the professional practice as the performance of a variety of professional situations. Sometimes this performance includes repetition elements.

The stability of the practice conduces to an increasing tacit, spontaneous and automatic, specialized knowledge. Many times a high specialization grade leads to a perspective limitation. In these cases the reflection is used to emerge and to criticize the tacit understandings giving a new sense to the situations.

"When a professional meditates from and about his practice, the possible objects of his reflection are as varied as the types of phenomena before him and the knowledge systems from the practice that are contributed by him. He can meditate on the norms and tacit appreciations that underlie in a thought, or on the strategies and implicit theories in a behavior model. He can also meditate on the feelings regarding a situation that has taken him to adopt a peculiar course of action, on the way the problem that is

trying to solve is framed, or on the role that has built for itself into a wider institutional context" (Schön, 1998, p. 67).

The inquiry about the problems that face psychologists graduated in the U.N.L.P in their professional practice into the educational field allows us to visualize the situations that raise the professional intervention as well as the crosses and conditions that configure them.

Methodology

This investigation uses a predominant qualitative methodology, based on an understanding and interpretation logic around the study object: the development of the psychologist's professional knowledge graduated in the UNLP, their insert in the educational field.

This study object is located in relation to a wider field of objects that includes: the academic formation, the professional formation, the insert in the educational field, the professional practices, assisting to their multiple relationships inside a particular social and historical context.

The investigation process leaves aside the lineal search and deepens the problem starting from the permanent gathering and analysis of data. In this way the investigation process doesn't suppose a succession of predetermined actions but rather assists to the multiplicity of aspects that determine and characterize it.

As we have already advanced, the reflections and conclusions presented in this paper, belong to a sample conformed by ten psychologists graduated in the UNLP among 1965 and 1994. It is a case-type sample as long as the information facilitates to analyze the values, meanings and own characteristics of a professional group: psychologists who were labor inserted or actually insert in the educational field.

The inquiry was carried out through genetic interviews with the following axes: aspects of the election and professional formation, the labor insert and professional trajectory and the transformations and implies in this process. Also it was focused on the professional practice, the problems that the professional faces in the educational context and the experience value when summing up the interventions.

Results analysis

Of the ten interviewed psychologists eight graduated before 1976, one in 1977 and another in 1994 (this had begun the career in 1971, she left and restarted in 1984). All of them studied the career with the study plans of: 1958-1969-70-1984.

The sample elected the following orientations: two are labor psychologists, two are clinical psychologists and three are educational psychologists. Only one studied and

obtained the title in two orientations: clinic and educational. At the moment of graduation in three of the cases, the study plan didn't offer orientations to choose.

Nine of them have teacher formation, one is mercantile expert. In the group of teachers, one was an Educational Assisting and another was Criminological Assisting before beginning their university studies. Three are teachers in psychology.

Seven register professional exercise in the private sphere: five do it in the educational field, (learning problems - vocational orientation) and two of them in the clinic field.

Eight work or have worked in university teaching reaching in a case Regular Professor's position, in three cases "Enclosed" Professor and in one Boss of Practical Works. All of them in subjects of the educational field, that is: Educational psychology, vocational Orientation, genetic Psychology and Didactic and practical Planning of the teaching in psychology.

Two of the interviewees studied during the military dictatorship the last subjects of the career, showing the academic deterioration and the institutional conditions in which obtained the title.

All carried out professional practice in school cabinets of the DGC and E; three of them continued in cabinets of University high schools.

Most accessed to administration positions in educational institutions in the different teaching levels and in the ministerial sphere.

The inquiry about the most significant subjects in the curricular plan of their grade formation, allows us to point out:

"...A strong relationship among the election of the subject and the professor's figure that occurs in subjects of the general formation as well as in the specialized one.

"The election of the subjects also depends on the orientation that was taking the graduate in the professional field and the granted significance becomes of its trajectory and professional development."

"In some cases the valuation arises starting from the promotion of specific practices, the investigation team inclusion, the approaching to psychological attendance services, psychopedagogic cabinets, among others."

"The elections are also clipped starting from the interest in specific topics: psychological exploration, approach to the child psychology, mental psychological disabilities, among others."

When we focus in the own professional practices, in the faced problems and approached in the educational context, as well as in the value experience summing up

the interventions, in the sample group we observe that only two of the ten interviewees refer as problems those that require the professional intervention frequently: the school failure, the aggressiveness and violence at school, among others.

