

ANALYSIS OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE SYLLABUS IN PSYCHOLOGY COURSES: CURRENT CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The objective was to analyze the syllabus of the Vocational Guidance (VG) disciplines offered in Psychology courses at Brazilian universities. For the survey, a spreadsheet available on the website of the Ministry of Education (MEC) was extracted. A total of 742 Higher Education institutions were selected for final analysis, 234 of which offering the VG subject were retrieved, and 70 of these were verified. The diversity of subject titles was analyzed, with VG being the most recurrent with 40.8%, in addition, 70% belonged to the private network and 88.6% were compulsory subjects. The Southeastern region represented 40% of the analyzed syllabus, with the workload of 60 hours being the most predominant. It was found that the discipline is often offered in the eighth semester. Thirteen categories were established for analyzing the content of the syllabus. The results were examined through the scientific literature, indicating the need for greater depth in the content of the syllabus, in order to enable better training for vocational counselors.

Keywords: vocational guidance; menu; university education; psychology

Análisis de las propuestas de Orientación Profesional en cursos de Psicología: desafíos actuales

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es analizar las propuestas de las asignaturas de Orientación Profesional (OP) ofrecidas en los cursos de Psicología de las universidades brasileñas. Para la recopilación se sacó una hoja disponible en el sitio del Ministerio de la Educación (MEC). Se seleccionaron para análisis final 742 instituciones de enseñanza universitaria, siendo recuperadas 234 con oferta de la asignatura de OP y de estas, 70 propuestas se verificaron. Se analizó la diversidad de los títulos de las asignaturas, y Orientación Profesional el más recurrentes con el 40,8%, además de eso, el 70% pertenecían a la red privada y el 88,6% eran asignaturas obligatorias. La región Sudeste representó el 40% de las propuestas analizadas, y la carga horaria de 60 horas la de mayor predominancia. Se verificó que la asignatura es frecuentemente ofrecida en el octavo semestre. Se estableció 13 categorías para análisis del contenido de las propuestas. Los resultados se examinaron mediante la literatura científica, indicando la necesidad de más profundización en el contenido de propuesta, con la finalidad de posibilitar una mejor formación a los orientadores profesionales.

Palabras clave: orientación profesional; propuesta; enseñanza universitaria; psicología

Análise das ementas de Orientação Profissional em cursos de Psicologia: desafios atuais

RESUMO

Objetivou-se analisar as ementas das disciplinas de Orientação Profissional (OP) oferecidas nos cursos de Psicologia das universidades brasileiras. Para o levantamento foi extraída uma planilha disponibilizada no site do Ministério da Educação (MEC). Foram selecionadas para análise final 742 instituições de Ensino Superior, sendo recuperadas 234 com oferta da disciplina de OP e destas, 70 ementas foram verificadas. Analisou-se a diversidade dos títulos das disciplinas, sendo Orientação Profissional o mais recorrente com 40,8%, além disso, 70% pertenciam à rede privada e 88,6% eram disciplinas obrigatórias. A região Sudeste representou 40% das ementas analisadas, sendo a carga

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horária de 60 horas a de maior predominância. Verificou-se que a disciplina é frequentemente ofertada no oitavo semestre. Foram estabelecidas 13 categoriais para análise do conteúdo das ementas. Os resultados foram examinados mediante a literatura científica, indicando a necessidade de maior aprofundamento no conteúdo das ementas, a fim de possibilitar uma melhor formação aos orientadores profissionais.

Palavras-chave: orientação profissional; ementa; ensino superior; psicologia

INTRODUCTION

Ever since its emergence, the Vocational Guidance (VG) area has been going through transformations in its theoretical as well as practical conception according to the needs that are present in the social and political context. According to Ribeiro and Melo-Silva (2011), for over a century, many investigators attempted to understand and explain the role played by workers and occupations in different cultural groups, while developing diverse theoretical focuses, as well as techniques and strategies for vocational assessment and intervention, while most surveyors do it by means of the psychological sciences.

