Introduction

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WORK, ORGANIZATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES IN SPAIN

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CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONS AND WORK

Over recent decades, increasing social and economic globalization, significant developments in information and communications technology and demographic, social and cultural changes in general have led to substantial transformations in the world of work, organizations and labour relations. More than ten years ago now, on reviewing the changes that had occurred, Cascio (1995) highlighted the new demands facing professionals involved in the Psychology of Work, Organizations and Human Resources and the limited response capacity of the models and technology available at the time. This author made an observation that still applies today: in spite of substantial achievements and developments in our discipline, the transformations in society, in organizations, in the nature of work itself and in employer-employee relations have given rise to a demand for new theoretical models, strategies and technologies for professional intervention. Given this situation, it is necessary for researchers and professionals to intensify their cooperation so as to identify relevant issues and client demands, generate new knowledge through research, and develop appropriate design and innovation activities (R+D+i) for bringing professional responses into line with the new demands.

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

High-quality, rigorous and effective professional practice must be based on scientific knowledge. What legitimates the "expert" capacity of Work and Organizational Psychologists is its scientific basis and a professional practice based on experience that is sound, prudent and inspired in deontological principles. These are the foundations that allow them to propose, recommend, prescribe and formulate diagnostic and intervention strategies for clients with the aim of improving work, organizations and labour relations from a predominantly psychosocial perspective (Peiró, 1994). This is the principal form in which Work and Organizational Psychologists contribute to the achievement of more human and more productive organizations, to improving the way people work in them and to promoting quality of life at work and the involvement of an organization's members in its project and mission.

From a broad range of fields within Psychology there is increasing insistence on the need for intervention based on empirical evidence obtained through scientific research – so-called *evidence-based practice*. Indeed, for several decades now the discipline has been advocating the scientific-professional model that stresses the need to train professionals in skills for intervention as well as for research, enabling them not only to carry out research but also to critically analyze that carried out by others, to make appropriate use of research results and to formulate intervention strategies, methodologies and technologies. The so-called *scientist-practitioner* is able to contribute to the application of scientific knowledge and adapt it to the changing needs of professional practice. A good grounding of professionals in scientific research permits them to "distinguish fact from opinion in their applications and promotes readiness to contribute to innovation in existing theory and technique" (Belar & Perry, 1992).

Even so, evidence-based practice, in the context of our discipline, is not without its complications. On the one hand, research often attempts to obtain rigorous data that permit the prediction and association of different variables in conditions in which as far as possible the rest of the variables are controlled (this is what is known as the *caeteris paribus* approach). The relationships between two or more variables are analyzed while trying to control or neutralize the effects of others. But professional practice does not take place in such conditions. It is not possible, nor in many cases desirable, to maintain constant or controlled other variables of the context when a professional is carrying out an intervention. Professional activity often takes place in a broader, more complex and dynamic context. This means that generalizations or applications of the results obtained in research must be applied prudently, and in full awareness of the variations in the context of the production and use of that data. Thus, apart from a good scientific grounding, another requirement in professionals is that they have sound experience and the capacity to contextualize and use with caution the scientific knowledge relevant to the specific situation in which they set out to intervene. Competent professional activity is, therefore, much more than the mere application of scientific knowledge and the use of technology developed through R+D processes – though these two elements are of course essential to it.

A second aspect to be considered on analyzing the complexity of evidence-based practice is the cultural component of the phenomena studied within our discipline and our profession. It is not always possible or appropriate to use indiscriminately the results of research obtained in particular cultural contexts for intervention in others. Such knowledge should be carefully checked for its applicability in the culture in which it is to be used, especially if the cultural distance between the culture in which the knowledge was generated and that which constitutes the context of use is large. Therefore, there is a need in our discipline to carry out research of a truly international nature, and in a dual sense: first, to perform research on the same topics in a wide variety of countries, enabling comparison of results and assessment of their generality, and second, to develop cross-cultural studies that permit systematic and rigorous comparisons

by teams made up of researchers from different countries. In this context, it is important for Spanish Work and Organizational Psychology to have access to research generated in our own environment and culture, and that this be carried out as part of the appropriate networks and on the basis of cooperation with other national, European and international research centres.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND THE PROFESSION OF WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN SPAIN

The development of research on this discipline over recent decades has been highly positive. The progress can be seen if we analyze this development over the last century (Peiró, 2001), but particularly in its final two decades. The same author had previously offered reviews of scientific production in the 1980s (Peiró & Munduate, 1994) and in the 1990s (Peiró & Munduate, 1999).