Most of the psychologists identify the complexity in which the psychologist's work in educational institution as a problem. This complexity settles in the singularity of each case; in the expectations made around the psychologist (... "the idea is that you will certify what they believe that happens, the deficiency, the failure, endogenous problems, they cannot see the complexity"...); in the tensions among the norms and the professional belief about their actions; the difficulty to be positioned; the overvalue of the psychometric tests by directors and teachers, and the own professional contradictions regarding the use of technical instruments of psychological evaluation; the lack of professional's supervision.

In the case of boarding resolution ways of the problems that appear in the professional practice, the answers highlight the search of solutions starting from the work in groups and the inclusion of the "others perspective". The reflection, the permanent formation, the supervision, the professional consult are also valued. With a bigger level of specificity some of the interviewees outline "to go outside the cabinet", to work with the parents and all the institutional actors. We observe that even when each interview answers from his particular experience, something common appears when thinking of the resolution problems, "to think with other" as a way to approach and to intervene professionally.

In relation to the experience in the professional knowledge construction the reference to the uncertainty appears as something that energizes, that generates looking for others consult and supervision. It is considered that the experience charges value whenever generates the possibility to meditate, the idea that experience is necessary but not enough if it doesn't dialogue with thought. This possibility shows the relationship among professional and academic work.

The experience is linked to the practice accompanied by interrogation and not to the practice as routine: if there is interrogation there would be a transformation possibility. A reference is made to the possibility of testing the knowledge that is being construct therefore the experience assumes a validation character.

Finally, there are divergent positions for the time-experience relationship in two of the interviewees: in the first one the experience appears as accumulation, a product of many years. Meanwhile, the second prioritize the experience as a situation that gives the possibility to put in relationship theory with practice.

Final reflection

The analysis allows us to appreciate how the professional development of the interviewed psychologists has been crossed by the historical conditions which framed their formative itinerary, their insert and the professional development.

The value that the psychological knowledge has had during the '50 in the Educational System of the Buenos Aires county is evident, as long as the applied science has played an important paper in this group, in its majority teachers that chose to enlarge their formation trajectories, in some cases like technical workers (Educational Assistant / Criminological Assistant) and professionals (Psychologists / Psychology teachers) that found quickly in that environment the labor insert place and professional development that, in most of the cases, influenced their professional itineraries.

It is also necessary to point out that this trajectories find common features, that is: professional development linked to educational environment in institutional organizations of the DGC and E or the UNLP; professional insert in relation to the teaching, to the psychological intervention and the institutional administration; interest in the clinic as a perspective to approach the educational problems and in some cases the professional insert in both fields: clinical and educational.

We could think that those coincidences remit in some point to the particular configuration of the Psychology field in the local level. On one hand the psychology development "in parallel" at the sphere of the provincial educational system and, for another in the university context, it is reorganized in terms of practices and knowledge built in professional trajectories that evidence the necessary relationship between both fields.

The educational field acquires an established force on the activity of its actors and the psychologist wonder about the singularity of the case and the school homogenization context. The insert of the interviewed psychologists was given in a mark of tensions among what was expected and what they considered that they should do, or among what was expected and what they could do according to their formation. That occurred on the opening stage of a labor field insert (very different to the actual situation). A lot was necessary to do, to structure, to define for the psychologist's function at school. The interviewed psychologists answer locate us in front of professional practices of strong evaluative pregnancy generated by a guided demand toward diagnosis, classification, norm application and orchestrated through psychological procedures of measure.

In some references a constant threat of "non place" appears for the psychologist designated as "educational assistant", "school guide"; would it be an intention of delimiting the role, of limiting the unfolding of its professional competitions? The consequences are expressed in the difficulties to build the psychologist's identity that

makes their insert in the educational field, to be positioned in a place regarding the contradictory and ambivalent representations that have been built. In one of the interviews words "the belief that the psychologist can do everything or that he is not able to do anything."

Through the interviews we have been able to come closer to the psychologist's professional practice in the educational institution and to the always changing and dynamic situations of the school day-to-day. Their interventions imply the knowledge built in the grade formation, in the work with "the other ones", in the permanent upgrade, in the reflexive reconstructed experience.

Notes

1. Professors of the Humanities and Education School, National University of La Plata (UNLP).
2. "The psychology professors formation at the UNLP" (1998-2000); "The conversion of the psychological knowledge: the knowledge, their mediations and the actors" (2000-2003); "The Psychology teaching and learning: a study of the educational practice in professors and beginners" (2004-2007). Incentive Program at UNLP. Directress: Elsa R. Compagnucci.
3. Ten psychologists graduated in the UNLP among 1965 and 1994 were interviewed using a genetic interview.
4. Spanish Doctor of the commission that projected the Study Plan of the Psychology Career at the UNLP Boss of the Department of Psychology and Regular Teacher among the years 1958 and 1964.

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