The growth of VG over the last few years is due to the fact that it concerns a process that facilitates the choice and construction of professional trajectories, while searching for the development of self-awareness and awareness of professional activities (Bardagi & Nunes, 2017). This process is based on different stages, and one of them is the professional reaffirmation that is characterized by professional motivations and interests during the study or preparation for performance in future professional life (Álvarez & Iglesias, 2020). Thus, the most important objective of the VG is to prepare individuals for professional decision-making and for career administration (Ambiel, Campos, & Campos, 2017; Mitran & Pârvu, 2017; Perry & Shanon, 2017).

In this sense, VG practice does not restrict itself to a specific public or life moment because it can be applied on diverse populations (Oliveira, Santos, & Dias, 2016). Nowadays, new VG and career perspectives have emerged. They are fueled by changes in the relations between people and their careers (Guichard, 2015). Thus, discussions and the effective application of VG in the 21st century must consider the current situation of the working world, which is characterized by constant changes, instability, occupational transitions, and creativity. As a result, there is a comprehension that workers can establish new relation standards to offer their services (Ambiel, 2019; Bardagi & Nunes, 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2016).

With the transformations in the theoretical and methodological point of view for the VG area, as well as changes in the behavioral profile of new generations, influenced by the democratization of technology, it is evidenced that psychology professionals must keep up with these updates (Machado & Oliveira, 2019). Conse-

quently, it is important to point at the current theoretical and practical suppositions that are inherent to VG and their relevance for education and the teaching of the contents of the discipline (Noronha & Ambiel, 2006; Nunes, Noronha, & Ambiel, 2007). Regarding constant changes, is it possible that education institutions will update their contents?

Universities are major promoters of knowledge in the VG field, with a highlight on psychology courses, which are the ones that offer the most disciplines and internships in the area, followed by Pedagogy courses. Their structures lead to the creation of research centers and the offer of extension services to the community (Melo-Silva, Lassance, & Soares, 2004). Some institutions provide VG content in specific disciplines that are dedicated to these themes, while others refer to more comprehensive disciplines that approach other themes such as Educational Psychology and/or Organizational Psychology. Besides, this discipline might be included in the mandatory syllabi or be offered as an optional discipline (Luna, 1999).

The study realized by Ambiel, Zuanazzi, Sette, Costa and Cunha (2019) aimed at analyzing the syllabus for Psychological Assessment in Psychology courses. The hours dedicated to these disciplines was considered insufficient. In addition, Paula, Pereira and Nascimento (2007) verified that Psychology students also classified the competences taught for their professional practice in different contexts as insufficient. In this scenario, it is by means of continued education, developed in a detailed way, that students will be able to become professionals who are ready for their practice and able to provide quality services to the society (Ambiel & Hernández, 2016; Borsa, 2016; Freires, Silva Filho, Monteiro, Loureto, & Gouveia, 2017; Lamas, 2017).

Melo-Silva, Bonfim, Esbrogeo and Soares (2003) realized research with 84 Brazilian professional advisors, psychologists, and pedagogues. The results evidenced that the most often mentioned need was formation and capacitation of professional advisors in order to face the challenges of today's world. In these studies, there was a highlight on the realization of research works, especially longitudinal ones, and intense advertisement of results among professionals. Public policies that make advice available and accessible to those in need were mentioned and there was emphasis on the importance of the amplification and universalization of VG at

schools, with a focus also on high school students in addition to other levels of education, as well as workers and unemployed people.

Still concerning the study by Melo-Silva et al. (2003), it was observed by the authors that 30% of the psychologists considered the VG discipline in their formation as excellent. 28% rated it as weak. 24% did not express their opinion, and 18% considered it good. The assessments that considered the discipline weak and the absences of assessment registrations hint at the need for further development of professionals in the area regarding the contents, methods, and perspectives for practice.

