

Socionomy and selection in a financial organization¹

Ana Carolina Poles Borgonovi*; Ana Cristina Rosa Garcia; Cyntia Maria**

Parro***

Instituto de Pesquisa e Intervenção Psicossocial (Interpsi).

e-mails: *acborgonovi@hotmail.com; **anacristinarg@hotmail.com;

***cyntiaparro@gmail.com

Revista Brasileira de Psicodrama. 2013. 21(1), 11-23.

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to present a case study of a selection process carried out in a financial organization, in which socionomic techniques and methods were used. In this process, we have worked with the professional role and the power relations that permeate it. Besides diagnosing the relationships and the organizational processes, it was possible to reconsider and recreate institutional roles in a creative and spontaneous way. Individual and group ludic activities were conducted in the selection process, focusing on the professional role. Approaching selection from this angle, it does not only identify the right person for a certain position, but also engenders institutional changes, by enabling the recreation and redefinition of professional roles and performing an organizational diagnosis.

Keywords: socionomy, group, power relations, selection, institutional role

INTRODUCTION

There are few academic references about personnel selection, mainly regarding to individual competences evaluation in group context. This paper intends to discuss the theme according to socionomy in order to open up for discussion and develop alternatives for acting in selection context.

The aim of this paper is to present a case study of a selection process carried out in a financial organization, in which socionomic techniques and methods were used,² which analyzes the power relations – latent and manifest – arising in the institutional roles representation.

The use of socionomic resources enables a group formation, as well as the analysis of its development and greater spontaneity in group experience. In the selection process,

¹ This article took first place in Febrap Award 2012 (18th Brazilian Congress on Psychodrama), in Scientific Article category written by a Psychodrama student or by a psychodramatist graduated in Level I.

² The conception of this selection proposition was developed under Marlene Magnobosco Marra's direction.

the use of these tools grants spontaneous expression and a better evaluation of the candidates, considering the relational dynamic of the group of participants and their individual characteristics.

In this proposition, 202 candidates were evaluated in the selection processes held in 2008-2011, taking as reference a professional profile defined institutionally. This profile includes some competences such as communication, leadership, relationship, strategic approaches, among others – which are evaluated in the whole process.

The case study refers to a two-day evaluation conducted in groups of 15-18 persons, with the assistance of the institution's senior management and the employees graduated in Psychology as evaluators. The selection aimed at a strategic position in the company which is responsible for the result of a group of agencies of a certain area. The approval in this selection is a precondition for using the candidate in the position.

The techniques used have enabled the work with the candidates' professional roles and, thus, the evaluation of their competences and the proximity to the competences required by the company.

The power relations permeate the institutional relations and are important to comprehension and critical analysis of organizational context, that is why these relations were clearly presented in group experiences held in the evaluations.

ORGANIZATIONAL PREMISES AND REFERENCES

The selection processes are made in order to identify professionals with potential for practicing many functions in the company, considering future performance indicators: competences that make up the professional profile required for a certain position.

In this perspective, Zavaglia (2006) states that the selection process aims at identifying a person with a profile for a certain position and also promoting the employee's satisfaction in that position. In this way, a diagnosis of the company regarding its employees is provided, helping them also in their professional career.

Recruitment and selection area of the institution has existed for more than 40 years. The creation and conduction of the selection processes are done by employees graduated in Psychology, with specific training provided by the company to act in the selection process.

One of its theoretical basis is Phenomenology, which proposes to examine the experience as it occurs, analyzing its totality, and not reducing it in parts. In the selection processes, the objective is to evaluate the phenomenon in the way it presents itself at that moment, releasing the prejudices concerning the candidates.

There are three phenomenological concepts that support the performance of the evaluators in the selection processes: intentionality, intersubjectivity, and limit of perception.

Intentionality: according to this concept, the consciousness is always intentional, that is, subject and object are linked in the process of perception and judgement of reality. When the subject observes an object, he gives some sense to it based on his experiences, values, knowledges and his relation to the internal and external world.

