

Tracked ways and contributions for the development of Occupational Therapy in Brazil

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Abstract: This essay reflects the paths I have taken in occupational therapy during 40+ years in this profession, presenting briefly the main important activities and participation of my career. It is possible to visualize the route followed in the choices of research issues and the beginning of a series of projects and directions to growth and recognition of the Brazilian occupational therapy. The participation with the research funding grants and the strengthening of research activities are presented. Recounts the history of the foundation of the Occupational Therapy Program at Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), the first research laboratory in Occupational Therapy in Brazil, the Journal of Occupational Therapy - UFSCar and also the Postgraduate Program in Occupational Therapy UFSCar (PPGTO). Some of the main challenges faced in teaching, community activities, the university management and the production of knowledge in occupational therapy are still registered, which contributed to the development of the profession.

Keywords: *Occupational Therapy, Higher Education, Universities.*

Caminhos trilhados e contribuições para o desenvolvimento da Terapia Ocupacional no Brasil

Resumo: Este ensaio reflete os caminhos trilhados por mim na Terapia Ocupacional durante os mais de 40 anos de profissão, apresentando sinteticamente as iniciativas e as participações mais relevantes de minha carreira. Nele, é possível visualizar o percurso seguido para as escolhas dos temas de pesquisa e o início de uma série de projetos e de direcionamentos dados para impulsionar o crescimento e o reconhecimento da Terapia Ocupacional brasileira. A atuação com órgãos de financiamento e o fortalecimento das atividades de pesquisa foram sinalizados. Reconta-se ainda a história da criação do curso de Terapia Ocupacional da Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), bem como do primeiro laboratório de pesquisa em Terapia Ocupacional do Brasil, da revista Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar e do Programa de Pós-graduação em Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar. Estão ainda registrados alguns dos principais desafios enfrentados no ensino, na extensão, na administração universitária e na produção de conhecimento na área, que contribuíram para o desenvolvimento da profissão.

Palavras-chave: *Terapia Ocupacional, Educação Superior, Universidades.*

1 The Beginning of Everything

The reason for my choice for Occupational Therapy was similar to many colleagues who, by the end of their teenage years, were not very clear on the profession they would choose. I wanted to help people, make a difference in their lives, and in this search, I came across the description of the Occupational Therapy profession in the book of CECSEM - vestibular system of the Biological area in São Paulo, created in 1964 -, which interested me because it seemed to meet my expectations of professional and personal life. It was the first year that Occupational Therapy participated in an integrated vestibular. I was approved at the University of São Paulo (USP) and, in 1971, I faced the challenge of knowing the profession that would make me here, now, telling about my professional career.

The course was on the fifth floor of USP's Medical School, on Dr. Arnaldo Avenue, in São Paulo, Brazil, and the setbacks were part of our daily lives: we wanted to know more about the profession, but there was no consistent theoretical and methodological support, leading students to the constant crisis of professional identity.

Seeking to understand the function of the profession, I visited places where occupational therapists worked in the first year, but I could not get an explanation of what was the base of the Occupational Therapy: they seemed to offer activities at random, without concern for their meaning for the people, and this was one of the first crises I lived in the course.

In the second year, I started voluntary internships at the Association for Assistance to Defective Children (AACD) in São Paulo; an institution specialized in the rehabilitation of children with cerebral palsy and developmental disorders. There, I began to understand child development, to see meaning in the activities that were taught to children and to think closely with an Occupational Therapy professional. I spent a part of the afternoon in AACD's library, researching the cases I was assisting, allowing me to gain more security and mastery over my role in that space.

In the third and final year of the course, the vocational internships showed a greater range of performance in this profession. After my internship at a special school, psychiatric clinic, and neurological rehabilitation center, my last internship took place in a clinic for children with multiple disabilities, in which I remained working after my graduation in 1973. Wanira Scilla, the owner, was an extraordinary supervisor, who helped me to observe what was, in

fact, relevant and to mature professionally. During a part of the year of 1975, I also worked in the Pestalozzi Society of São Paulo, where I provided care for the development of cognitive and social skills in adolescents.

Even while I was in the last year of the Occupational Therapy course, I enrolled in the Licentiate course at USP, at night. Born and raised in a family with many teachers, I initially denied this possibility, but at graduation, teaching began to attract me. However, when only two subjects were needed to complete this training - which was in the classroom internship - I was informed by the coordinator that I could not attend them, since the training of a licensee was not authorized by the Ministry of Education (MEC) for Occupational Therapy or other courses in the area of Health. Thus, I interrupted that dream only with a certificate of the subjects that I studied.

