

Professionalization, Insertion, Mobility and Professional Status. a Comparative Analysis in Populations of Doctors

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Abstract

This study is in line with the analyses of university and working career in their interaction in relation with conditioning factors, carried out by Dr. Aparicio for the past two decades with a variety of populations. The aim was to analyze the relation between working conditions and future working perspectives through social representations. There are three core variables: Professional Mobility, Professional Status and perspectives regarding the future of their careers at the personal development level and within the organizations, considering, on the one hand, insufficient Professionalization and the increasing market demands; and on the other the impact structural limits have on the identity level. The methodology used was quanti-qualitative (semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, and hierarchical evocations, out of which we will analyze one node: Labor Market). The population consisted of doctors (2005-2012) from the National University of Cuyo, in Argentina and the CNAM (France) of different courses of study. The analysis is done from a systemic sui generis perspective involving three interwoven levels (macro-meso-micro-macro), called The Theory of the Three-Dimensional Spiral of Sense (See Aparicio, 2015 c and d; also, 2005 2007a; 2007b, 2013a, 2014 b; 2015 c, 2015 d). The results show that it enters in the nucleus of such representations, which relates to the current issue of professional mobility, as regards different study courses and contexts; we can also observe the effect of professionalization on the insertion environment, and on the personal and organizational identity.

Keywords : Professional Mobility – Status Professional Careers – Professionalization – Social Representations – Labor Market

1. Introduction

This research work is part of the issue of Professionalization, (Lang, 1999; Bourdoncle 1993) associated to the issue of professional, personal, institutional and social identity (See. Part I. Introduction; Aparicio, 2015 c and d; 2014 b.)

This is part of a set of continuous works concerning professional performance of different populations (university graduates, drop-outs, students who take longer to complete their studies, teachers, etc.), covering 20 years of existence of different courses of study at Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (UNCuyo, Argentina).

We have worked on two core issues: Identity related to Professionalization in the field of Training and other humanistic sciences in institutions in both countries related to Professional Status / Professional Mobility / Professional Insertion and Satisfaction.

Why should we study these issues related to Professional Mobility and the Professional Status?

Doctors in Social and Humanistic Sciences, in general, are oriented towards two fields: research in scientific entities and teaching at the highest level, in Argentina but not in France, where the degree only enables them to hold a position of "Maitres de conférences", and only after 20 years of teaching practice can they reach the status of "Professeur des Universités", standing for the "*habilitation a diriger des recherches* - HDR. The latter status is reached by a small minority of practicing doctors.

The situation of scientific entities in Argentina, despite the progress and investment – is as follows:

a. On the one hand, the scientific system promotes Professionalization and Continuing Training by means of fellowship programs and exchanges overseas. However, since they are rigid national state systems – with hard regulation not always updated to the new demands and even to the same training programs offered by CONICET –, there are constraints regarding the time to be away from the country. This causes that, to mention but a case, scholarships that have been awarded for a year, due to ranking or legal reasons, should be somewhat wasted, using only 6 months within a six-year period for stays at scientific entities overseas. There is an offer of training alternatives and a time limit to make it effective. Contradiction, then, causes uncertainty and it demands greater efforts from researchers in order to make progress within short times. There is overvaluation of Professionalization, on the one hand, and a true constraint, on the other.

b. The situation worsens as the professional status reached as a researcher gets higher. In fact, Mobility does not rise easily in the hierarchical scale since the number of positions is limited (the higher the status in the scale, the fewer the positions). Once a high status is reached, to this we should add the number of demands in terms of original knowledge production, international transmission, transference to the corresponding system, among other aspects. In addition, there appear the problems of evaluations; always tinged with a possible subjectivity, despite the fact the scientific system intends to take the necessary precautions so that such evaluations can be most objective. Also, we are taking steps forward into standardization of grills which have many aspects in common with the ones used by other developed countries.

c. This higher status also demands more commitment to society in terms of training material for human resources (little demand when a researcher is placed in the lowest categories of the system due to a real impossibility). This requires extra time. Once more, the dimension “temporality” appears hampering Satisfaction or Well-being in those who research and should lead programs, projects, groups (of other researchers, professionals, and support personnel), to name but a few cases. (Aparicio, 2014 a, Fiedler, 1967; Andrews et al, 1979).

d. Back to regulations, there exists some over prescription of rules opposed to actual possibilities to come with the demands (Goffman, 1965).