This development has been the fruit of the activity of research groups progressively constituted within the framework of Spanish universities (Munduate & Peiró, 2001). In our discipline there are no research units in public research bodies (such as the Spanish National Research Council – *CSIC*), and such activity has also been limited in non-academic institutions, in companies and in other types of private organization. In any case, analysis of the research groups currently working in our discipline in Spain, the topics studied and the results obtained, on the basis of relevant indicators, reveals healthy and positive development and, in general, a dynamic and highly positive situation.

Furthermore, the sound development of the profession of Work, Organizational and Human Resources Psychologist has also frequently been revealed since the incorporation of Psychology as a university degree (Ordóñez, 1981; 1997). Throughout the 1980s, with the support of the Spanish Psychological Association, the development of the profession was promoted through a series of activities: Congresses of Work and Organizational Psychology (the first was held in Madrid in 1983), the founding of the journal *Revista de Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones*, the creation of the National Council (*Vocalía estatal*), and so on. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 1990s, at a conference held in Castillo de Magalia (Avila, Spain), a group of professionals and researchers made a detailed analysis of the state of research, professional practice, the training of professionals and aspects related to the organization of the profession, drawing highly encouraging conclusions suggesting clearly positive development in all areas. The conference also provided an opportunity for a strategic analysis of the profession, on the basis of which possible actions for its development were suggested (Peiró & Cañero, 1993). These actions bore fruit in the form of a series of events during the 1990s: the EAWOP European Congress of Work and Organizational Psychology, held in Alicante in 1993; the significant participation at the IAAP International Congress Psychology, held in Madrid in 1994; and the Spanish presence in important associations such as the IAAP (Secretary-Generalship) or the EAWOP (Presidency) and in international publications (*International Journal of Selection and Assessment; European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, etc.).

Over the last decade, research in Work and Organizational Psychology in Spain has become consolidated, has expanded considerably and has attained significant internationalization. There are research groups in the majority of Spanish universities in which Psychology is taught. Moreover, the research activity of several of such groups is oriented toward sharing their results and achievements with researchers in the international research front, frequently publishing their work in international journals. Likewise, all of them endeavour to make available to professionals in the field all the knowledge obtained and technology developed, with the aim of contributing to improving professional practice. A key player in this regard has been the journal *Revista de Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones,* which for almost 25 years has served as a channel of scientific communication and as a bridge between research and professional activity.

THE PRESENT SPECIAL ISSUE

It is in this same framework that we can situate the present special issue. It includes a series of studies from diverse Spanish research groups in a format that can be useful and informative not only for academics and professionals from Work and Organizational Psychology, but also for the wider psychological community. As we have pointed out, there are a considerable number of research groups in Work Psychology at Spanish universities making significant contributions, and this makes it impossible to incorporate all of them in a special issue such as this. In any case, while not all of the valuable research being done is included here, all the groups covered are indeed contributing valuable work.

As the reader will see, the works presented cover a broad thematic range and make interesting contributions in diverse areas of Work and Organizational Psychology. A first block looks at phenomena related to the labour market and the incorporation of workers by companies. The work by *Moya and Puertas*, from the University of Granada, deals with one of the most important issues related to the labour market and the workforce*: immigration*. The analysis by these authors offers a view from the perspective of Spanish society and from that of immigrants themselves, facilitating a fuller understanding of the reality of the current social and employment situation in this regard. For their part, *Salgado and Moscoso*, from the University of Santiago de Compostela*,* present a systematic consideration of *models and methodologies of personnel selection* and their implications for this crucial aspect in businesses and public administration in our country. These works, then, cover the analysis of important aspects related to the incorporation of workers into organizations.