From that view, subject and object are constructive parts of the same world. The subject understands the world through his point of view; and as he understands the world with his own way, he also sees himself as part of this world. Perception is a creative process, mediated by the active interests of the subject (GHEDIN & FRANCO, 2008).

In the selection process, the evaluators are attentive to their own intentionality and

their value judgments about the candidates, so that they only consider in the evaluation what is brought by the candidate during the selection process.

Intersubjectivity: refers to the intercommunication among the consciousnesses, the encounter of the subjectivities. Forghieri (2009) emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity concerning past experiences, since the world receives its meaning through the encounter of the world perceptions of various subjects.

In the context of selection, from their individual perceptions, the evaluators try to achieve a consensus, consolidating what is common in different perspectives of evaluation.

Limit of perception: refers to the selective character of human perception. The individual sees what he wants, needs or seeks. In this way, something that is not perceived by a certain subject can be perceived by others. Lima (2011) declares that the limits of perception of each subject depend on their individual experience.

In selection processes, it is up to the evaluators to remain open to the phenomenon to be evaluated in order to understand it in a broad and dynamic way, and to be able to be surprised at all times by aspects that had not yet been perceived in the candidates and by those highlighted by other evaluators.

CHALLENGES OF PRACTICE: SOCIONOMY AS ALTERNATIVE

In order to evaluate the candidates' professional profile, individual and group ludic activities were conducted, focusing on professional role. The premise is that the group experiences enable the expression of behaviors, and the relations established by the subject in the group bring up individual and relational aspects that permit the evaluation of competences profile evaluation for the position.

The challenge of identifying this competences profile of the candidate in the selection have indicated the need to look for other theoretical references in Psychology that complement and broaden the possibilities of acting and evaluating. It was found that, increasingly, candidates have been preparing for selection process, so they artificially represent the role they think is ideal for their approval.

According to Moreno (2008), cultural conserves "can operate, in a certain moment, as a disciplinary force, and in another, as an obstacle" (p. 53, our translation). The method used by the company in the processes was providing institutional conserves in a form of application; furthermore, the fact that the candidates have been participating in internal selections – so they know what is expected of them in those events – also constituted an obstacle to the spontaneity of individuals in the relations with others.

In the evaluations of this case study, socionomic methods and techniques were used for the construction and conduction of the activities by the evaluators, aiming at allowing greater spontaneity of the candidates in group action.

The activities were created considering the stages of group formation. When starting a group work, at first, people do not know each other, and the level of anxiety and expectation is very high. Everyone is wondering what will happen in that new space. Datner (2006) describes this moment as an amorphous phase, in which there is a feeling of estrangement, people either do not know each other or when they know each other they do not recognize themselves in that circumstance of the event. At that moment, they are focused on themselves, they still cannot see the other.

The second phase of the group is when the first contacts with other members

begin. Relationships are being created between me and the other, by reactions of attractions, repulsions or indifference. Moreno (2008) approaches the creation of relationships in a group and the development of roles: "Each person, since he is the focus of many attractions and repulsions, also appears as the focus of many roles that relate to the roles of other people. Since he always has a set of friends and another set of enemies, he also has a set of roles and a set of counterparts, which are at various stages of development". (p. 89, our translation).

According to Datner (2006), the third phase begins, and the subgroups arise from the relations of attraction and repulsion. People develop roles that determine the formation of these small subgroups, and the group begins to understand its functioning and the relationships established therein.

The fourth phase is characterized by the formation of the group identity. It is described by Datner (2006) as a phase of mutual relations, when the group is already mobilized by common goals and establishes a clear communication among the members. In this phase, the leaderships in the group and the conflicts created by the acceptance or not of the leaders arise.

