**WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS DISCLOSURE IN BRAZIL**

Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP) is a field of knowledge lodged within Social Sciences which emerged at the sunset of the XIX century to investigate the organization of work institutionalized as the industrial employment and the latter’s impact on human life. By now, it is a specialization of Psychology dedicated to explain the profusion of issues and problems arisen within the boundaries between organized work, the person and society. The history of WOP is not significantly distinct in most countries. In this paper WOP identity will be summarized together with its expression in the Brazilian context.

From its very beginning, WOP has evolved in a steady and fertile rhythm in most industrialized countries, turning very soon into an attractive field for academics and a useful tool for professional work. In Brazil, WOP is the second more frequent specialization of psychologists. It started around 1920 as part of the tools posed to support the rationalization of work. Hence, some institutes of research and consultancy were created together with the publication of several texts. Such a visible development was fostered by and grounded on the increasing and turbulent evolution of (industrial) organizations which left behind not only a trail of human problems but also the challenge of keeping human work performance at the pace of economic and organizational advancement. According to that, WOP started to study fatigue and tasks but soon reached problems outside of organizations, such as retirement and well- being. Now, in the dawn of the XXI century, after over one hundred years of production, WOP can be considered as a necessary instrument for the understanding and functioning of organizations and therefore of the society. Most of the concepts and theories developed within its realms (such as competence, commitment, leadership, quality of life and safety) are comprised as a routine in the agendas of business meetings as well as in the classrooms within which professionals are trained. In Brazil it has been a tradition to keep WOP psychologists permanently in the HRM teams.

The increasing complexity of the organization of work and the continuous unfolding of new problems in the quality of workers’ lives have turned the object of WOP integrated to society strategic issues as seen in the quest for better understanding of effective performance, for the prevention of accidents and for the enrichment of the work meaning. By answering to these demands WOP has not been directly assumed as responsible for the troubles in the working conditions but was pressured to put into light the causes of the organization of tasks, of the understanding of conflicts, of the production of work illnesses, of the track of accidents and of the several tensions and mismatches between organizations and other institutions such as family and social life. The literature gives plenty of empirical evidence of the WOP advancement on these issues. Since the late 50s WOP has contributed to these issues by producing critical and instrumental knowledge - two fundamental resources in the arena of problems stemmed from the organization of working life and production. Several known industrial projects in Brazil were rooted on the integration of both instrumental and critical knowledge disclosing that they should walk always together to enrich each other. One of these projects (see Malvezzi, 1988) aimed at overcoming the bad effects of hierarchical structure in the decision making process on the grounds of the shop floor knowledge developed in the realms of team building and leadership. Another (unpublished) project carried out in a metal industry worked the critical knowledge and diversity as fundamental data for the understanding of team effectiveness. Supervisors were trained to produce critical knowledge which was deployed as a kind of counterpoint for the decision making process. In both cases changes were grounded in the integration of both kinds of knowledge.

The evolution of WOP is better understood if the changes in the syntax of the work place are taken into account. The twentieth century was a peculiar context for the development of WOP because it sheltered distinct syntaxes about society and the organization of work, a condition which fostered the creation, validation, development and decadence of several concepts and instruments as mirrored in WOP from the era of tests and vocation to the era of portable skills and coaching. The syntax of the beginning of the XX century was characterized by the occupational differentiation of tasks within the building of dense structures and the reliance on rationalization of organized work. WOP was given problems to investigate such as the adaptation of workers to tasks and safety prevention. It had to presume the work place under the logic of structures as had to dialogue with professionals that understood the worker as a functional man. Whereas at the sunset of the XX century WOP was set to work within the syntax of flexibilization and networking where structures were dismantled, the employment bound weakened and the enterprises reshaped as loose networks. WOP was given boundaryless careers, psychological contracts and the quality of working life to scrutinize within contexts characterized by bloody competitiveness, emergent properties and the dictatorship of urgency. This syntax presumes the logic of flows and the understanding of the worker as a modular man. A recent investigation of the stage of evolution of HRM in Brazil has disclosed that about 50% of enterprises are still presuming the organizational context as organized by the syntax of structures and the functional man whereas only 25% are working presuming the context as organized by the syntax of flexibilization (see Tose, 1996). Accordingly, Brazil presents a context in which both syntaxes are found in the same enterprise.