Thus, there is a certain distance between what is expected – one of the issues of this work, expectations – and the actual possibilities of realization in daily occupational practice.

In general, considering the existing literature, it can be said that there is a certain tension between the area of work and the area of training, as well as between the expectations at the moment of vocational choice and the actual experience in the professional environment; also, between the “ideal” situation expected by the PhD students and the real one of the PhD graduates; between the representation of the doctors and their world experience.

Is there certain over prescription in the institutions to respond to the changes in the labor market along with under prescription in the means used to such response, as it is usually said? Within this framework, the links between the personal training experience and the professional life become a source of concern in the field of training and, especially, in the studies related to humanities and social sciences.

Besides, this issue involving institutional and even disciplinary identities, as well as the identity reconstruction processes, is accompanied, as it has just been said, by actual *insertion conditions*, duration and *professional mobility*; all of them will have an impact on professional performances (Dubar 1991, 2000 a, b and c; Sansaulieu, 1977; Silva & Aparicio, 2015 a and b).

e. Another contradiction shows up: there is social value through the media, more and more evident every day, affecting different age groups, including children. More and more we watch cartoons inviting children to become the researchers of the future. However, there is the other side of the coin: undervaluation of salaries. This even more evident and critical if we consider, on the one hand, the investment high status researchers have to make in order to keep their status and/or to try to go up the hierarchical scale. On the other hand, if we consider the natural desire regarding personal and professional achievement (particularly if they reached a high status in the scientific hierarchy)

There are many institutional efforts which have not always been accepted. In the specific field of training, the new professionals encounter various difficulties, in addition to lack of recognition. Some authors even speak of de-professionalization of those graduates on this field, and they are left behind into a process of “proletarianization” (Ozga & Lawn, 1981). There exist other problems: “semi-professional” status in a broad sense (Etzioni, 1969), the devaluation of

the graduate's image in the field of education (training) along with an ever growing weakening (burnout) (Tardiff & Lessard 1999; Maroy 2006; Aparicio, 2006a, 2006 b, 2007 a, 2007 b, 2009 a, 2009 b, 2009 c, 2013 a).

f. Finally, the higher the professional status, the more the demands in terms of not only disciplinary but also collective and social competences: management (of researchers and technicians), consensus, negotiation, leadership (Argyrys & Shon, 1974, 1978, 1996a and b). The researcher who is the head of the team must try and harmonize the organizational climate, even though it may be a micro organization (Payne, 1973; Aparicio 2014 a). It does not seem easy, according to the results of our studies. In fact, the work published in the US in 2014 shows, in terms of statistics, that there is an only aspect of coincidence among those who belong to social and humanistic sciences (SHS) and to exact and natural sciences. This is, precisely, the widespread dissatisfaction/nonconformity of younger researchers regarding leadership capacities. In simpler words, there is lack of true leadership regarding innovation and keeping a climate of psychological well-being, of team high motivation. The doctors-researchers from both fields feel they are not satisfied with leadership in their teams (Fiedler, 1967; Knorr, Mittermeir, Aichholzer & Waller, 1979; Hollander, 1971; Andrews et al., 1979; Aparicio, 2002, a; 2014 a).

Our present reality poses other challenges: cultural diversity management (age, sex, ethnic group, (Dupray, 2005; Dupray & Moullet, 2005) and interculturality, a challenge for which not all of them have been prepared: competences to work with new technologies, to incorporate technology in business, to properly equip the work area (physical and psychological comfort and well-being. Excellence has a high price (Aubert & Gaulejac, 1991).

The professionalization of individuals (training on an existing field) or of the activities (construction and/or redefinition of new profiles of an existing profession) demands the implementation of new mechanisms. On the other hand, as regards this research, the conditions of professional practice in the working world have changed, and professional insertion as well as duration and promotion represent a complex problem with a variety of variables.

g. On the other hand, even though there are disciplinary and institutional differences, since these groups form "colleges invisibles", to quote, there is also dissimilarity shown by the a "self-sustained" interplay of macro social and political (organizational) of individuals and contexts. Dr. Aparicio's "Theory of the Three-Dimensional Spiral of Sense" (2015 c and d) clearly shows this interplay based on research on six disciplinary complementary fields during 30 years (National Council of Scientific Research (Argentina).

h. To close this brief framework, doctors in France – although they are globally better positioned than those who could not get their PhD degree –, are also aware of the degree devaluation and suffer the consequences of the so called "Queuing Theory" (Carabaña, 1987; García Rodríguez, 1993. See also Aparicio & Cros, 2015 a; Giret, 2003; Giret, Moullet, & Thomas, 2003).