During the two-day selection, it was possible to provide a space for the development of all these phases. The groups started the first day with a very high level of anxiety and expectation for the new situation and also because they knew that it was about a turning point in their career. Throughout the activities, the group was forming. The interactions began in pairs, then in trios or quartets, in which they presented and discussed a little about their objectives in the process. At that moment, the relations of attraction, rejection and indifference began to emerge in the group.

By the end of the first day of evaluation, the subgroups and the roles played by each member have been already recognized. Leadership and definitions of territory have appeared. On the second day, the interaction among the participants has evolved, and it was possible to propose activities that involved the group as a whole. The group identity has been perceived throughout the process, and it was possible to analyze the members' participation and to evaluate their behavior in the group.

The preparation of the activities carried out throughout the two-day selection was made in order to facilitate the gradual constitution of the group: it began with activities focused on the reception of the participants, warm-up and initial interaction; the dramatizations and activities that involved the whole group were proposed after the first two phases had been accomplished. At the end of the process, they shared the experiences related to the selection, and then there was the closing of the process.

The group development was also considered for the creation of each selection activity. All activities were composed by, initially, a warm-up, before the experiences, and then a sharing with the group the feelings experienced through the activity and, finally, a reflection on the relation between what had been lived there and the perception of the candidates' reality.

The warm-up is a fundamental part of the group formation process. It is in this phase that the first interactions, attractions and rejections of the members of the group begin, it is a way to prepare them for the activity that will be proposed next. Williams (1998) says that the warm-up process aims at preparing the group members for a group process.

In the dramatizations, going through situations on the stage similar to those experienced in the exercise of their professional role, the candidates have presented how they relate to others, and thus have told about themselves, the group and the company. Because of the dynamics of group relations, the conduct of activities has required that the psychologists were able to reconsider and replan their intervention at all time and has

extended the possibilities of evaluation due to the greater spontaneity of the candidates. In addition, the selection made it possible to carry out institutional diagnoses, perceived by the institution executives who have participated as evaluators.

Regarding the sociodramatic experiences, Nery (2010) states that when the individual assumes a social role in the scene, he portrays all those who live this role in his community, bringing collective and personal conflicts to the role. In this way, the stage experience enables to highlight individual characteristics and rescues a spontaneous action, and also it is an interesting alternative for evaluation in the selection process.

Sharing, in turn, refers to the moment when candidates expressed their emotions and feelings concerning the group and what was experienced. After that, at the end of the activities, there was a reflection on what they had been experienced on that occasion, trying to relate it to the experiences outside that space, a significant moment to rethink the ways of placing themselves in an external environment.

It was also used, in the final stage of the selection, the sharing as an opportunity to close the process, in which the candidates could resume what they had been lived during the two-day evaluation.

Therefore, in the process activities focused on the professional role, the objective was to bring them to the scene, so that, based on the experience, the competences to play that role were expressed by the candidates, and also to enable them to reflect on this professional role as well as their career choices in the company.

To understand the professional role, it is necessary to differentiate it from other social roles played by the subject. Moreno (2008) conceptualizes role as a way of how an individual acts in a specific moment of his relation with the other. In this way, each subject develops several roles in his life as a way of relating to others and to the external world and also inserting himself in society.

In an organization, Datner (2006) distinguishes two types of roles: professional and functional. The professional role refers to the role played by the subject in his action to work, regardless of the position assumed. It is linked to individual aspects of professional experiences and technical knowledge required in the development of their profession.

The functional role, in turn, refers to the organization. It is the description of the position and its attributions by the company, it is the profile expected by the company for a certain function. In this way, the professional role accompanies the subject; and in a selection process the evaluators want to know the professional role of each candidate in order to verify if it is close to the functional role sought by the company.

One of the techniques used, role-playing, allows the role training, his development on the stage, that is, in a protected space. Datner (2012) states that role-playing takes into account three aspects: the “know how”, which are the knowledge necessary to develop their function; the “know to be”, which refers to the characteristics of the person in relation to their attitudes and relations; and “know to act”, which refers to the knowledge, competences and attitudes that are mobilized by the person concerning the work.

