

A VIEW OF THE WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN RESOURCES FIELD IN URUGUAY

Even though psychology and psychologist have been part of the Uruguayan modern life, it must be said too, that they had been battling and struggling for their legal recognition as a university undergraduate program, for many years; until August 1999 when the national parliament approved by law the psychology profession.¹

The relationship between Psychology and work and workers has more than a hundred years in Uruguay. However we can still say that it's a discipline in its infant stage. Their interventions and contributions, both at a professional and also an academic level, are far from other psychology areas, as clinical, social and educational.

Generally, universities used to include the WOP field, only as elective courses of undergraduate programs². If students once they finished their careers want to achieve deeper knowledge and organizational intervention skills, they pursue Human Resources Management or Organizational Analysts graduate programs, depending if they are looking for managerial or consultant positions.

In the last years the field has taken more relevance, and thanks to national grants and organizations support, academic research is taken place, in human capital and new technology, risks in the labor place, workers wellbeing and family balance.

LABOR MARKET AND HR PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

We can divide the history of Human Resources in Uruguay in three periods.

During the first one, there were almost no HR professional, neither HR departments. There were experienced practitioners that had worked within the firm, eventually working with

lawyers, but not trained managers, applying personnel practices exclusively limited to payroll control and payment as an auxiliary role to the general administration.

The early nineties have called for a managerial role more oriented towards a "profit-seeking" behavior, with more innovation-prone activities, more careful development of strategies, and managerial practices seeking to attain competitiveness in a more open economy. It is in this context that medium/large national and state owned companies were involved in "high performance practices" and in establishing a professional HR department. Usually, the HR professional profile more demanded was the psychological one with specialization in work and organizations and in HR practices (job analysis and description, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, etc)

Which are the biggest challenges for today's WOP professionals?

Important changes took place in Uruguay in the economic and regulatory environment, in particular in the labor relations system, characterizing the consequences of these changes on Human Resources Management practices and the role played by HR professional and department. Firms and organizations are looking for professionals not only trained in understanding individual and organizational behavior or classical "HR best practices", but also in other fields and disciplines as: economics, strategic management, statistics, marketing, labor relations, etc.

Uruguayan WOP/HR core or elective courses in undergraduate or graduate program should be revised in an unprejudiced way, taking into account today's new demands.

WOP professionals, to keep on track, must have the knowledge, skills and abilities to articulate with other professions and to respond to market and diverse customers' needs.

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¹ Ley de Reglamentación de la Profesión de Psicólogo N° 17.154 (August 10, 1999)

² Courses have a theoretical component and field intervention in a variety of organizations: public, private or non profit. Interventions deal mainly with labor conditions and its psychosocial effects, conflict and stress in the labor place, social programs, etc.

***USEFUL LINKS IN PSYCHOLOGY &
HUMAN RESOURCES FIELD***

Undergraduate Psychology Programs

Psychology School
Universidad de la República
www.psyco.edu.uy

Psychology School
Universidad Católica del Uruguay
www.ucu.edu.uy

Graduate Programs

Master in HR Management
Graduate Program in HR
Universidad ORT Uruguay
www.ort.edu.uy/

Graduate Program in WOP
Graduate Program in HRM
Universidad Católica del Uruguay
www.ucu.edu.uy

Professional Associations

Coordinadora de Psicólogos del Uruguay
(Uruguayan Psychology Association)
www.psicologos.org.uy

Asoc. de Dirigentes de Personal del Uruguay
(Uruguayan HR Managers Association)
www.adpu.org