Nunes, Noronha and Ambiel (2007) analyzed the taught contents in VG disciplines in the Psychology graduation and assessed 25 syllabus that were available on the websites of the universities. The results indicated a slight variation in the used nomenclatures. They also verified that most VG disciplines were included in the mandatory curricula of institutions. It was also possible to observe that most of the disciplines were offered in the second half of the graduation courses, with average workloads of 62.6 hours. At last, the analysis of content of the syllabus was employed with a division of 19 answer categories, which was a sign of a certain emphasis on the introductory elements of VG and on the testing employed to that end.

Since the 1990s, there has been a growth in the number of studies and publications in the VG area (Ambiel, 2019; Mitran & Pârvu, 2017). However, it does not correspond to the applied practice and, much less, to professional formation. In this same period, there was a decline in the offer of disciplines and of internships in VG in higher education courses in the Psychology and Pedagogy area in Brazil (Lisboa & Soares, 2017).

According to Luna (1999), when we talk about knowledge construction, the adopted teaching techniques are fundamental. Concerning VG, it is important to consider theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and the necessary personal conditions for professional practice. Concerning the formation of professional advisors in Psychology courses, it is necessary to discuss the Pedagogical Project, which must include the profile of the professionals in formation. Thus, if we consider the decrease in the availability of VG disciplines throughout the years, it is a good idea to ask ourselves what the profile of a truly prepared professional is for this context, and whether such profile is being produced during graduation.

Lisboa and Soares (2017) postulate that the role played by professional advisors nowadays must be contextualized in accordance with the political, economic, and social situation. In addition to preparing students to the future, professional advisors must also focus on urgencies and uncertainties that permeate the

working world while casting individuals as protagonists in this process. The formation of professionals must promote reflection, knowledge construction, and critical analysis on the objective and subjective situations of students, who must be stimulated towards new forms of action. Students must also develop their potentials, self-awareness, and awareness of their own skills. Finally, students must be prepared to act with utmost competence and ethics.

Based on the presented theoretical and empirical conjectures, the present research aimed at mapping and assessing the syllabus of VG disciplines available for Psychology graduation courses in Brazilian institutions. The choice of syllabus as an analysis element can be justified by the fact that their contents must represent primordial aspects to be developed in the disciplines, regarding expected knowledge as well as skills and practices to be developed with students. Furthermore, understanding how these transformations make themselves present in the current educational model adopted by education institutions, regarding the content of the disciplines in the Psychology course, is fundamental for understanding the practice of Psychologists in the context of VG.

METHOD

Criteria and procedures for searching for syllabus

It is a documental study whose analysis sources were the available syllabus for available syllabus in the VG discipline of Psychology (bachelor's degree and degree with a teaching certificate) from Brazilian public and private institutions. In order to do so, in May 2019, an Excel worksheet was produced and made available on the website of the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC) for surveying active graduation courses in Psychology at registered institutions regarding the five regions of the country.

Subsequently, researchers checked the websites of every registered institution in order to verify if they had any VG disciplines in their curricular programs and, after that, whether these curricular programs were available to the general public. It is important to emphasize that institutions with more than one unit were regarded as a whole, that is, the syllabus were not independently assessed. In cases where the discipline menu was not available in the institution's website, an email was sent to the course coordinator or to another available contact (contact us, general email), explaining the objectives of this research and requesting a valid menu within a period of 30 days.

It is important to emphasize that all criteria were established by the authors of the present article, with the creation of categories in group and onsite training for the standardization of procedures. At first, researchers provided information regarding the name

of the institution, whether it was active, inactive, or in extinction on the MEC website (only the active ones were assessed), and, finally, whether it was equipped with a VG discipline. For the organization of search results, researchers proposed analysis categories organized onto a digital worksheet.

As criterion for the selection of syllabus, researchers created key words that could be present in the names of disciplines, such as: Professional Guidance, Vocational Guidance, Career, Career guidance, Career Advice, Selection, Career Management, Professional Choice. The initial selection ended up in a total sum of 1.082 institutions that, after application of the exclusion criteria, came down to 742, according to what will be detailed in the Results and Discussion section.