2 New Challenges in São Carlos

In January 1977, I moved to São Carlos with my first child, a year and a half old, and the second child of my three children, only 15 days old.

The Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (APAE) was one of the few rehabilitation institutions in the city, and I was hired in early 1977. I had the role of guiding the teachers there, but I also attended many cases.

3 Post-graduation

Several professors of the Special Education Postgraduate Program (PPGEEs) of the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) developed research at APAE. Talking with them, I was interested in the program because I saw the possibility of better informing my practice in the post-graduate course, expanding my knowledge, unveiling the world of research and preparing for the academic career that attracted me. I enrolled in that program in 1979, at a time when almost no Brazilian occupational therapist did post-graduation studies.

Doing post-graduation in another area had several challenges: learning another language, in the case of the area in question; Learning to do research, since our training did not include anything in this respect; To develop research in Special Education and for learning to be meaningful, it was necessary to "bridge" between the new knowledge obtained and Occupational Therapy. I then sought, for my research, a theme that approached the two areas, Special Education and Occupational Therapy. I had

attended many children with Down Syndrome, and I knew of the difficulties of verbal communication of this population. In the study of Spitz (1980) on the interaction between mother and child, I developed a comparative study, trying to understand better how the nonverbal interaction between mothers and their children with and without Down syndrome occurred (EMMEL, 1985). The next step would come with the doctorate, whose theme was motivated by my activities in the UFSCar clinic - future Special Unit Nucleus of Attention and Research in Health (UENAPES) and current Health-School Unit (USE) -, where it offered practical subjects and supervised the internships with children and adolescents. In my doctoral project, I investigated how the social interactions of children between 7 and 9 years old occurred during group games (EMMEL, 1990).

4 Emergence of the Undergraduate Course in Occupational Therapy at UFSCar

In the first months of 1978, I was surprised by the news that the undergraduate course in Occupational Therapy was being implemented in UFSCar - it had received authorization to operate in April 1977 -, by Prof. Dr. José Rodrigues Louzã, doctor, professor of Occupational Therapy course at USP, my former professor. Knowing that I was living in São Carlos, he invited me to teach a class to the first group of students who entered the course in August 1978. Until that moment, I was the first occupational therapist with whom the students were taking contact. In March 1979, I was hired as a professor at UFSCar, with the semester already started. In the first semesters, I took all the specific course subjects (Fundamentals of Occupational Therapy, General Occupational Therapy, Therapeutic Activities) until I could share this responsibility with the new colleagues.

Many things were becoming to my life: besides the beginning of teaching at UFSCar, I had just joined the PPGEE, and I was waiting for my daughter's arrival in May of the same year.

As I took on the burden of the new course, Prof. Louzã, who until then had assumed all the responsibilities of the implementation of the course, protracted his arrivals in São Carlos and in August 1979, he left the coordination and set up of the course for my management.

Analyzing the profile of the course initially offered, I realized that it lasted three years and offered training aimed at the medical model. I then faced my first challenge of the program reform, and we were able to implement, even for the first group, a four-year program with a list of specific Occupational Therapy subjects from the beginning of the course, Human Sciences subjects inclusion and increasing the hours of internship (approved by the UFSCar Teaching and Research Council on November 9, 1979).

São Carlos still had no structure of appointments for the Occupational Therapy course to fix and train its professionals. Thus, it was necessary to prepare the spaces of the city for the practical action of the students. With a few colleagues who had just joined as teachers, we started the proposal of offering an Occupational Therapy service in the existing institutions in the city. In Santa Casa de Misericórdia de São Carlos, we had the additional work of building a sector, which involved all the physical planning of structure, equipment, and materials.

The lack of knowledge of Occupational Therapy by the community of São Carlos and by local health professionals was another problem, faced with the implementation of a project to raise awareness and concern about this profession in the city and region. It involved personal contacts with professionals, case discussions with city doctors and lecture cycles open to the entire population, which were the triggers for creating a larger event that would bring together professionals and students around the subjects of Occupational Therapy. Thus, the I Week of Occupational Therapy at UFSCar was born in 1980, which I organized with the students of the classes of 1978 and 1979, and it continues to this day.