To this chain of circumstances affecting doctors in relation to Mobility, professional status, expectations and effective achievement we add readiness to accept "the other" who was acquainted with rising geographical mobility – often times, as a result of the so called "delocalization", which is more expanded in developed countries. This mobility usually entails certain individual and group tensions. Thus, we can see in our own research works that rising status not always goes together with "lived satisfaction" (called "Subjective Satisfaction").

i. Such feeling of dissatisfaction impacts on personal/biographical and institutional identities, fragmenting them due to abrupt changes and the lack of competences to deal with them. We have found typologies of identity strategies, to which we have made reference above (Goffman, 1963, 1975).

Consequently, we find individuals who would prefer to change their occupation, to perform administrative or technological tasks within the academic system in its highest level, or in the scientific System rather than to put up with the increasing demands versus the material impossibility to comply, at least at the desired level, with the requirements for inadequate information of collective and social competences, according to what our actors' representations. In spite of this, virtually no one denies the value of a PhD degree as a certificate, nor of a university experience.

Some are still looking for different strategies to help them support the system; finally, others feel satisfied and happy, globally speaking (those who got a PhD in Management).

Briefly, we could say, on the one hand, that the effects of "overcrowding" in higher education (Bourdoucle & Demailly, 1998) has emphasized the need to consolidate certain competences and sets of knowledge essential for professional practice and its corollary, social recognition of professional groups (Bourdoucle, 1993; Lang, 1999). The issue of Professionalization is more and more important every day in all the contexts according to the corresponding demands.

The quick changes within the professional world demand innovative transformations in training institutions and consolidation of new competences valued by the market. All that could influence on professional and institutional identity updating.

On the other hand, the achievement, in this study, reminds us of the experience in the labor market of doctors in the framework of degree devaluation (Aparicio, 2005 a, 2007 a and b, Boudon, 1973; Lévy-Garboua, 1976, 1977; Dupray, 2005; Dupray & Moullet, 2004; Calmand & Haller, 2008; Giret, 2003; Giret, Moullet, & Thomas, 2003; Mansuy, 2004; Olivier et al., 2008). We should also add, on the one hand, the market demands new competences and, therefore, new mechanisms from the institutions, as well as the effort of the individuals to support the changes. On the other, this leads to identity transformations and the implementation of identity strategies to deal with the difficulties posed by the new contexts and, related to that, there appears the need for professional recognition. This problem does not seem to be different for those who reached the highest academic level (Dubar 1991, 2000 a, b and c).

2. Methodology

2.1. Material and Methods

The quantitative-qualitative method was applied. This study refers only to the qualitative method.

2.1.1. Participants: Consisting of doctors in education at Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (National University of Cuyo) (2005-2009) and doctors in social sciences; this study is still in progress) y Cnam PhD students/doctors of courses related to Education, Management/Administration and Sociology of Work, (Conservatorio National des Arts et Métiers, Paris, France). Two research laboratories took part in this work: the Laboratorio de Investigaciones en Educación (Education Research Laboratory - Conicet/UNCuyo, Argentina) and Social Psychology Laboratory - CONICET, UNCuyo) en Argentina and three laboratories of the Cnam: Occupational Sociology Laboratory, Administration Laboratory and Center of Research on Training (CRF). It is expected to find different profiles according to the work/professional disciplinary areas in which they are situated together with the differences of the respective contexts with their strengths and weaknesses.

The samples of the groups included were significant, and also allow for a quantitative treatment of the data.

The core variables were Professional Mobility, Professional Status, Achievement *versus* Expectations, Professionalization and Identity which played an "objective" achievement conditioning role (Mobility / Status, Professional Placement level, Coutrot & Dubar, 1992), and "subjective" (Feeling of Achievement: McClelland, 1961; Lévy-Leboyer, 1971, Aparicio 2015, a, c and d), Identity Fragmentation (Goffman, 1975).

These variables, according to our sui generis systemic approach, interact within a "self-sustained" movement (feedback) (Aparicio, 2005a, 2012a, 2014c). Analysis shows, on the one hand, the gap between the training provided by educational institutions and that demanded by the market (disarticulation between the education and productive systems). On the other hand, the differentiated conditions of the individuals received by each institution (self and institutional selection processes): variables which have an influence on the professional achievement levels, as far as the results of our studies are concerned.

