

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN THE UNIVERSITY. AGENT OF MODELING

IDENTIDAD PROFESIONAL EN LA UNIVERSIDAD. AGENTE DE MODELADO

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“Nobody can be slave of its identity, when a possibility of change arises is necessary to carry out it”.
Elliot Gould

Introduction

The European convergent reform of the Spanish University System is a suitable framework to delimit the professional identity of the occupational therapists.

Some university degrees between which the Occupational Therapy (OT) is located, are in disadvantage because diversity of the sciences in what its philosophy maintains makes difficult specify in a concrete professional identity. The biomedical, psychological and sociological pillars consolidate and enrich the Occupation Science, specific substratum of the student's education. However, the heterogeneity of OT university centres of existing in Spain generates a diversity of profiles distant of the occupational therapist specific role and closest to other related professionals.

SUMMARY

In University the first meeting theoretical-methodological between the student and his future labour identity takes place. The professionals, teachers and students, taking as a base their teaching and researcher experience, have defined the objectives, the competences and the profile of the graduates, in order to give an appropriate answer to the demands of a dynamic and changing society that favours the specialization in new work environments.

Nowadays and in our country, the Superior Education European Space development motivates a deep reform of the university degrees that force to define the profiles of the graduates, basing on the competences analysis.

RESUMEN

En la Universidad se produce el primer encuentro teórico- metodológico entre el alumno y su futura identidad laboral. Los profesionales, profesores y estudiantes, basándose en su experiencia docente e investigadora, han definido los objetivos, las competencias y el perfil de egreso, para dar una respuesta adecuada a las demandas de una sociedad dinámica y cambiante que favorece la especialización en nuevos ámbitos de trabajo. En la actualidad y en nuestro país, el desarrollo del Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior motiva una profunda reforma de las titulaciones universitarias que obligan a definir los perfiles de egreso, basándose en el análisis de las competencias.

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UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

University is the space in which the conceptual models theoretical-practical that define the base and foundation of each profession make known, what is essential to develop a practical activity of quality in the person/user daily attention (1). The university education stage supposes the starting point that draws the student's profile gradually until transforming it into a professional ready to insertion in the socio labour environment. As learning base, the theoretic-methodological pillars of all profession maintain in the knowledge exchange and in the research, what converts the university professors into the main responsible people in the election and teaching of the suitable education to the role that it is tried to form.

The professional profile defines identity of the people who, with an academic degree, carry out a skilled work and explains the main functions that this profession fulfils, as well as the tasks that it makes of usual way (2).

The first University challenge is to determine the necessary components to build the occupational training, setting the guidelines for the development of competent study plans and delimiting the profile competence that wants to build; a profile that will not be understood as static but like something flexible face with the continuous social changes and the different environments of participation in which it can be contextualized (3).

Moreover, the bases that support the professional work are taught in the University and specific attitudes and aptitudes specific to practice the profession of an adequate and honourable way are transmitted (4). The university occupational therapy studies (OT) must be built from a professional perspective, with inexcusable referent in scientific and methodological identity of the occupational therapists.

In this context, the new study plans of the university degrees have to answer to the needs demanded by society, favouring the labour integration and the recognition of the graduates of OT. (3)

EUROPEAN SPACE OF SUPERIOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The European countries have involved in the European Superior Education Space construction, controlled by the general principles of the Declaration of Bologna (1999,) that has persuaded an university reform that is favouring the progressive and slow inclusion of occupational therapists in the university Spanish scene(5).

The European convergence allows to implement an educative system similar in every countries of our idiosyncrasy and environment, in order to favour the movement of the students and professionals so that discrimination does not exist in the continental recognition for the professions in general and for the OT in particular.

The ECTS credit system's employment ("European Credit Transfer System") supposes a significant change in the academic Spanish university structure. With this methodology of teaching/ learning, what is searched for is to promote that the student to know the concepts and be able to explain the learned contents, acting – proving as- and practicing -doing-. In this novel and current university, the teacher does not limit itself to exhibit concepts, but teaches to the students to apply the knowledge in the daily labour, at the time that the student acquires the elaborated competences from the specific role of its profession (6). The teacher, intermediary agent between the training and the professionalization, transforms the provided information into applicable knowledges to real situations, what motivates the learning of the student. The student replaces its passive attitude in the classroom, typical of teaching classical model, by a dynamic commitment that facilitates the feedback of knowledge with the teachers.