Role-playing was used in the selections in a group experience, in which the candidates were asked to choose and represent a conflict situation at work that involved the position in focus of the selection.

This experience allowed the director to deepen questions about the dynamics of the group relations that have appeared on the scene, and enabled the candidates to construct alternatives and recreate situations experienced in the professional role. Participants were encouraged to express their feelings and sensations about that scene, a certain role played by them or other, and they were invited to rethink the conflict scene in order to change their outcome, exploring other possibilities for that situation. With the

scenes, it was possible to better analyze the profile or the proximity to the desired functional role, as well as to bring candidates and evaluators to the reflection about their professional performance and new ways of playing a management role.

Dramatic game, as a ludic action with symbolic characters, was also used to work out the conflicts of group dynamics and power relations, so that it did not provoke anxiety in the participants, since they are representing characters that are not part of their reality. Conceição (2012) declares that dramatic game brings the spontaneous and creative experience in place of a more reflexive attitude of the subject in relation to their roles and manages the emotions aroused.

A dramatic game was held at the end of the second day of the selection, at the time the formation and development of the group was at a stage where group identity had already been created.

As a ludic environment, the candidates were not so tense to represent the characters and this has facilitated the emergence of spontaneity and the evaluation of competences such as leadership, management style, strategic approach. The proposed game had a defined hierarchical leadership and provided the group to experience some moments in which there was a validation of formal leadership, and other in which this leadership was not legitimized. In the latter case, informal and authentic leaderships have emerged, with significant action to resolve conflicts.

POWER RELATIONS

When formal or informal leaderships emerge, they may or may not be legitimized by the members, and are determined by the manifest and latent power relations in the group. According to Moreno *apud* Nery (2010), when roles are more defined, the group competes for power and uses it.

For Foucault (1979), power permeates all relations established in the group:

third methodological precaution: not to take power as a phenomenon of massive and homogenous domination of an individual over others, from one group over others, from one class over others; but to be aware that power – . . . is not something that can be divided into those who possess it and hold it exclusively and those who do not possess it and submit to it. Power must be analyzed as something that circulates, or as something that only works in chain (p. 183, our translation).

Thus, the possibilities of power evaluation are broadened, as regards the way the group is constructed and the way it circulates among the participants in the group.

Throughout the two-day selection, it was possible to observe the power in the interactions in the group; however, dramatic game has evidenced more clearly the group leaderships, according to the moment of the group and the nature of the proposed activity.

Foucault (1979) states that the individual is the effect of his power and he is the one who shares it. Power, therefore, does not focus on an individual, but appears in the relations with others. In this perspective, the role-playing activity of the professional role also enabled to evaluate the dynamics of the power relations more directly linked to the organizational hierarchy.

RETURN OF SELECTION DATA

At the end of the selection, a consensus was reached among the evaluators to consolidate the perceptions and evaluate the candidates' proximity to the functional role. The consensual result was constructed in the intersubjectivity formed in the group of evaluators.

The last activity of the selection process was the moment of the individual feedback, in which the candidates were informed about the proximity to the profile required for the position. Using socionomic techniques and methods, the evaluators could more easily provide a true and closer feedback to the candidates' self-perception, because they could perceive them more spontaneously and thus better identify the profile competences.

The interaction that occurs in the feedback is an extension of the bond between evaluators and evaluated candidates established during the selection process. And, in this way, the use of the resources of socionomy has extended the possibilities of this interaction and has made the feedback process easier.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Using socionomic methods and techniques in the selection, it was possible to work the professional role in a creative and spontaneous way, rethinking and recreating institutional roles. The selectors have developed the process approach and the candidates' profiles, evaluating them from a group perspective. Thus, it was possible to understand, in an institutional context, the relational dynamics of the candidates in the professional role representation.

