

**ORÍGENES DE LOS ESTUDIOS DE
PSICOLOGÍA EN ESPAÑA Y ESTADO
ACTUAL. DESARROLLO DE LA
PSICOLOGÍA EXPERIMENTAL**



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*Palmero Ediciones
Valencia*

Origins of Psychology studies in Spain and current status. Development of Experimental Psychology

(Orígenes de los estudios de Psicología en España y
estado actual. Desarrollo de la Psicología Experimental)

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*“Todas las olas del mar deben la belleza de su perfil a las que les
precedieron y se retiraron”*

*“Si he podido ver tan lejos es porque me he apoyado en las espaldas de
los gigantes anteriores”*

Frases citadas por el físico español Pedro Miguel Etxenike, Catedrático de Física de la Materia Condensada de la Universidad del País Vasco. La primera frase es de André Paul G. Gide (Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1947) y la segunda frase se le atribuye a Newton.

A Juan Pascual Llobell

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Previous comments

*COMMENTS. The content of the book can be expanded with new information. It is an "open book" that can be filled in with comments from readers, with new data and information, with lived experiences, with documentation, or with new images and photographs that are considered interesting to leave all that information in writing for future generations. Therefore, if you believe you can make a contribution and wish to participate in this book, you can write to M.Dolores.Frias@uv.es and your contribution will be incorporated into the supplementary material with your authorship and the date of the update in an annex of the book called "New materials of the book: contributions and experiences of other authors" (Chapter 11, with free access deposited on the Internet and repositories). It would be of great value to collect graphic material and personal experiences to bring the history of Psychology in Spain to life in general and, especially, the area of research methodology (statistics, psychometrics, and research designs).

It is important to remember the beginning of studies in Spain and the different curricula that have been implemented up to the present day (and probably future curricula), and here is an opportunity to record what happened. The book describes the academic situation up to the year 2019. The year 2020 marks a milestone in world history with the problem of the coronavirus (COVID-19), and the pages of this book are also open to tell how distance learning was adapted in a matter of weeks and what consequences it had on the training of students and on the teaching tasks of the faculty. It is not a book of the history of Psychology in a formal sense; we are not specialists in the subject of the history of Psychology. Its only intention is to record facts, academic training, experiences, and personal experiences told in a different way and supported by documentation, if possible, and, above all, we want to narrate the history of Psychology in Spain from the moment the faculties of Psychology were created in Spain (the 1980s). Its objective is for those moments to become known and analyzed by future experts in the history of Spanish Psychology and by future students. In addition, above all, we want to take advantage of the voice of the faculty who were living through those beginnings and the course of the studies of

Psychology. Professors who promoted Psychology in the early 1980s, who shaped it, who worked to create content for the curriculum with the aim of training professionals with a high scientific education. Many of them have retired, but their experiences continue to be of immeasurable value. We need to record their experiences and knowledge about those beginnings and the development of Psychology studies. Thank you for all your work and dedication. Also, from the Psychology students who can provide information or documentation. In the end, the students are the direct protagonists of our teachings, who receive the training and subsequently transmit it through their professional work.

Marcos Pascual-Soler
Dolores Frías-Navarro
Valencia, December 2019

Note: the translation of the “Previous comments” has been done with ChatGPT (3.5).

Reference

OpenAI (2023). Note: the translation of the ‘Previous comments’ has been done with ChatGPT (3.5). *ChatGPT 3.5* (November 02). [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

Origins of Psychology studies in Spain and current situation. Development of Experimental Psychology

The main contents of the “Research Designs in Psychology” course (generally known research methodology training programs as ‘*research methods*’), taught in the current Psychology Degree at the University of Valencia, have been a part of Spanish study plans since the beginning of the institutionalization of Psychology training in the 1960s within the “Experimental Psychology” course. At first, these contents were part of the training provided in the five-year Philosophy and Letters degree. Later, they were part of the Training in Philosophy and Letters and Education Sciences (Psychology section), and finally they were included in the five-year Psychology degree. This latter degree later became the Undergraduate Degree in Psychology in the 21st century with the Bologna Plan and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), leading to a new way of organizing university studies in Spain and activating new functions of students and professors in the teaching-learning process.

The main objective of the EHEA was to elaborate some common elements shared by all the countries to facilitate students’ mobility, allow the recognition of official degrees, and improve university education. Since then, university education has been structured in Undergraduate Degree, Master, and Doctorate. Students’ active and independent learning is stimulated, along with their training in contents and, especially, in competencies. In other words, the objective of the training is to develop the capacity to perform using the knowledge acquired (‘learning to learn’), and the European Credit (ECTS) is adopted as the measurement unit (1 ECTS = 25/30 hours of work). The lecture class as the main way to transmit knowledge (and perhaps the only way in the traditional teaching model) and the student’s passive behavior as the receiver of information have given way to a teaching-learning model. This model involves the active role of the

professor, who has to program continuing education activities, and, especially, the active role of the student, who also becomes a generator of knowledge when trying to respond to the continuing education activities directed by the professor.