Procedures and assessment of syllabus

The selected syllabus were organized into an Excel worksheet with the information referring to the following analysis categories: title of discipline, Brazilian region of the education institution, character of the discipline (mandatory or optional), administrative category of the institution (public or private), semester and offered hours, and description of menu.

Besides that, descriptive analysis and assessments of the VG discipline syllabus were realized. The descriptive analysis referred to attendance data for each one of the aforementioned categories. Regarding documental analysis of content, the selected syllabus were divided into text units, according to the precepts of Bardin (1977), so that the content could be explored as analysis units. In order to do so, categories were created in accordance with the topics in the syllabus and then individually assessed. Data were stored in accordance with the identification of the same topic in the other syllabus. The objective of this survey was to identify the most frequently approached topics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the proposed objective, results were analyzed in accordance with two perspectives: first, researchers realized descriptive analyses, and then the contents of the syllabus were explored as analysis units, that is, qualitatively. Thus, researchers first present the results of the whole search and, subsequently, the ones related to the discipline syllabus.

Initially, 1.082 education institutions offering psychology courses were found in the MEC website. In these institutions, five were excluded because their courses were classified as "inactive" and 18 were excluded because they were "in extinction". Thus, 1.059 institutions were subsequently considered for analysis. After that, 317 institutions were excluded because they were duplicated in the MEC website. That is probably due an update in the electronic system. In the end, 742 institutions of higher education were selected for final

analysis.

The next step was the survey for the presence of VG disciplines. Considering active institutions and the ones where it was possible to obtain information concerning the presence or absence of the VG discipline, researchers obtained a total sum of 498 institutions. 48 were public and 450 were private. Out of this sum, 29 public institutions and 205 private institutions offered, effectively, the VG discipline, reaching the sum of 234 institutions.

Concerning the analysis of the syllabus, 70 were recovered. They were present on the institutions' websites, or electronically provided via email, by the coordinator of the Psychology course. Thus, the results presented in the sequence refer exclusively to the 70 assessed syllabus.

Concerning the names of the disciplines, researchers verified over ten titles. The most recurrent one was Professional Guidance (40,8%), followed by Vocational Guidance (22,5%), Career and Professional Guidance (8,5%). There was also Guidance for Professional Choice (2,8%) and Processes of Professional Choice (2,8%). The other titles (15 articles found) appeared only once. Consequently, it is possible to say that, despite such diversity, there is predominance of references to Professional Guidance, followed by Vocational Guidance, which obtained numbers that were above the others.

According to Nunes et al. (2007), such fact might indicate that all VG content is located in disciplines with more comprehensive nomenclatures, which would not necessarily contemplate a formation with specific, in-depth topics within these themes in graduation courses. Besides that, according to what has been previously highlighted by Noronha and Ambiel (2006), the diversity of nomenclatures is related to conceptual confusion in the area. Many terms are used to define Professional Guidance. Thus, it necessary to organize and define more clearly the used terms and the approached contents.

Regarding the administrative category of the institutions, 70% were private and 30% were public institutions. Concerning, the character of the discipline, 62 (88,6%) were part of the mandatory curriculum and 8 (11,4%) were optional. According to what was pointed by literature, some universities offer the VG discipline in their curricular programs in an optional way (Luna, 1999).

It is important to mention that graduation in Psychology allows professionals to practice in diverse areas after graduation, including professional guidance. In this sense, the non-mandatory character of the discipline related to VG throughout graduation makes it impossible for students to come into contact with this area and get to know how to conduct the specificities of

their practice when necessary. Formation in Psychology aims at approximating theory and practice (MEC, 2011), while the common core of this course constantly explains the need for a formation that contemplates the basic command of psychological knowledge and the capacity to use them in different application contexts.

Concerning the regions of the institutions that contained syllabus, they were diversified. Table 1, presented in the sequence, displays the results.