These studies not only add inputs and outputs but also, and fundamentally, *human processes* that appear on the base of the figures of the systems, accounting not only for the factors have a significant impact on achievement, but also for the "*underlying*" reasons that make the figures in the national and, system meaningful and, more broadly, in the international framework. It is actually an integrating and holistic approach that helps analyze the mechanisms and/or factors anticipating achievement at the psycho individual level, and at the same time going through the meso-institutional/organizational level (university, labor market). Several research works done for 30 years have led to the development of the theory, which Dr. Aparicio has called The Three Dimensional Spiral of "Sense" Theory (2015 c, 2015 d).

The original approach joins explanation and comprehension; quantitative and qualitative methodology aiming at explaining and reveal conditions of achievement. As strategies, the macro-meso-micro-macro dimensions are gathered: processes and results; transversal and quasi-longitudinal (personal experiences or life, ...); diachronically and synchronically (Aparicio, 2005a, 2007a and b, 2012a).

2.1.2. Materials

Quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied. We also used the "hierarchical evocation" (Abric, 2001) and the lexicometric analysis techniques. Doctors/PhD students were also interviewed. The findings shown by the interviews will be approached in a strict and extended way in publication currently in progress. Here, we deal with some representations which showed, particularly, certain contradictions between the "objective" factors associated to Professional Satisfaction, Status, Training and Mobility and factors which could be called symbolic. They show, probably, what it means to doctors to have been part of this training program and reached such a degree, versus what is shown by the concrete current conditions. Therefore, they say they are satisfied with the training in some disciplines but in a deeper analysis of the interview, they speak very hard words to define the core variables of the study. This reveals certain "concealed" dissatisfaction. The latter allowed to show which representations are part of the "nucleus" of a doctoral training in each of the groups, and which are their most evident differences and the ways they experience their professional practice according to their expectations.

2.2. Core questions in the research work

Which positions do doctors in the market reaches? Which professional structures are they inserted in? Have they become acquainted with Professional Mobility since they entered a PhD program? Does this Professional Mobility show differences according to different disciplinary fields and countries? Which are the aspects defining their actual insertion on terms of positioning achievement – objective/subjective – within the hierarchical scale? What are their expectations regarding their PhD training? Do they bear positive expectations for the future? Do they consider their positioning will improve as time passes by? Regarding the analysis on their work contexts, what are their representations of the work world? Are there any inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary and inter-country differences? Which are the most relevant aspects in those representations? Which aspects nowadays do they think have an impact on quality of life at work, work climate/atmosphere? What are their comments regarding their personal and professional identities? Do they feel fulfilled or do they primarily detect a gap between what they "dreamed" their professional life would be and their day-to-day reality? Which values are prioritized? Are they in search for stability, reality or the economic benefits associated to the PhD degree? How do they see their future? How do they see their role? Which are, in their own perspective, the factors prioritized by the market nowadays? Have they experienced any discrepancy between the training they received and the market requirements or not? Does hope or pessimism prevail? Do these doctors share specific "identities" or "interests"? How similar or different are these?

3. Results

They were presented in two sections: quantitative (descriptive plan, correlational and explanatory) and qualitative. Here, for the sake of brevity, we will deal more with qualitative considerations related to the aspects underlined within the theoretical framework of this issue and to the research questions.

As we could observe, differences are noticed between the different groups (disciplinary, national) In fact, there appear PhD training and its impact on labor positioning, professional promotion and mobility known by the individuals, extra-curricular development experiences which contributed to labor placement and continuity, correspondence (or lack of it) with professional expectations, the gaps between the dream world at entering a PhD training and actual everyday world, the difficulties at obtaining recognition due to the "plafond" effect, more and more evident in more developed countries (France, in our case) and in the conflict work world, in which education does not go parallel to the macro social and economic context development. This aspect to which authors warned us already in last century (Anderson, 1961; Halsey, Floud & Anderson, 1961; Coleman et al., 1969; Thurow, 1972; Boudon, 1973; Jencks, 1972; Jarousse, 1984; Lévy-Garvova, 1976, 1978; Eicher & Lévy-Garvova, 1979, just to mention some of the "founding fathers") caused the so called "Education World Crisis", and it became more evident as time passed by. Advances in technology come up sooner and are more abrupt every day; therefore, systems of education cannot manage to adapt to the training programs and thus prepare students to face the new demands. There exist disciplinary areas and/or problems people though were solved and surprisingly become almost

obsolete; there are many gaps to fill regarding training material which demand many competences from educational and organizational institutions (Market), for which, those who manage them (doctors, many times) do not feel are fit. On this line, however, it is necessary to point out that those who have reached the level of "cadres" (managers/higher bosses) look somewhat more satisfied (Aparicio & Cros, 2015 a; Chauvot, 1997).