A second block of articles concerns the analysis of work groups and teams, an area of study in which a large number of research groups are involved. Here, we present a work by *Gil, Rico and Sánchez*, from the Universities Complutense, Autónoma and Carlos III, all in Madrid*.* These authors offer us a systematic review of current issues and recent contributions in the study of *the effectiveness of work teams and the factors affecting it*. This is followed by an article by *González-Romá*, from the University of Valencia, who presents a comprehensive view of phenomena

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related to *innovation in work teams*, its antecedents and its principal consequences.

The third block of articles deals with phenomena of great current relevance for organizations. The work by *Martinez-Pecino, Munduate and Medina*, from the University of Seville, presents theory, empirical evidence and intervention experience in relation to *organizational conflict management by non-judicial means*. This is a field in which the contribution of Psychology is especially significant, and opens up opportunities for professional activity. *Cantera, Cervantes and Blanch*, from Barcelona's Universidad Autónoma, explore another important issue: *Violence in the workplace*. Through the analysis of an online service for the notification of violent incidents at several hospitals they provide valuable information for a better understanding of this phenomenon and the adoption of effective measures of prevention and control.

The fourth block focuses on employees' psychological well-being, on the role of leaders and managers in this well-being, and on aspects of a more macro nature, such as safety culture in organizations. More precisely, *Salanova and Llorens,* from the Universidad Jaume I in Castellón, analyze recent developments in the *experience of burnout*, as well as looking at *engagement* with the organization as a set of positive experiences that can also be derived from work. *Peiró and Rodriguez*, from the University of Valencia, explore the *role of leadership in phenomena related to stress and well-being* in employees, approaching this complex phenomenon from a multilevel perspective. *Diaz-Cabrera, Isla-Diaz, Rolo-González, Villegas-Velazquez, Ramos-Sapena and Hernández-Fernaud*, from the Universidad de la Laguna, analyze organizational health and safety from a holistic perspective, paying particular attention to high-reliability organizations, that is, those which have to guarantee safety above all else. Finally, *Quijano, Navarro, Yepes, Berger and Romero*, from the University of Barcelona, review processes of social and human resource management audit, and offer a detailed description of the Human System Audit (HAS) proposal, which they have been studying for more than ten years.

A "CROSS-SECTIONAL" VIEW OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS

Thus, the works included in this issue deal with a wide range of topics, covering phenomena at diverse levels of study in the work and organizational context: some articles focus on the individual level (Salgado & Moscoso; Salanova & Llorens), others on the team or group level (Gil et al., & González Romá), and still others on the organizational level (Diaz Cabrera et al. Martinez-Pecino et al.). One work turns its attention to the cultural and social context of the world of work and organizations (Moya et al.), and finally, some deal jointly with more than one of the different levels we have described (Peiró & Rodriguez, and Cantera et al.).

The different articles also highlight different types of outcomes of organizational processes. Thus, some works deal mainly with effectiveness and results, of either the organization or work teams, while others focus on employees' health and well-being.

There are also a series of characteristics common to all, or to the majority, of the articles presented. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we could mention the following:

First, the majority of the articles refer to and propose approaches from **Positive Psychology**, highlighting an insistence on the view that Psychology should have more than a merely corrective function, that it should do more than simply remedy, solve or palliate problems; rather, it should make contributions that take into account positive elements and opportunities for the growth, development and self-realization of people, of work teams and of organizations themselves.

Second, most of the authors contributing to this issue show an awareness of the **multilevel approach**. The vast majority of work and organizational phenomena occur at different but inter-related levels. They are phenomena with individual, group, organizational and inter-organizational components, or which must be considered in the context of the characteristics of the organization's environment. An adequate understanding of such phenomena requires multi- and cross-level research, and intervention that takes into account the relations and interactions between the different levels. On some occasions an adequate understanding and appropriate intervention in an organization requires taking into account phenomena emerging at basic levels that affect higher levels; in other cases it is necessary to consider the contextual influence of higher levels on the more basic levels.