The new models of work in the classroom will boost the inter professionals relations and improve the labour performance, promoting the very necessary interdisciplinary nature argued, reflective and well-balanced that allows to develop and boost the maximum ***the Functional rehabilitation Model, Personal Autonomy, Functional Adaptation to the Environment and Life Quality***, common model to several professional entities that allows to express the occupational therapist's identity from the Science of the Occupancy, of the physiotherapist from the Physiotherapeutic Science, of the speech therapist from the Science of the Human Communication, of the nurse from the Basic Care Science and of the specialist in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation from the Medical Science, between others (7). This interdisciplinary model, started in the International Classification of the Functioning, (CIF, 2001,) is a suitable way for the development of professional identity in the Health Science environment and supposes the path of more ethical attention and harmonica orientated to the integral attention of the person with chronic disability. The maintenance of this model, existing in the present time although immature, it will avoid the

monopoly attempts of the disability/dependence on uniprofessional and dogmatic way, dissonant dead weight of the European convergence.

Considering the positive and negative factors, we consider that the spanish university reformation foments the construction of the individual and collective identity of the future occupational therapists and it educates and balances, applied correctly, the action interdisciplinary and inter professional like prolegomena to possible and future trans disciplinary performances.

The responsible institutions of the OT Spanish Degrees, in answer to the new university models of teaching / learning and professionals of Functional Rehabilitation, Personal Autonomy, Functional Adaptation to the Environment and Quality of Life, will support the construction of study plans by and for the occupational therapists, integrating in an appropriate way to the rest of professors that participate in the teaching.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The academic, scientific or professional interest of the OT new degrees is justified in professional internal and external referents proved and experienced. Once defined the occupational therapist's identity that needs the social-labor environment, it can be defined the diverse components of the studies plans, namely the entrance profile, the general objectives, the access, admission and the student's registration, the convergent planning of the subjects, the human resources, materials and services, just as an estimate of the results linked to the expenditure profile and its reintegration in the social-labor environment (8, 9).

It is certain that the elaboration of TO academic qualify, requires of the contributions of professionals, professors and students, as well as the collaboration of the schools and professional associations, of throughout

nationwide as worldwide, to know with accuracy the own competitions and the development field.

With these human resources, although with the fundamental participation of the occupational therapists, the academic studies plans will contribute to define the specificity of the profession considering the demands of the social situation. The society needs of occupational therapists with a flexible identity to the perspectives and external necessities. In this context, to define the professional list favors design of subjects with programs and contents guided to the real necessities of those titled. So, the professors interact with the studying contribute model theory - practices, being especially the practice formation the one that contributes the previous experience to their premiere like qualified professional. The occupational therapists that act like professors or educational-assistance collaborators of practices, assume with their work a same responsibility, even bigger, that the university professor that imparts teaching theory. The occupational therapist directs the performances of the students that observe like to apply the theory in practice real situations, arising an enclosing of doubts and questions and learning "in situ" the activities characteristic of her profile. The experience of the real situations is always enriching, because it facilitates the approach to the professional activity with the help of the educational occupational therapists of practices, which they transform into relating and individual models. The students begin to be identified with their specific list with these performances, learning how to love the profession that they have chosen as differentiating element of their identity.

The universities are suffering a significant change that, without subtracting importance to the masterful classes, it impacts in the practice education to improve especially the future exercise of the TO profession. This change is product of the complaints of the managerial sector that he receives theorist professional with few abilities and attitudes to adapt to real situations.

Contextualized, we consider that the practice education transforms in the first and main identification element that it favors the professional quality from the moment of the incorporation to the occupational therapist's labor field.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, COMPETITIONS AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Why the occupational therapists need to define their profession continually? (10).

The professor owes to teach assisting to the competitions characteristic of each profession, in such a way that allows the students to *"learn the knowledge to face and to solve different types of situations related with his specific profession"* (11).

