

MENTAL HEALTH, INSTITUTIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL- HISTORICAL-POLITY PERSPECTIVE. A PROPOSE OF PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING. THE CASE OF LA PLATA CITY. 1966-1969

*Agustina M. E. D'Agostino**

Abstract

This article presents the training proposal by Psychology students of the Faculty of Psychology at the National University of La Plata (1969). Techniques used include interviews and document analysis. We make the following conclusions: Students were interested in a historical and political social project, and wanted to include group, institutional and community practices in training. Was present the commitment to transform society. Mental health was conceived as a result of socio-economic context. A critique of the hegemonic medical models is observed, psychiatric care of mental illness

Keywords: Mental Health; Politics; Institutional Psychology; Programmes.

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to describe and present some reflection on a training project in psychology at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP).

In 1969 the students of clinical psychology presented a document with some aspect to reconsider the relation of the discipline with the social problems, with groups, the institutions, the politics and the community. Also the note included contents of "Institutional Psychology".

The career of Psychology in the city of La Plata began in 1958, and offered the title of Psychologist with specialties: clinical, laboral and pedagogical.

The Plan presented by Calcagno and Monasterio proposed an eclectic profile, in which the role of the psychologist in the field of the clinic and psychotherapy was limited to the figure of the physician's collaborator (Dagfal, 2009, 2014).

The first graduates and psychology began to take an interest in a psychoanalysis of social tendency, and the contributions of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association

* CONICET Scholarship; teacher of Psychology School, National La Plata University. E-mail: dagostinoag@gmail.com

(APA), of the Argentine Association of Psychology and Group Psychotherapy (hereinafter AAPPG), and The teachings of Liberman, Pichón-Riviere, Bleger, Pavlovsky and Ulloa.

The period that we address in this work, includes the years between 1966 and 1969, between the government of Onganía and the Cordobazo. At the end of the sixties began to form the student groups that later would be political protagonists of the decade of the seventy (Barletta, 2001; Castillo & Raimundo, 2012).

The struggles of the world labor and student movement (Droz, 1986), the questioning of a scholarly university far from the social reality, the conceptual contributions of the institutionalists, became active references for these young people.

This coincides with advances in anti-psychiatric movements. Cooper published with Laing "Reason and violence" in 1964 and "Psychiatry and Anti-psychiatry" in 1967, these experiences, along with that of Basaglia in Italy, denounced the practices of confinement and mistreatment carried out in asylums. Argentina was no stranger to this movement, which could be observed in Colonia Federal, or in the Hospital Estévez in Lomas de Zamora (Carpintero & Vainer, 2004). In the psychoanalytic field, the tendencies that in the seventies will produce the rupture with the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association (APA): Document and Platform

What Psychology did psychologists want to study? Some characteristics of the external proposal.

The Rosario Experience and the Operational Groups

The Rosario Experiment directed by Pichón Riviere in 1958, was an intervention in the form of a social laboratory. It consisted of a work with thirty groups of a thousand professors and university students, workers of the port, boxers, housewives, grouped as they arrived at the inscription. The team included more than twenty coordinators, among whom were David Liberman, José Bleger, Edgardo Rolla and Fernando Ulloa.

After of the Rosario Experience, was organized a seminary to systematize the operative techniques (Ulloa, 2012; Vezzetti, 1999). This Experience was a novelty for the community and institutional work in Argentine, and advance for the conceptualization of the operative groups. Pichon Riviere related that Experience Rosario was the beginning of his psychoanalytical vocation, and the earliest brand in his work of the community experiences (Pichón- Riviere, 1960).

Based on this Experience groups of students were conformed to work in community problems. Also an interdisciplinary perspective was proposed in some university courses (Dagfal, 2009).

Psychology and Mental Hygiene

The Mental Hygiene was thought in his relation with the economical and social's structure. The causes of mental illness and the support of mental health were assimilated.

lated with social-economic factors, and with the uncertainty index and family structure. The anxiety and conflict had their causes in the economical order and they caused insecurity. From this perspective the work should be centered in the health not illness, and groups should promote the mental health (Pichón-Riviere, 1966).