Third, many of the articles make explicit reference to **European policies or issues**, and thus predominantly consider research activity and its meaning in the European context. It is becoming increasingly evident that European policies on many issues – such as employment, growth and progress toward the consolidation of a knowledge-based society, health at work, job flexibility and security, improvements in working conditions ("better jobs"), reduction of unemployment and social and workplace integration – are highly relevant, and influence the demands and needs of our companies and our workers. This means that both research and professional practice have to maintain a keen awareness of the European reality and its policies, strategies and programmes.

Fourth, practically all the works highlight the ***relevance of knowledge obtained through research for professional intervention***. As we pointed out above, appropriate professional intervention must be based on sound evidence from research. The review of contributions on a given organizational, work-related or human resources topic provides and identifies theoretical models and well-tried ideas that can enrich professional activity. Sometimes it is difficult to take full advantage of previous work due to obstacles such as the language in which the research results are published, the dispersion or fragmentation of the information or a lack of resources for identifying and analyzing the relevant data and publications. The works in this issue provide up-to-date and critical summaries of the state of the question and the principal contributions that are of use to professional practice in the areas they deal with.

Fifth, also reflected in several works is the ***relevance of available scientific knowledge for the design of instruments and techniques for diagnosis, intervention and the assessment***

of intervention. It is important to bear in mind that Psychology, as Simon (1973) pointed out, is primarily a science of the artificial, that is, of design. Although the explanation and understanding of phenomena is important, even more so is the way they should be in order to contribute to social improvement and quality of life. Thus, intervention in Work and Organizational Psychology requires the design of technology and interventions for influencing the social reality, and those technologies and methodologies should not be the result of improvisation. An adequately designed technology (e.g., a personnel selection system for an organization or a project for improving the organizational culture) must be based on systematic knowledge and procedures that permit the formulation of prototypes and their subsequent evaluation, validation and implementation so that they offer guarantees of quality, effectiveness and respect for users and clients or customers. Research on development in Work and Organizational Psychology in our country needs to gather momentum if we are to increase the quality of professional intervention. Just as neurosurgeons can only do their work well using technology developed by others, professional psychologists must also base their intervention on the use (and appropriate adaptation) of properly developed technologies. R+D requires investment and effort, and research teams will have to pay increasing attention to this aspect of the transfer of scientific knowledge that enriches professional practice and contributes to the maintenance of its quality.

Sixth, several of the articles explore intervention contexts within organizations in which *the development or consolidation of professional roles can generate work opportunities for psychologists*. Programmes for the training and development of teams is providing wide-ranging opportunities for intervention, particularly in the new organizational systems of companies, while other areas with potential for relevant and significant work by professional psychologists include conflict mediation, management development, the design of strategies for the prevention of psychosocial risk, the promotion of workers' health and well-being and the design and implementation of strategies for improving safety in high-reliability organizations.

To summarize, this special issue constitutes a renewed attempt to highlight the ways in which Psychology can help to improve human well-being and social development. The contributions of scientific research in our discipline are relevant to laying the foundations of correct and appropriate professional practice. In order to achieve this objective, such contributions must take into account the demands of professionals themselves and the issues they raise, and the intensification of dialogue between professionals and researchers on the relevant topics is fundamental to the advance and improvement of both science and profession. The relationship between science and practice requires the concurrence of the two elements (as well as that of clients), and it is essential that professionals indicate the research needs deriving from their practice and from their clients' demands. Contributions and reflections in this direction are highly advantageous, and even more so if they are presented for publication in this or other scientific-professional journals.

The present special issue, thanks to the opportunity provided by *Papeles del Psicólogo,* attempts to take a further step in this direction. We are confident that they will be of great interest and utility in this regard.

Finally, we, the Invited Editors of this special issue of *Papeles del Psicólogo*, would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the authors who, in spite of the limited time available and their own obligations, have accepted the invitation to contribute. Our knowledge, and also, we believe, that of the readers and of professionals in the Psychology of Work, Organizations and Human Resources, will be all the richer as a result of their efforts. We should also like to offer our thanks to Serafín Lemos, Editor-in-Chief of *Papeles*, for having given us the opportunity to edit this special issue, and for his constant support and concern throughout its preparation. By way of conclusion, we sincerely hope and trust that the articles presented here will make a significant contribution to the progress and consolidation of the Psychology of Work, Organizations and Human Resources in Spain.

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