The foregoing has an impact on the levels of "experiences" or "subjective" satisfaction in addition to the "extra" a rise at work may represent, causing uncertainty. Organizational well-being is affected by the impact of such changes. Besides, it also damages institutional identities and personal and professional lives. Many have very little or no future expectation at all, given the general situation in a globalized world.

Other doctors, with a more ideological view (especially those belonging to fields like Sociology), blame liberalism and capitalism for all this failure...The words found on their representations and core aspects show it very clearly: They define the node "work world" as follows: "demands", "disadvantages", "difficult", "slavery", "injustice" "production", "uncomfortable climate" "market", "just work", "harsh", "schedule", "inflexibility", "little flexibility", "lack of true leadership", "lack of compassionate bosses", "complex world". Also, "ideology", "politics", "alignment", "individualism", "selection with long and unfair recruitment processes", "political game", "internal bickering", "power", "crisis", "deception", "in egalitarian", "demanding with no offers for training in return with respect to work hours". Finally, "a world that focuses only of efficiency and effectiveness", "man means nothing", "submission", "liberal rules", "capital in operation".

Those belonging to fields like Management have a more positive view even on the Work Market. They got trained to become part of it and expected more from the future, showing optimism regarding work environment, the climate or atmosphere in which they work, regarding their admission into this world (which is quite different from the admission received by those working in other studied areas). Their satisfaction is higher, globally speaking. Among the defining words we find: "Project", "quality", "motivation", "important world", "creation", "professional journey", "election", "important mastering in life", "career", "future".

At the *applied level*, this research provides those who have worked on it certain elements to be introduced there where there are gaps.

At the *theoretical level*, this research allowed: a) to produce knowledge regarding differences and similarities presented by the doctors recently incorporated into the professional world of different disciplinary fields and countries; b) to go deeper, from an interdisciplinary perspective, into the higher education/occupational world relationship, as well as into the professional world transformations and their impact on the level of identity. In fact, we discovered more fulfilled "identities"; others which are blocked, and others in search for transformation. Interrelations can be seen among other Core Variables: Professional Mobility, Professional Status /work placement, Satisfaction (objective and "subjective"), Expectations, Identity and Professionalization. This work reveals the interplay of macro social-contextual, organizational/work, institutional (university and continuing training programs), psychosocial and personal variables. In this research, we have intended to account for a quantitative "back movement" (conditions *versus* effects, measured statistically in the work area) and a comprehensive "forth movement" (qualitative which helps to grasp the "sense" the actors give this scenario, its core and peripheral aspects, according to the selected methodology: hierarchical evocation). This accounts for the spiral loops, in a positive or a negative sense on the base of this theory. Three levels – macro, meso and micro – interplay and are self-sustained. Only then can we go beyond the figures which indicate a diagnosis of situation but do not show the causes or the conditioning factors beneath those figures (effects of the system). The *comprehension* of the *conditions* aiming at improving micro-systems and, so in the medium term, global systems should be first added as an indicator of education systems quality and work indicators. Figures are not enough; if we want to know the problems, their basis must be revised and then, try to overcome them based on the transfer of scientific results founded on actual referents. However, business keep on considering "customer Satisfaction", is we can call it that way, as a "subjective".

In the end, the research showing the interplay between personal competences, institutional/organizational conditions, and the possibilities offered by the macro social context in relation with the different disciplinary areas (for example, for those graduated in education, the PhD degree represents a bonus in the labor market). Scrutinizing the shared representations is, thus, a way of going deeper into this issue, as we go beyond statistics and apart from linear analyses. There is no linear professional career. The three levels of Dr. Aparicio's theory (Aparicio 2007 a and b, 2015 a and b, 2015 c and d) interplay in every case, and make an impact on the possibilities of fulfillment along with organizational growth.

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