Life at the university was very intense, and I participated in activities that occurred in several of its sectors. There was a "buzz" showing a growing university, and this encouraged us to make whatever claims we deemed necessary to make it the best in the country. In this spirit, I got involved with so many demands, Occupational Therapy, and the University.

As we became aware of our course and the work of UFSCar, we were also required to advise on new proposals for teaching Occupational Therapy. This is how I integrated the consultant group of the State Education Council, to issue technical opinions regarding municipal high schools, and the Culture and Education Ministere (MEC/SESu) Verification Commission, for authorization, accreditation, and

re-teaching of courses and institutions, where I also participated in the Committee of Specialists Teaching Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, to analyze processes for the authorization of new undergraduate courses.

I also participated in works with other educational institutions to assist in the pedagogical projects of the courses. I would also like to highlight the *ad hoc* consultancy that I have with the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), the Foundation for Research Support of the State of São Paulo (FAPESP), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) - UFSCar Research Department - PIBIC / PIBITI.

5 Undergraduate Teaching Activities

Teaching Occupational Therapy to future professionals in the area was a significant challenge in the 1970s. This was because the undergraduate course in Occupational Therapy at UFSCar was one of the first in Brazil to structure a four-year program with specific subjects in practically every semester. The scientific production in the country was almost nil, and access to foreign literature was quite limited. The professionals in the area did not have the tradition of writing and disseminating their knowledge, and this made it even more difficult to search for national theoretical references, which also compromised the professional's training.

With all these difficulties, it was up to us to seek ways of researching and producing contents that fit the training of our students, with sustained support for the practice of this professional, which I always tried to do in my classes on the subjects of Occupational Therapy Fundamentals, Occupational Therapy Applied to Childhood and Adolescence, Analysis of Activities, Observation Techniques, Observation Stages, Vocational Training Internships, Occupational Therapy Resources and Activities Educational Unit, Occupational Therapy Research Educational Unit and Practice Reflection Group.

6 Involvement with Teaching and Guidance in Postgraduation

My first experiences as a postgraduate teacher were in the Postgraduate Program in Special Education (PPGEEs) at UFSCar, where I was accredited in 1992, beginning to guide several masters and doctoral works of occupational therapists and other professionals.

At the beginning of 2000, I was accredited by the Graduate Program in Education of the University of Sorocaba (UNISO) and there, I guided masters students.

In 2010, we started the Postgraduate Program in Occupational Therapy (PPGTO) at UFSCar, at a master's level, based on a project structured by myself and colleague Cláudia Maria Simões Martinez, Thelma Simões Matsukura, Roseli Esquerdo Lopes and Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano. In this program, the challenge was again to build contents for the graduate. However, it was already possible to use references from our colleagues who published in national journals, but it was also easier to access international journals, due to the opening of databases through the Internet (MALFITANO et al., 2013).

In 2015, another joint project was approved by CAPES, and the PPGTO of UFSCar started its postgraduate activities at the doctoral level.

7 Creation of the Activity and Development Laboratory (LAD)

In 1990, after defending my doctorate, I had already booked a small space for research in my office of the Department of Occupational Therapy. The first laboratory of research in Occupational Therapy of Brazil inside a university was born. I called it the Laboratory of Activity and Development (LAD), and the project was to be the embryo of space for the development of Occupational Therapy research around the themes "human occupation" and "human development"¹.

Several colleagues were arriving at the university, and some of them joined the proposal: Prof. Dr. Cláudia Maria Simões Martinez, who was developing her master's degree with families, was the first. Then Prof. Dr. Thelma Simões Matsukura came, who worked in Child Mental Health, and Prof. Dr. Marina Palhares, who came from a post-graduate training in Education.

Besides my interest in human occupation, especially the role of toy and play, our experiences fostered the constitution of a group that understood the health-disease relationship and the child's development as interdependent of social experiences, including family, school, conditions of education and toy.

With this small group with the same objectives, the laboratory grew and nucleated many research and extension work, opening a new research and acting as the occupational therapist. Many students

went through the LAD to develop their projects of extension, scientific initiation, master's and doctorate, as well as isolated projects as volunteers, giving a dynamic to the LAD that encouraged us to do more.

