

# Training and Professional Practice in Work and Organizational Psychology

## Formação e Exercício Profissional em Psicologia das Organizações e do Trabalho

### Formación y Práctica Profesional en Psicología Organizacional y del Trabajo

Producing scientific knowledge is a permanent challenge for the theoretical, methodological and technological development of science. In turn, disseminating this knowledge in society, through training processes and professional activities, is a necessary and relevant condition for the development of professions (Cruz et al., 2021).

Science and profession are social and historical institutions, which have become inseparable. This has become more apparent since the 19th century, with the dissemination of the role of scientific rationality in understanding reality, and with technical and technological advances (Cupani, 2005). Both result from individual and collective efforts to systematize knowledge, building understanding of perspectives and strategies in the search for solutions to human challenges. They act as components of a “transmission leash”, one frequently transferring power to the other, although there is no integral interdependence between them. For example, research projects can be based on problems of professional practice and this can benefit from the findings of these projects.

There are striking characteristics of a profession and its professionals. A profession is essentially a set of activities, based on a systematic body of scientific knowledge, and on practices adhering to a code of ethics (Sheehan, 1994). Or, yet, it can be defined as an occupational group, organized into relatively autonomous corporations - due to their self-regulatory capacity - and which provides specialized services to society (Abbott & Meerabeau, 2020; Crompton, 1990). Professionals, in turn, are guided and motivated by assumptions, ideals, methods, standards of conduct and obligations about what to do, why to do it, how to do it and what results are expected to be achieved in their technical specialties. As a result, they assume individual responsibilities - eventually multiprofessional - in providing the best services, resources and interventions aimed at individual, group and organizational demands.

Professions are distinguished from each other by the status of power, legitimized by the State and based on three fundamental pillars: the monopoly of the specialized and institutionalized area of knowledge, the technical autonomy for the professional to decide about his own work, and the credentialism as a way to access the profession (Freidson, 1998, 2001). The power of professions lies in their potential to recruit and train people, perform specialized training and technical accreditation, as well as create mechanisms to protect discretion, legality and legitimacy of professional practice (Abbott & Meerabeau, 2020). This power is continually challenged by the consistency and effectiveness of knowledge, methods and technology used in professional practices, as well as by the trust placed by society in the conduct

of professionals.

In this context, it is important to understand the role of psychology as an area of human knowledge, recognized as a science, applied as a regulated profession and integrated into the public image as an instrument for understanding human behavior in different contexts (Malvezzi, 2021). To affirm, therefore, that psychology is a science and a profession, in this case, emphasizes the legitimate and necessary dialogue between an area of scientific knowledge and a field of professional intervention, with different specialties and purposes, valued by an internal (psychologists) and external (users of the professional services) public. The result of this relationship is the organization of an academic community, oriented towards research, teaching and professional intervention processes, and the social institutionalization of the profession and its specialties, through regulations of professional practice (Cruz, 2016).

In the field of work and organizational psychology (WOP), this challenge is no different. Understanding and intervening in the scope of work and organizations, based on the *corpus* of knowledge and practices developed in psychology and related sciences, is a scientific and ethical commitment. Scientists and professionals who work in this area and specialty are part of a community that must contribute and guarantee the quality of knowledge produced and made available to society. This is the context in which the challenges of training professionals who intend to work or are currently working in the field of WOP are outlined.

In general, the main objective of professional education, whether basic or continuous, carried out essentially in specialized education/training institutions, is to promote the development of scientific and professional skills among learners of a profession and their respective specialties (Cruz, 2016). Training people to work professionally in the field of WOP is a complex activity, which basically involves 1) understanding the scientific role and social relevance of scientific knowledge and technologies produced in WOP; 2) demonstrating interest in sharing and integrating them into teaching processes and the development of people's skills; and 3) ensuring their effective application, bearing in mind the work/organizational contexts, the purposes of the intervention, the regulated practices and the technical and ethical responsibilities associated with the provision of professional services.

In Brazil, professional education in WOP must include a set of fundamental technical skills for professional practice, taking into account the main fields of WOP: work psychology, organizational psychology, people management and psychology, teaching and research in WOP. The general scope of these

competencies includes a) analyzing the needs and/or demands of clients/users and determining the objectives of the intervention; b) planning the assessment, evaluating and diagnosing individual, group, or organizational conditions relevant to the intervention; c) defining strategies, selecting and building methods and techniques necessary for the intervention; d) identifying, preparing and carrying out interventions considered appropriate to reach the objectives, based on the development of activities and the results obtained; e) establishing the adequacy of the intervention carried out to the solution of the initial problem; and f) providing feedback to customers/users of the service provision (SBPOT, 2020).

In the development and improvement of these competences in WOP, it is relevant to consider the relationships between knowledge and practical problems that come from the world of work and organizations (Rodríguez, 2017). It is a process of integration between theory-practice and reflection-action, of discovery and absorption of knowledge from the state of the art (up-to-date scientific production) and experience (personal or supervised), of development of verbal and written communication skills, of use of technical resources, and of identification with professional ideals and values in facing concrete demands (Arboleda & de Arboleda, 2012; Iñesta, 2006; Sierra-Barón, Mora, Quintero, & Santofimio, 2020).

Among the contemporary challenges to professional training in WOP remains the need for integration between scientific knowledge and the ability to respond to the demands of people and organizations. This need for integration produces the greatest possible amount of benefits for those involved. It is a process which can be improved based on the development of strategic thinking, technical skills, capacity for interdisciplinary interlocution and versatility to face complex problems. These aspects indicate the search for a qualified professional performance, whenever possible and ethically desirable.

The Psychology: Organizations and Work Journal (*Revista Psicologia: Organizações & Trabalho*, rPOT), since the beginning of this century, has become a mechanism of dialogue between science and professional practices in WOP, through the evaluation of the quality of knowledge produced and its dissemination in the community. The expectation is to continue contributing with the constant flow of qualified scientific and technical information, seeking to contribute to the training process and professional practice in WOP.

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