Bleger (1966) considered that the Mental Hygiene must be part of public health. The psychologist shouldn't wait to illness to work and should base his social function in the public health and mental hygiene. The psychological aspects of health and illness must be considered social phenomenon. The objectives of mental hygiene are based in "do something for the mental illness". The psychiatric assistance must be carried on to more human conditions (betters hospitals and better attention), and the prevention should have a priority order.

Institutional Psychology

According to Bleger (1966), the psychology should to contribute improving the human life, cross the social life and include the study of groups, institutions and community. Therefore, the psychology should have social importance and the psychologist a social function.

The institution is a level of psychologist's work, not only a place to work. By this reason, the institution must be examined from a psychological point of view, his objectives, leaderships, relations must be studied. A second level is the intervention groups, and a third by the community work. Bleger affirmed that the psychologist was prepared to be psychotherapist, but it could be considered a problem and a failure of training if the psychologist's work be limited to individual psychotherapy Bleger (1966).

Method

In first place, we analyze programs of Psychology career, of Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP), between 1966-1969. In a second order, we made In-depth interviews to UNLP's psychologist graduates between 1966-1969 (n=15).

The type of sample was decisional no probabilistic (Yuni & Urbano, 2006).

key selection criteria:

- To be UNLP's psychologist graduate between 1966 and 1969.
- To be worked at public institutions, between 1966 and 1969.

Results

The student's perspective about training

The interviews revealed a positive valuation about carrer's contents and this plurality. The graduates express that the eclectic training was an incentive and an apport to diversity. However, it was insufficient to respond the practice's problems and not delimited a specificity of the role.

On the other hand, the disagree was between the teachers, who transmitted European knowledge, and the students who pretended a psychoanalytical and local training. Possibly, this disagree was the reason why the students resorted to external courses, study's groups and supervisions, in the APA and the AAPPG.

"We traveled once a week to Buenos Aires, to seminars that were dictated in the APA and in the AAPPG. Our teachers then: Liberman; Pichón Riviere; Bleger; Pavlovsky, Ulloa" (Interview L, 2014)

"There was Mrs. Corsico. She didn't agree very much with our thought, because at that moment our formation was much more psychoanalytic, and she came with much data of England ... for me the important difference is that we left of the specialty, I am clinical psychologist" (Interview ERG, 2013)

"And ... they were short ... we were formed for an intellect, a particular reasoning, we started from the analyzable beings ... we had to have many rules ... the rest was like a barricade ... I always felt like a psychology worker but I never lost my frame" (Interview CL, 2015)

"Well the formation of degree at that time was that we were going to learn this with Buquelman, the other with I do not know who, that with such and such, Pavlovsky came, we were going to see it, I was doing therapy with busts that was who made psychodrama ... A formation of degree plus all that you were incorporating during the degree, but not of postgraduate because I was there and in an area that was totally unknown for me" (Interview MEB, 2013)

Operative groups

For the year 1964, the Professor Edgardo Rolla (1964), included the work with operative groups in the signature "Depth Psychology" (UNLP- FHyCE). This subject aroused anxiety in the students by the contents that it presented. This group has the objective to expose the critical and objections about contents presented at the theoretical class.

Angel Fiasché (1964), who was APA's member and psychotherapy's Professor (FHyCE- UNLP), presented an intensive field work realized by students, an interdisciplinary researched model, based in interviews and surveys. The team was composed by medicals, sociologists and psychologist. Apparently, some aspects of the "Rosario Experience" were taken in these programs.

In the same way, the references to team work were presents in the institutional work of the psychologist. Likewise, the contention and discussion groups were designated to patients and team. The groups were offered to resolved institutional situations, like take decisions or to collaborate in the entrance or discharge of the institution

"We did therapeutics group in the hospital with neurotics. In my stay in the hospital I learned interdisciplinary work" (Interview RG, 2014).

The resistant to a psychology without ideology

Mauricio Knobel was a Professor of Mental Hygienic (FHyCE- UNLP). The author proposed that the student's resistant to this subject was funded in the polemic about the psychologist limited role like psychotherapist. The students had prejudices about Mental Hygienic and his adaptative goals. Knobel wanted to differentiate himself from that argument making a distinction between "feeling" and "adaptation" concepts. The principal idea was that the psycho-hygienist shouldn't be to service a polity religious or moral idea, and must use his psychological knowledge to avoid the illness and psychological-social maladjustment. The Mental Hygienist should be familiarized with basically concepts of general psychology like dynamic, work, study, recreation and with the habitual psychopathologies; because these aspects could be recognizing and valued by community (Knobel, 1966).