With the faculty's help, the TO student begins to forge her professional role getting the academic objectives and learning a series of general and specific competitions that let him to graduate, once concluded her formation stage, and to build her professional identity. The competitions - to know as -, they suppose an appropriate integration of the knowledge - to know and to understand -, abilities -to know how to make - and attitudes -to know how to be and to be - necessary for to hold later on their work (12). In occasions, like it happens at the present time with TO, an applicable defined series of competitions doesn't exist in all the countries, although there are homogenization intents guided to consensus an universal profile of generic and specific academic competitions to form the occupational therapist.

However, the objectives and the competitions designed for a TO degree demands the election of a faculty with an appropriate profile to the matter that imparts, as well as the appropriate election of the centers and institutions in those that the students carry out the practices pre - professionals. The profile academic - professional of the degree guide to all the educational ones, occupational therapists or not, in the consecution of an common objective: the

construction of the professional identity starting from the knowledge of the competitions, functions and fields of actuation of those qualified. . It is evident that to work with competitions facilitates the conceptual assertiveness of the educational one that, for link to relate of knowledge areas, is imparting the education in different degrees to their previous vocational training. Although it seems evident this affirmation, is common that certain lectures sectors they don't know with accuracy the professional's identity that are forming, developing competitions that are outside of the mark of TO. This situation is fomented and it propitiates in those university degrees, generated in the last decades and implanted assisting to social recent demands that rely on kindred sciences of those that acquire models or reference marks. This is the case of the TO degree, that is based in biologic and social sciences like the Medicine, the Psychologist or the Social Anthropologist. These pillars that sustain, a priori, the development of the Occupation Science, they transform somehow into an obstacle to define the professional identity of the occupational therapists (13).

What we do refer when speaking of professional identity inside the university context?.

According Mérida (2006) (14), *"the construction of the professional identity supposes, among other things, to assume a certain way of being located before the construction of the knowledge on the part of the students."*

The university professors assume the role of transmitting the contents that have acquired throughout their professional trajectory, acting like a model for the student, that to take advantage of the professor's exhibitions to learn, to ask and to question or to rebut the knowledge. The educational one should possess some abilities, dexterity and attitudes that characterize him/her as such. The professor begins his term planning the subject based on some contents, objectives and competitions to acquire for the student once overcome the matter. The subjects should be coherent with the expenditure profile that seeks the plan of studies of the specific degree. The competitions to acquire for a student of Medicine in the subject of Anatomy are not the same ones that for

a TO student, since the applicability in the labor contexts is different. In this sense, it is convenient to remember that the professor should adapt the contents from the matter to the specific competitions depending the degree in which imparts the training. The University must be coherent in the choice of the educational ones implied in each educational project, because the absence or lack of a professional defined identity among the faculty that imparts classes in the degree, favour an insufficient and incorrect education in the university student and to promoter the creation of professionals profiles with unaware functions to their field competition. Result of these anomalous ones is the employment of work techniques on the part of some occupational therapists that are characteristic of other kindred professions, such as the Physiotherapy or the Psychologist (13).

Also, the TO multidimensionality doesn't favor the construction of a academic - professional profile uniform. In this context, for some professors not occupational therapists, it can be an arduous task to expose the contents of their matters with the perspective of a profession with which they don't feel identified and/or with the one that they have never shared their work. In Spain, is habitual that TO is ignored for much of the kindred professionals that they impart education in the degree and with those that labor relationship is shared. In that sense, it is necessary that the professors not occupational therapists commit in the teaching / learning of a profession that is not his, what supposes them an effort still bigger. In the TO Spanish university education, this situation gets complicated especially if it is considered that the university faculty corresponds in his majority had titled doctors, what is summed up as a factor of additional distortion. The Spanish TO graduates need, still today, to be licensed in other degrees to consent to the Doctorate, situation that soon to be history with the European convergent reformation begun in Spain.

