

## Present and Future of Work and Organizational Psychology in Colombia

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Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP) in Colombia has a key importance because its applied developments have a strong effect on society in aspects such as employment, work, organizations, market's world and the socio-economic dynamic of the country (Aguilar, López, Barreto, Rey, Rodríguez and Vargas, 2007).

WOP has had a long and important history in the Colombian psychology and has played a key role in the development of psychology in Colombia, because of its early applications in the attitudes measurement by Mercedes Rodrigo at The Applied Psychology Institute of National University of Colombia in 1948 (Mankeliunas, 1993), and the foundation of the first Laboratory of Psychometrics of Bogotá by the Psychologist Ernesto Amador Barriga in march 22, 1950, which was oriented in supplying tests for the improvement of selection processes.

Is important to note how in the sixties decade came to Colombia a mission of the International Labour Organization (ILO) of United Nations to advice the Colombian government in structuring the recently founded National Learning Service (SENA). In addition, the main aim of the ILO mission was to advice the government in structuring and carrying out the National Survey of Occupations and the application of the

occupational analysis technique (Ardila, 1993). From there, WOP in Colombia has grown rapidly showing the same influences showed in other countries.

In general, advances in Colombian psychology in the last five years show a high development in terms of several indicators such as the increasingly supply of degree programs in psychology (around 120 in the country), and post-graduate, master and doctorate degree programs (26 post-graduate specialization programs, 2 doctorate programs, and some programs under approval process). In terms of research groups, there are 79 recognized groups by the Colombian Institute for the Development of Science and Technology. There are more than 30 scientific journals in psychology and an increasing number of psychologists playing an important role in different fields of the society (Enríquez and Rentería, 2007).

WOP in Colombia has not been away from that dynamic. According to Enríquez and Castañeda (2006), there are two master programs focused in WOP, more than 16 research groups and one research network in the field. On the other hand, the bibliometric analysis of the Interamerican Journal of Occupational Psychology (edited in Colombia), carried out by López and Aguilar in 1997, showed high coincidence between journal issues and the research network issues (work motivation, training, organizational climate, perspectives in psychology, work life quality, work environment, leadership, the role of work and organizational psychologists, organizational values, application of qualitative analysis, among others).

Despite there is no studies showing the whole set of activities performed by organizational psychologists in Colombia, practices in organizations developed by undergraduate students and the employers' demands for those students, show that work and organizational psychologists are involved in activities such as organizational

assessment, recruitment and selection, training, career development, work well being, occupational health, motivational and social issues, culture, climate and conflict, leadership, performance, knowledge management and organizational learning, competences management, retirement programs, mobility in the organization; and managerial skills management such as communication, decision making, power, authority and conflict, climate and organizational environment management, among others.

Nowadays, other areas are being explored beyond the above mentioned, such as psychology, work and health, new employment forms, and the employment relationships between labour market actors, which are analyzed deeply and critically. Research in WOP in Colombia is specially focused on organizational learning, knowledge management and competences models and management.

According to the social, political and economic characteristics of our context, issues as organizational culture, change and conflict are related to the frequent reality in our organizations, which are analyzed at individual, group, social and contextual levels. Furthermore, that analysis emphasises the psychologists' social responsibility in organizations, and considers WOP practitioners like people who think about implications of changes and unstable dynamic of the labour market.

Finally, economic and consumer psychology are ones of the most dynamic areas of the Colombian psychology in terms of post-graduate programs focused both on the understanding of consumer behavior, applied markets research, advertising products analysis, strategic marketing and responsible consumption.

Our short description shows a promising future of WOP in Colombia. Public and private organizations recognize the important role of psychologists in that field. On the other hand, there is a significant number of teaching-research groups carrying out important projects in different issues, an arising number of degree programs in psychology, and an even more strong Colombian Psychological Association and its WOP division.

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