8 The Paths of Research and the Production and Dissemination of Knowledge

The need for research in Occupational Therapy has always been present in my convictions. Since, until the 1970s, there were no expectations regarding the teaching career, post-graduation training was limited to specialization, which gave greater support to the clinical practice of Occupational Therapy. With the increase in undergraduate courses in the national territory, the need for qualified teachers to teach specific subjects has become a reality, and, consequently, graduate training began to be sought. As there was no Occupational Therapy program in Brazil, a few professionals went abroad, where they already had a post-graduate degree in Occupational Therapy, while most of them were enrolled in postgraduate courses in related areas, such as Education and Psychology (EMMEL; LANCMAN, 1999, 2003; EMMEL; CRUZ; FIGUEIREDO, 2015).

The development agencies were impervious not only to opening funding to those who were not doctors but also Occupational Therapy was a profession unknown to them. In the mid-1980s, the UFSCar Occupational Therapy faculty group opened discussions with CNPq to seek to sensitize that body to issues in our area. The answer came in the form of a task: to do a national research about the situation of Occupational Therapy. We then assembled a small group and gathered these data until we assembled the first report, with a national survey of the situation of the courses and the training of the occupational therapist teachers. These and other actions that followed from groups of teachers of several institutions were sensitizing the CNPq to the presence of a new profession to be considered (TOYODA; PINTO; EMMEL, 1986; TOYODA et al., 1988). Gradually we were opening paths, technical and political, in CNPq and FAPESP. The critical mass of demands has increased, and we make that effort to this day.

Across the country, Occupational Therapy showed that it was growing, and opportunities and challenges were always appearing ahead of us, showing us that it was necessary to extend the occupational therapist's area of action to the new demands of society. That is how, for several times, I embraced

a new research topic, because I understood that it was up to Occupational Therapy, and could open work spaces for this professional.

In 1989, I created and registered in the Directory of Research Groups of CNPq the group "*Occupational Therapy: Processes of Development, Human Activity and Technologies in Health*", which focuses its studies on daily life and human doing in the various phases of the life cycle and in the different contexts, seeking to understand the processes of occupational development, acquisition and recovery of skills, and development and application of support technologies. In 1990, I also created and registered the group "*Training and Qualification in Occupational Therapy*," which proposes to investigate issues related to the training of the occupational therapist and its implications in the life of this professional.

From the 1980s, Kielhofner's studies gave me more scientific support for the understanding of the role of human occupation in people's lives and health (KIELHOFNER et al., 1980). These bases were strengthened with other authors of Occupational Therapy, such as Yerxa (1993) and Wilcock (1993), and more recently with occupational science, contributing to the knowledge about the complexity of human occupation (PIERCE, 2001; RUDMAN, 2013).

These theoretical bases and a deeper understanding of the human being as an occupational being undid me for some limitations of performance and favored the expansion of my area of action, revealing new possibilities.

In the late 1990's, our research group was called by Faber-Castell, a school products factory, located in the city of São Carlos, to analyze the suitability of materials for the use of children. We were entering a large industry to show what an occupational therapist can do, open new ways for this professional, now with people without disabilities. Especially in new places, which could mean workspaces for Occupational Therapy, we always entered with students as trainees. There were several projects of this partnership that lasted more than four years, and this was an incredible experience that gave us a vision of research applied to production.

Accessibility was another theme that I embraced, and the first project appeared in the subject Analysis and Therapeutic Application of the Activity. In 1998, already very attentive to the lack of accessibility on the campus of São Carlos, I chose to include this content on the subject, offering students the development of some projects to identify architectural barriers on campus and also in the city center of São Carlos as

a way of theoretical content in class. This work was compiled in reports that I delivered to the Rectory and the City Hall of São Carlos. The Rectory has allocated resources to initiate the first adjustments within the university, and this initiative has initiated several other projects on accessibility, which I have guided and continue to guide (EMMEL; CASTRO, 2003; EMMEL; GOMES; BAUAB, 2010; CRUZ; AGNELLI; EMMEL, 2012; GOMES; EMMEL, 2016).

In 2000, my work group and I joined another major project developed at EMBRAER. Our objective was to analyze the company's conditions to absorb employees with disabilities, besides evaluating the quality of life of the employees of that factory and propose solutions. Thus, I inserted this new research theme in my professional life (EMMEL et al., 2002; EMMEL, 2012).

