



30. FROM THE PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE GERONTOLOGIST TO THE PROCESS OF CARING

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

This communication aims at contributing to the discussion on the professional knowledge of gerontologists. The gerontologists that we refer to are individuals with a degree in gerontology. The results of a study conducted under an FCT research project reflect the study of the professional knowledge of professional graduates in social sciences and humanities who work in organizations of the social sector.

The empirical data stem from: (1) ethnographic observation (12 non-consecutive days of work that took place within a month, or approximately 96 hours of observation) with a gerontologist, having as main objective to study the interactions of the professional gerontologist in the context of working in an institution for the elderly, (2) four in-depth interviews with two gerontologists focused on individual perception on the issues of aging, the workplace and career paths, (3) five in-depth interviews with directors of employers of gerontologists, on these skills.

The study revealed the existence of 18 different kinds of professional knowledge, which result in a direct interaction of the gerontologist (caregiver) with the subject (person cared) that constitutes a process of caring.

We found that the knowledge of the gerontologists is co-constructed in the interaction caregiver / person cared for, they are in relation to the complex scientific and unscientific knowledge that they mobilize, are expressed by technical and strategic skills, relational skills, prudential skills and discursive skills, are promoters of confidence, self-efficacy and empowerment of either the caregiver or the person cared for, they are benchmarks of professional identity and culture, they are liberators, driving innovation and promoting excellence in service.

These kinds of knowledge are expressed in an integrated manner (complex, cyclical, shared, reflected and therefore always revisable) in performing the tasks of caring. This integration of values, skills and knowledge differentiates the work of the gerontologist and it is the essential process of caring. This, as a central element of professional identity of the gerontologist, once shared, is a defining element of the professional culture of that gerontologist. This is essential to the process of professionalization, since at present (under the conditions of post-modernity), professionalism is increasingly defined by the quality of service and recognition of it by "customers", the reflective capacity of professionals, by their versatility and ability to work in interdisciplinary contexts.