Within that span of time and of these two opposite syntaxes, WOP built and updated its identity grounded on both its own internal differentiation (see the evolution of the concept of work motivation from need to value and desire) and the changes in the “other” (sciences) to which it has to be always referred to, such as Medicine, Sociology and Management. If one takes Cooper’s (1998) concept that differentiation always presume the participation of an “other”, the WOP identity today implies the integration with other fields such as Sociology, Management and Health as a point of confluence of challenges and as the recognition of its own object of study as a more complex than it used to be considered. WOP became a field of dialogue not only with other sciences but chiefly with other specialized areas of Psychology itself such as Social and Clinical Psychology. The policy of the State University of São Paulo allowing a multidisciplinary team of academics to be the supervisor of a PhD thesis confirms the recognition of the complexity of the field and the need of dialogue for the understanding of many problems related to organized work. Today, WOP psychologists are frequent examiners of PhD dissertations in other areas.

Also, some recent books published in Brazil give evidence of that evolution in WOP. Eduardo Davel’s (1995) ‘Human Resources and Subjectivity’ and Fernando Motta & Maria Ester Freire’s (2000) ‘Psychic Life and Organization’ are two issues which reveal WOP as a bulk of knowledge which aggregates concepts of other sciences. Both books aim at explaining the relationship between workers performance and life as products of the interdependence between organizational processes and individuals’ subjective conditions. Through the scrutiny of several problems (safety, culture, well-being and effectiveness) they analyze how managerial and individuals’ intimate psychological processes are intertwined being hardly understood apart from each other. Accordingly, they develop ideas and evidences on how strategies which are a significant feature of management are interrelated with personality, how performance is shaped by unconscious processes and how the latter are shaped by organizational structures and policies, showing that only a dialogue between Administration and Psychology can explain the organization of work. Accordingly, the identity of WOP is less defined by its boundaries with other sciences than by its integration with them, thus creating multilevel analyses.

That shared way of investigating organized work is also mirrored in the division of areas in HRM. In Brazil the HRM is roughly speaking partitioned into four great areas: development, health, rewards/ benefits and institutional relations. Psychologists are spread out in all these areas although most of them are deployed in the realms of development. This partition reveals a kind of community of technologies and theories of which WOP is a fundamental element. The implementation of Total Quality Management models gives evidence of such a community whose task is to explain the integration of subjective, technical, economic and social processes. None of these four areas fits into only one scientific field, disclosing that the recognition of complexity is changing the way problems are designed and dealt with. That trend in Brazil is reshaping the traditional boundaries between several professions.

Finally, it is easily recognized that WOP has not only produced for others (society) but also for improving itself. In order to react to the complex demands of globalized society, networks were created everywhere to serve both researchers and professionals. Brazil has been well developed in that aspect. In times like the present day competitive and technologically advanced society two conditions have been required by the understanding and the dealing with most of issues and problems: diversity and collective competencies. Unfortunately, there is no room in this paper, to discuss them. The networks fulfil both as it has been the case of WOP. The most highlighted of these networks in Brazil is the ANPEPP group (National Association of Researchers on WOP) whose main activity is the regular contact, to produce and share information, critical assessments, the production and the sharing of resources. The strategy of this group is a regular meeting every other year and the joint generation of knowledge that can be useful to WOP researchers and professionals. Two years ago, it produced a robust text book (see Zanelli et al., 2004) which systemized the main topics of WOP in Brazilian context. Presently, the ANPEPP group is finishing an empirical research to investigate the activities accomplished and positions held by Psychologists.

Looking at these 120 years of WOP’s existence (both in Brazil and elsewhere) it is not difficult to understand its role as a set of distinct eyes looking continuously at the subjective features of the organization of work. As such, WOP has been an instrument for the transformation of society because it has fulfilled the function of knowing, criticizing and creating.

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