Before the EHEA, the objectives of university education were mainly oriented toward teaching contents rather than competencies, based on lecture classes, and the instruction was organized in 3-year Diplomas, 5-year degrees, and Doctorates. The credit was understood as the number of teaching hours in the classroom (1 credit = 10 teaching hours). The Spanish adaptation occurs with Royal Decree 13/2007, the document that establishes the organization of official university education and regulates the structures of the Undergraduate Degree and the Master degree. The mid-level degrees, such as the Diploma and Technical Engineering, disappear and become 4-year Undergraduate Degrees with the EHEA. Most of the undergraduate degrees have 240 ECTS, divided into 60 ECTS per school year. In addition, the Final Project (TFG) is introduced as an obligatory assignment, as well as the *Practicum*, which involves external practice hours. Therefore, a student who wants to pass a complete Undergraduate Degree program will have to dedicate, on average, 1500 hours of work (60 ECTS x 25 hours x 40 weeks in the academic calendar) during the school year. Starting in 2010, all the Spanish universities adapted their training to the 4-year Undergraduate Degree.

The purpose of this book is to reflect on the origins of Psychology studies in Spain until arriving at the current Study Plan adapted to the EHEA. This historical review will take a special look at the development of the “Experimental Psychology” course, which, through various changes in the different study plans, has eventually become “Research Designs in Psychology” at the University of Valencia. It is present in all the Psychology training programs in Spain, although its title can vary, and it is generally represented by the “research methods” course in the study plans of all the universities. In the Psychology training programs, the name and contents of the Experimental Psychology course have gone from the study of basic psychological processes to the study of the research plan or design and its statistical analysis. The book also emphasizes the development of the area of Methodology of Behavioral Sciences, referring to its congresses and the Association of Methodology of Behavioral Sciences (AEMCCO).

The book has been developed in a moment of crisis in Science, in terms of a new stage of reflection and criticism about the quality of the results contributed by Science. At times, the crisis has been associated with a methodological crisis, but it is much more than that. The crisis had a strong starting point with problems in replicating statistically significant results and the so-called publication bias (a high percentage of studies with statistically significant results are published and practically none with null or non-statistically significant results). Currently, studies still have low statistical power, and a high rate of false positives is estimated. These are two crucial elements of this new interruption in Science, where the quality of the research design process has been seriously questioned, highlighting confirmation bias and a set of statistical fallacies that require the education and re-education of professionals, researchers, and professors. This is another important moment in the necessary self-correction in Science. Important changes are foreseen in the way of doing Science, the way of communicating the results of Science, and the way of evaluating and correcting Science. This change can probably only occur if the theory and the substantive foundation supporting the hypotheses acquires much greater relevance. The question is to improve the research method so that scientific integrity regains its relevance. The current research culture (“publish or perish”) must give way to a new culture that strengthens the quality of the findings obtained by adequately planning the study (the statistical power is fundamental when planning the study) and motivating replication and meta-research studies. Meta-research studies of the published results and meta-analyses will take on a prominent role after this crisis of Science because they will be active agents in reviewing research designs and their results. The transparency of the reports, open publication with peer-review processes before and after the publication, open publication of all the elements associated with the study, such as data and codes, or the promotion of collaborative teams instead of individual studies will define a new stage in scientific publications. Social networks will also aid in this change. Research method blogs are already a useful tool for reflecting on the quality of the results and work, based on the model of searching for better tests or evidence and providing reflections and meta-research analyses of the publications from the moment they are published in an open medium before their publication in a journal. For example, the blogs by Lakens

(<http://daniellakens.blogspot.com/>), Gelman and a group of collaborators (<https://statmodeling.stat.columbia.edu/>), Mayo (<https://errorstatistics.com/>) or Simonsohn, Nelson and Simmons (<http://datacolada.org/about>) maintain an open line of discussion and meta-research, and they have the potential to reach large audiences in an immediate and updated way. Blogs probably need some changes in their format in order to avoid conflicts or personal criticism, but their role in the future will also be quite relevant as a scientific communication tool. Meta-research centers are also gaining relevance as a medium to disseminate training contents and analyses of the quality of the results of Science, paying close attention to the detection of biases in studies. There is a need for research about research, as well as new analytical tools such as p value curves. For example, the Berlin Meta-Research Innovation Center, directed and founded in 2019 by John Ioannidis, stands out. Its origin can be found in the Stanford Research Innovation Center (METRICS).

In summary, our book tries to provide a summary of the development of Psychology studies in Spain, highlighting the Experimental Psychology course as the origin of the current research design subjects. The theoretical and methodological bases of the research design process are essential in carrying out the necessary scientific investigation. It is also necessary for researchers to know the implications of the method and apply it correctly. Furthermore, readers must filter the studies through critical or active reading in order to select those that contribute results with the highest degree of reliability. The scientific accumulation of knowledge requires the education and re-education of scientists, professionals, and consumers of scientific literature.

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