The occupational therapists professors should guide and to advise to their non therapists colleague to effects of favoring the delimitation of contents and competitions with sense and occupational inters that allow to form roles and

identities adapted to the competitions characteristic of the degree and the profession. According Kielhofner (2006) (15), "*the human occupation is the center of our profession, using the participation in occupations like agent therapeutic.*"

The development of the European convergence in TO, supposes that the occupational therapist's professional identity should be gotten implementing study plans that express competitions and contents prepared in a "mixed net of coherent convergent" traverse (vital cycle) and longitudinal (fundamentals and tools). If the new university models of mixed and coherent convergent approach to the demanded reality for the society, the Spanish occupational therapists will have that to become aware gradually about the relevance and importance of the basic and applied investigation, as well as the setting of their knowledge to the public specialized through the scientific literature with the objective of manifesting the entity and the greatness of the TO profession. In this situation, if the formation of the student's professional identity depends in great measure of its identification with the professional role, the maintenance and development of the occupational therapist's identity in the exercise of its profession it is developed with his/her participation in the attendance, the education, the management and the investigation, being this last the one that will contribute more foundation, prestige and solidity to the Occupation Science and TO in all its slopes.

SPAIN, UNIVERSITY REFORM AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

In Spain, the National Conference of Occupational Therapy University Schools Directors (CNDEUTO, 1999), has taken initiatives in favor of a modern development of university and professional TO, such as the realization in 2003-2004 of the White Book of Grade of Occupational Therapy of the National Agency of the Quality Evaluation and Accreditation (ANECA), with an itemized analysis of the generics and specifics competitions of TO in which they participated democratic occupational therapists, professors and Spanish

students of TO. Later on, "*European Network Occupational Therapy Higher Education*" carry out, in a similar way, a study of TO competitions that enriched and improved the previously analysis carried out by CNDEUTO. Two Spanish university centers (Coruña and Zaragoza Universities) have already presented the new degree of Grade of TO for verification in ANECA, to effects of beginning with the new plan of studies the next course 2008-2009. The sixteen centers remaining are building their plans of studies at the moment with the intention of beginning a new stage during the course 2009-2010. In CNDEUTO the adscription has been fomented from the Spanish university centers to ENOTHE and an annual representative has been designated in each European congress from ENOTHE-Ankara (Turkey), at the same time that contacts have begun with the Executive director of this European association, Hanneke Van Bruggen, in the Catholic University of San Antonio from Murcia (2007) and in the A Coruña University (2008). CNDEUTO has consensual for unanimity the inclusion of the ENOTHE objectives and competitions in the Spanish Ministerial Order that to establish the requirements for the valuation of the official university degrees that will authorize for the exercise of occupational therapist's profession, pending of being published in the Spanish State Official Bulletin (BOE). This regulation will transform into the legal foundation of an university new identity, previous of the professional identity that we seek for our occupational therapists. Certainly, in Spain it is considered important the presence of a biomedical pillar in TO since the majority of the degree occupational therapists is reinserted laborly in the sanitary field, contrary to the countries of the North of Europe in those TO is not based in the conceptual approaches derived of the medical knowledge. Evidently, the TO study's plans must be coherent so much with the labor and social environment as with the principles of European convergence, to grant homogeny coherence guided to the education of a solid professional profile around the Occupation Science. We consider that the diversity of the professional profile in the European mark enriches TO. Countries that have implanted again this degree and profession exist. The National School of TO (ENTO, 1961) in Spain, of sanitary character, been founded in Madrid by Mr. Heliodoro Ruiz, rehabilitative doctor, and for

Mrs. Mercedes Abella, occupational therapist and Gold Medal of TO 2008, it has been the pioneer educational center of Spanish TO. Later on, in a second historic stage (1990), diverse university sanitary centers (Medicine, Nurse) and of Psychologist they have fomented the development and implementation of degrees of TO. This situation has contributed the genesis, the inters and the structure in the development of TO, although at the present time it supposes a slowness in the specific development of the Occupational Science. However, the European university reform allowing us to build new degrees of Grade in TO, with sense and intention convergent and occupational whose main promoters are being for the most part the occupational therapists. The beginning of the third historic stage of Spanish TO will stage, after seven years of intense work in the Spanish universities, in the ENOTHE Congress 2009 of A Coruña TO. From these pages, we invite the occupational therapists and professors of European TO know the occupational therapists and Spanish professors that will arrange to met with all us in this beautiful "city of the reflections" of the north of Spain presided by the light of the oldest lighthouse Roman and active of the world, the Hercules's Tower.

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