At EMBRAER, what people did and the time spent with their day-to-day activities showed signs of directly influencing their quality of life. Since then, I have deepened my knowledge and developed research focused on the relationship between occupation and the use of time (STINSON, 1999; EMMEL et al., 2002; FARNWORTH, 2003; ZEMKE, 2004; PEMBERTON; COX, 2011; NUNES et al., 2013; LOURENÇO; EMMEL, 2016).

9 The Creation of the Journal “Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar”

As already mentioned, the history of Brazilian Occupational Therapy was marked by the lack of scientific publications for many years. This forced the professionals to be updated in foreign literature, although well-founded, it did not bring studies related to the Brazilian reality.

In this context, in 1989, we created an instrument to channel the scientific production that began to appear: *Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar*, launching its first issue in 1990 with me directing the works.

10 Involvement with University Administration

My involvement with the Occupational Therapy course and with UFSCar led me to assume administrative tasks that I did not think would happen in my teaching life. The installation of the course put me in its coordination. Later, between 1985

and 1987, I assumed the position of the Department of Health Sciences with the mission of conducting a departmentalization process that would create a Department of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, separating it from Nursing and the basic area of Health, formalized on February 20, 1986.

Between 1991 and 1997, I was deputy director and later director of the Center for Biological and Health Sciences at UFSCar (CCBS), which brought together nine departments in the areas of Biological Sciences and Health Sciences. During these two mandates, besides to coordinate the installation of the new Physical Education course at UFSCar, we developed actions to restructure and equip teaching laboratories and create new ones (for Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Physical Education). We participated in two major institutional projects: EXIMBANK and IDB (of the Inter-American Development Bank), with the survey of equipment demands for these two areas. We also coordinated the physical area distribution process of the Biological and Health Sciences Center, with the reallocation of the departments of the Health area and the construction of more than 8 thousand m² of area, and coordinated the Project FAPLIVROS III of CCBS, aimed at the recomposition and updating of the collection of the UFSCar Central Library in the Biological and Health areas.

Between 2004 and 2008, I was again involved with the university taking over the UFSCar Extension Pro-Rectory. The principle of the inseparability between teaching, research and extension were maintained and strengthened, since these three activities feedback as parts of a whole, not as separate units of academic life, enhancing the generation of knowledge available to society and making transformative actions. Among the various initiatives developed from this place, there are the institutional programs, highlighting the Quality of Life Program at UFSCar, whose objective was to develop actions to improve the living conditions of the teaching and technical-administrative employees. I also coordinated, with the Physical Development Office of UFSCar, the first edition of the Include MEC/SESu Program, between 2005 and 2007, with a proposal to eliminate architectural barriers in the campuses, seeking to minimize the difficulties of accessibility that we had seen in previous works. In the Culture area, the efforts made to equip and put into operation CineUFSCar and Rádio UFSCar deserve special attention, proposals that I have materialized in this management.

I also participated in the Forum of Pro-Rectors of Extension of the Brazilian Public Universities,

in which I assumed, in 2005, the Southeast coordination of the Forum's Culture area and, in 2006, the deputy coordinator of the Southeast Regional Forum in all Areas.

11 Closing a Cycle

Occupational Therapy and UFSCar composed and shaped a significant part of my life, and I dedicated to them all these years.

I have always defended the profession I believe in, the university I believe in, and today I can see that the battles we have waged were not in vain. With my colleagues, we opened paths and planted seeds of our profession, fighting for their technical and scientific representativeness, which strengthened the research and systematization of knowledge in Occupational Therapy, drawing new horizons that now feed the course of current students and professionals.

Retired since August 2015, I still have a contribution to the PPGTO, with the guidance of doctoral students and the development of research.

I am pleased to see several of my alumni (undergraduate and graduate) pursuing a brilliant academic career, leading teams, developing programs that will improve the lives of the population.

Seeing this movement happening gives me the certainty that we have done what had to be done and the tranquility of saying that if we did not get it right at least a good part of our work was rewarded.

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Notes

- ¹ In Brazil, occupational therapists used the term "activity" rather than "occupation." There was not yet a discussion about the differences between "activity" and "occupation" that we have today and the exploration of the scope of the occupation (PIERCE, 2001). Currently, in Brazil, the term "occupation" begins to be more widespread, but "activity" remains the most used. The text reflects a bit of this moment of passage, which is why both are still used here as synonyms.