Dissociation between theory and practical

The right work in psychology should be an investigation about what's happened at intervention moment. The practice isn't a derivation of science, on the contrary is his core, the scientific investigation isn't above or out of practice, is inside it. The problems should be extracted of the practice and social reality. A psychologist is an investigator if study the reality, object of his work (Bleger, 1966).

In this way, Bleger proposed that Institutional Psychology is a field of psychology and not a use of it, this affirmation means an advance to the research and the profession. In line, the ECRO of Pichón-Riviere (1969) included the ideology and analysis of self referential scheme. The discussion was centered in the professional and clinical practice of psychology connected with the investigation about reality. The "methodology" wasn't out of professional and clinical practice.

Armando Bauleo and Differential Psychology

In 1968, Armando Bauleo was proposed as Professor of Differential Psychology. Thanks to this change, the subject started to include the operative groups and social construction of personality. The subject programs included texts like "History of madness", "Mental disease and personality" of Foucault, "Concrete psychology" of Politzer, "Critique of dialectical reason" of Sartre, and other texts of Bunge, Bleger, Maisonneuve Asch, and Pichón-Riviere. In 1967, the author, published "the psychologist like change agent", be a "change agent" was attend the conflict and to ease the functionality of the groups (Bauleo, 1969 In: Bauleo, Bleger, Caparrós, Kesselman, *et al.*).

The 1969 Propose

In 1969 the Study Plan of 1960 was changed for a new one by for a year. This Plan proposed an only title without specialty and a postgraduate. The goal was empower the psychology to work in investigation. Some transverse contents in the 1960's Plan like social psychology and groups were bounded. The subjects were grouped by fields: psychological, biological, social and methodological.

The subject "Differential Psychology" of the Plan to 1960 changed his name by "Personality Psychology" in the 1960'Plan.

Considering this situation the students presented a note and a new proposal to the Clinical Psychology (1969). In the students' note they denounced that the Plan was presented "behind his back" "the plan ignored de professional practice in clinical and was centered in the psychologist like investigator". The students proposed a training about the institutional problems and solicited to include "Institutional Psychology" like a subject.

The debate was between theoretical training and practice training. They insisted on an interdisciplinary work and especificity. Besides the students demanded training oriented to groups and institutions. As a result of theses disconformities the students began attending courses in Buenos Aires.

The 1970's Plan take into account some of suggestions of students, such as the contents of Institutional Psychology that were included in "Social Psychology II". The specializations were abandoned and the postgraduate courses were presented additionally. Some topics were presented as "Introduction to the methodology of psychological research" and "Methodology of psychological research" that could mean the failure of a project that doesn't separate theory and practice.

Conclusion

In this paper we presented some characteristics of the training for psychology in the UNLP between 1966 and 1969. It is often said that psychologists of this period were interested in a "social psychoanalysis", such as the division between "endogamy psychoanalysis" and "social psychoanalysis" which reduced a complex problem to one dichotomy and insolvent opposition.

From the above we can affirm that the interest was in an ideological conception about the professional duty and the relation with the social problems. The idea of disease caused by the social-economy context led to be commitment to transform society. The critique of hegemonic medical care and the need to local knowledge were key to proposing a change in training.

The group formation was included in different subjects and programs, although the students considered that this formation wasn't sufficient. Apart from this the Community Psychology, Rural Psychology, primary prevention, Antipsychiatry, the Marxist theory, were aspects desired by students to the formation.

Rather than demarcating areas of work, specialties or characteristics of "outward" psychoanalysis, what was included in these interests had its anchor in understanding discipline in its possibilities of disentangling the subjects of the dominant capitalist system. In Marxist code: the study of social reality is contained in the praxis of the psychologist; no one can be a clinical professional without researching the society, groups or institutions on which it operates.

The proposal of a psychology committed to social reality accompanied the militancy for socialism and social justice, and questioned the instituted ways of society.

We consider Psychology's priority task is to investigate how the senses are produced that imagines the psychologist's practice distanced from social reality and the historical and political context.