Based on Table 1, it is possible to verify a rather disproportionate distribution among the institutions that offer disciplines with VG syllabus, with a predominance in the Southeast and South regions, while the most concentration is in the Center-western region, followed by the Northern region. Such result corroborates findings by Ambiel et al. (2017), who in their review of literature found a predominance of publications related to the Southeastern and Southern regions of Brazil. Thus, it is possible to assume that in these regions of the country, there is a greater interest in teaching and in the systematization of VG research.

Thus, two points deserve to be made. The first one concerns the predominance of the Southeastern region in most of the analysis that consider academic variables, whether in the number of graduation courses registered by the MEC, or also in post-graduation courses and in the number of doctors (Ambiel et al., 2017; Ambiel, Zuanazzi, Sette, Costa, & Cunha 2019). The second point regards the fact that the present research was realized only with 70 graduation syllabus. However, the reduced number indicates, though less comprehensively, the aforementioned hypotheses, and more comprehensive studies are needed for a more in-depth assessment.

Concerning the hours of the disciplines, the concentrated average was 63,70 hours, while disciplines with 60 hours (32,9%) were predominant, followed by 40 hours (14,3%) and 80 hours (11,4%), respectively. The minimum number of hours was 30 and the maximum was 136 hours. Such data shows the discrepancy among institutions when it comes to the number of hours dedicated to the VG discipline, corroborating the

Table 1. Region of the Education Institutions with VG Syllabus.

Region	F	%
Center-West	4	5,7
Northeast	14	20
North	6	8,6
Southeast	28	40
South	18	25,7
Total	70	100%

Source: the research

findings by Nunes et al. (2007) regarding a predisposition towards workloads with over 60 hours. On the other hand, in the mentioned study, the average time destined to VG was 63,70 hours, which corresponds to twice the number of discoveries of the present research.

It is possible to suppose that, as time goes by, despite increasing interest in the VG area (Mitran & Pârvu, 2017; Perry & Shanon, 2017), it has been given less time in Psychology graduation courses. Such a statement is in accordance with Lisboa and Soares (2017) on the decline in the availability of the discipline and of internships in VG in higher education courses in Psychology and Pedagogy in Brazil. It is important to remember the objective of VG, which is to prepare individuals for professional decision-making and for career administration (Ambiel, 2019; Ambiel et al., 2017). Therefore, in the current scenario of the working world, with constant specificities and changes, such discipline plays a vital role, leading to the possibility of recurrent action by capacitated professionals in the face of new demands by society.

According to the results, most of the disciplines take place in the second half of the graduation course. The discoveries are displayed for verification on Table 2.

According to what is displayed on Table 2, it possible to observe that, most of the time, the VG discipline is offered in the eighth semester, followed by the seventh. 17,1% of the institutions did not present this information, and as we have already explained, 11,4% refer to disciplines offered optionally. This result resembles the discoveries by Nunes et al. (2007), in

Table 2. Semesters in which the disciplines are offered.

Semester	F	%	% accumulated
3	1	1,4	1,4
4	7	10	11,4
5	5	7,1	18,5
6	3	4,2	22,7
7	9	12,8	35,5
8	15	21,4	56,9
9	4	5,7	62,6
10	3	4,2	66,8
3 e 7	1	1,4	68,2
7 e 8	2	2,8	71,0
Optional	8	11,4	82,4
Not mentioned	12	17,6	100
Total	70	100%	

Source: the research

which the most concentration of VG disciplines also took place during the fourth year of the Psychology course. By considering the importance of the theoretical/practical character of the VG discipline, it is a good idea to provide it right after half the course. Thus, students would present the required skills for professional practice. Regarding the practical character of the disciplines in the Psychology course, Borsa (2016) affirms that academic planning must guarantee, by means of time and planning of curricula, the availability of individual and group activities that include the assessment of strategies, resources, techniques, and the use of psychological instruments.

The description presented in the content of the syllabus was also analyzed. In order to do it, 13 categories were established, according to what was displayed on Table 3. It is worth it to emphasize that the organization of categories took place by means of the analysis units, according to Bardin (1977), and researchers counted the frequency at which each category was identified in the 70 analyzed syllabus.

