

Contextual dynamics, individual resources and employability: The case of university professors

Dinámicas contextuales, recursos individuales y empleabilidad: El caso del profesorado universitario

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Received: August 12, 2019

Accepted: March 9, 2020

Background

From the multidimensional perspective of employability, the processes of insertion, permanence and mobility of professors in labor markets emerge as a result of the complex and situational confluence between contextual dynamics and individual resources. From the above, it is necessary to consider different analysis dimensions for its understanding. The socioeconomic, cultural and political dimension in which legal conjunctural issues of labor markets are addressed. The institutional dimension of education and training devices, which includes emerging logics of academic work in the university context. The organizational and labor relations dimension that analyzes evaluation criteria, working conditions and processes related to the bonding, mobility and retirement of professors and the individual dimension that refers to creditable, relational and psychological personal resources that have an impact on employability. The contributions derived from these dimensions illustrate the complex, situational and relative nature of the phenomenon that is dependent on both the context and the individual.

Method & Procedure

From this approach, it was sought to analyze the configuration of the employability of university professors. For this, contributions from the specialized literature were systematized and stories about work histories in professors linked to public and private universities in the Spanish and Colombian context were analyzed. The selection of the referred contexts allowed analysing geopolitical dynamics and conjunction of differential labor markets. In order to have access to the stories, 24 in-depth interviews with teachers with more than ten years of academic experience were carried out in different ways of bonding, working and dedication conditions. Once the information was obtained, transcription and analysis of the content of the stories was carried out, considering 15 categories of analysis related to the four dimensions connected to employability. For the analysis process, the Atlas Ti software was used as support.

Results

The results obtained in differential space-temporal contexts reflect the incidence of reciprocal relations, although asymmetric between contextual dynamics and individual resources that have an impact on the configuration of employability. The socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics of the environment permeate the academic work, generating new social assignments, working conditions and evaluation criteria for the entrance and mobility of professors in the labor markets. In this context, people are challenged to adapt to emerging dynamics, to become visible, and to demonstrate resources and capabilities to respond to current and future demands of work. In response to the above, different positions were identified that have a differential impact on career management, work relationships and employability settings.

Discussion & Conclusion

This generates contributions to the understanding of employability as a complex, multidimensional and situational phenomenon, depending on both the context and the individual. This position questions the individual approach of the employability that represents one of the main trends in last decades. Among the interviewees, there were people with

high preparation, adaptability and ability to respond to the demands of labor markets, in multi-employment and precarious working conditions, that could be substantially different, if the person changes his working segment or market. This could show that a person of low employability, in one context, could be of high employability in another. Consequently, we could point out that it is the relationship between the supply of individual resources and the structure of job opportunities, which largely explains the configuration of employability, which represents a relative potential estimation of difficult apprehension, but with concrete consequences for working people

Keywords: context, employability, individual, labor relations, university professors

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Financial support: Programa de Becas de Postdoctorado en el Extranjero, Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID), Chile.

How to cite this article: Botero-Sarassa, E., Rentería-Pérez, E., & Malvezzi, S. (2020). Dinámicas contextuales, recursos individuales y empleabilidad: El caso del profesorado universitario. *Psicoperspectivas*, 19(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-vol19-issue1-fulltext-1741>



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