The group, in a context of greater spontaneity and creativity, made it possible for individual aspects to be more easily highlighted and well evaluated. The activities carried out and the relationship established between evaluated candidates and evaluators have strengthened the demonstration of individual competences. This has facilitated the consensus among the evaluators and, consequently, has enabled the construction of better quality feedbacks.

The techniques have also enabled the process to become more formative for the candidates; when experiencing the "as if" of the professional role, the candidates could recreate ways to act in that role and even modify the institutional model.

In addition to making possible the evaluation of the specific competences for the position, such as leadership, the selection has instigated reflections on the institutional hierarchical relations, by evidencing existing power relations in the organizational culture. The theme "power" is pertinent to think critically the evaluation context considering that: the function in question has a strategic relevance for the company; the approved candidates are seen by others with a differentiated power in their institutional role; and the evaluators are senior executives of the company, who have significant representativeness and power in the process.

Besides identifying people, the selection is based on having a formative character. More than that, it starts to generate institutional transformations, by enabling the recreation and resignification of professional roles and allowing the performance of diagnosis of organizational relationships and processes.

Based on this experience, other selections have been made following this new approach, as well as the improvement of the training of the selectors involved in the

processes and changes in the management of the business areas.

Acknowledgement

We thank Marlene Magnobosco Marra, who has inspired us and has guided us on this journey and has enabled us to rethink our practice under a new, more spontaneous and creative approach.

REFERENCES

CONCEIÇÃO, M. I. G. Jogos dramáticos. In: M. P. Nery, & M. I. G. Conceição (Orgs.). (2012). **Intervenções grupais: o psicodrama e seus métodos**. São Paulo: Ágora.

DATNER, Y. (2006). **Jogos para educação empresarial: jogos, jogos dramáticos, role-playing, jogos de empresa**. São Paulo: Ágora.

DATNER, Y. (2012). Role-playing: Um método sacionômico. In: M. P. Nery, & e M. I. G. Conceição (Orgs.). **Intervenções grupais: o psicodrama e seus métodos**. São Paulo: Ágora.

FORGHIERI, Y. C. (2009). **Psicologia fenomenológica: fundamentos, métodos e pesquisas**. São Paulo: Thomson Pioneira.

FOUCAULT, M. (1979). *Microfísica do poder*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal.
GHEDIN, E., & Franco, M. A. S. (2008). **Questões de método na construção da pesquisa em educação**. São Paulo: Editora Cortez.

LIMA, E. L. (2007). Do corpo ao espaço: contribuições da obra de Maurice Merleau-Ponty a Análise Geográfica. *GEOgrafia. Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia*, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro, v. 9, n. 18. Recuperado em 20 mar. 2013 de: <http://www.uff.br/geographia/ojs/index.php/geographia/article/viewArticle/226>.

MORENO, J. L. (2008). **Quem sobreviverá? Fundamentos da sociometria, da psicoterapia de grupo e do sociodrama**. Tradução Moisés Aguiar. São Paulo: Daimon – Centro de Estudos do Relacionamento.

NERY, M. P. (2010). **Grupos e intervenção em conflitos**. São Paulo: Ágora.

WILLIAMS, A. (1998). **Temas proibidos: ações estratégicas para grupos**. Tradução Silvana Finzi e Carmem Fischer. São Paulo: Ágora.

ZAVAGLIA, T. (2006). **Gestão de pessoas: desafios, tendências e expectativas.** Campinas: Editora Alínea e Átomo.

Ana Carolina Poles Borgonovi. Psychologist in training in Psychodrama at Instituto de Pesquisa e Intervenção Psicossocial (Interpsi).

Ana Cristina Rosa Garcia. Psychologist in training in Psychodrama at Instituto de Pesquisa e Intervenção Psicossocial (Interpsi).

Cyntia Maria Parro. Psychologist in training in Psychodrama at Instituto de Pesquisa e Intervenção Psicossocial (Interpsi).