According to Table 3, most of the syllabus were based on: Practice, Techniques and Instruments (19,5%), Theories (17,3%), Definition/Concept (12,3%) and Individual Differences (11,8%). Such fact reveals a

rather remote tendency to associate, essentially, VG with the employment of psychological instruments and techniques. According to what was indicated by Ambiel (2019), the history of VG, as a subarea of knowledge, gets mixed with the history of psychological assessment when it comes to its appearance and development in the 19th century. However, no matter how much the advancements in the instruments of assessment have contributed to a more scientific character for these two VG areas, nowadays, the standardized instruments must play a supporting role in the promotion of self-awareness, which is disconnected from causal, inexorable relations.

Furthermore, it is also possible to evidence how much the issue of definition of concepts and theories surpasses in importance the graduation courses that offer the VG discipline. Concerning that fact, it is possible to highlight it because it consists of introduction elements for understanding the themes (Nunes et al., 2007). However, researchers are also expected to attribute importance to more specific, in-depth contents for the discipline. For example, it is possible to mention the issue of ethics in VG, which was approached in only 1,4% of the analyzed syllabus.

Thus, it is worth it to question whether the

Table 3. Categories of menu analysis, description and frequency.

Topic	Description	f	%
History	History of OP in Brazil and in the world and new tendencies in the area	21	9,5
Definition/Concept	Fundamentals and conceptual models	27	12,3
Theories	Theoretical Approaches and Modes	38	17,3
Practice, techniques and instruments	Different tools for practice in VG	43	19,5
Ethics	Ethical Aspects in VG practice	3	1,4
Elaboration of programs and projects	VG Development and implementation	11	5
Career Development	Vocational Development from childhood into adulthood	8	3,6
Individual Differences	Interests and skills	26	11,8
Choices throughout life	Decision-making throughout life	6	2,7
Social, Family and Economic Aspects	Relation between professional factors and issues	22	10
Identity and advisor's role	Formation of professional advisor	7	3,2
Diagnosis	Group of information pieces with a purpose	2	0,9
Information	Data of informational character on VG and the jog market	6	2,7
Total		220	100%

Source: The research

disciplines concentrate, mostly, on issues related to the employment of instruments and techniques, as well as theoretical definitions in syllabus, most often optional and with reduced hours. What is the profile of the professional advisor that is being developed? Furthermore, when do the courses deal with more modern models for understanding the themes, especially when it comes to the issue of self-awareness of individuals regarding their identity and the current demands of the job market?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study aimed at analyzing the syllabus of VG disciplines, in the Psychology courses, offered by the higher education institutions in all regions of the country. This survey becomes relevant due to transformations in their theoretical as well as in their conceptions that are brought to the social and political reality. Thus, this analysis leads to the promotion of new practices and contents, especially when it comes to curricular organizations for the area, while following scientific advancements throughout the years.

The results indicated a few aspects that were similar to other studies on the themes, as well as important differences to be considered, such as reduced hours for VG disciplines and a preponderance of more introduction elements present in the syllabus. Such aspects lead to problematizations when it comes to theoretical and practical skills that have been developed by students in the Psychology course, who have the possibility of acting as professional advisors. It is possible to verify the need for more in-depth content for syllabus in order to promote a better formation for professional advisors, as long as their practice contemplate current tendencies in VG, with scientific and theoretical rigor for the profession.

Despite their originality and relevance, the present study presents some limitations. One of them is the fact that only 29% of the identified institutions initially provided the menu for the VG discipline, whether on the website or after electronic request. Thus, the analysis employed in the research referred to the syllabus that were available and found. It is important to emphasize that such data are the fruit of an accurate portrait and that the curricular programs of the institutions are in constant change. Finally, the diversity in the nomenclature of the discipline makes it difficult to provide certificates that regard the inclusion criteria and the object of study established in this research. So, the most frequently used terms in the literature are chosen. Nevertheless, many others might refer to the themes and were not found.

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