

Relationship to working: international perspectives

Valérie Cohen-Scali, Cnam Inetop, France

Geneviève Fournier, Université de Laval,
Quebec

The guests of the Round Table

- Pr Gabriela Aisenson, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Pr Annamaria di Fabio, University of Firenze, Italy
- Pr Kobus Maree, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa
- Pr Jonas Masdonati, University of Lausanne, Switzeland
- Pr Marcelo Ribeiro, University of San Paolo, Brazil

Introduction

Social Attitudes

- In the psychological literature, can be found a variety of terms or expressions, or concepts to describe the role of work in the life of individuals and groups.
- First, the expression Social Attitudes, was used and applied to the world of work in diverse studies. Attitudes towards work corresponds to the idea of more or less positive evaluation , or commitment related to certain aspects of work. Several studies have been done on attitudes towards the status, the relations on the workplace, authority, decisions at work, or industrial restructuring...(see the works of Furnham as exemple).

Social Representations

- Then, the notion of social representations of work has been developed to qualify the way groups of people perceive certain aspects of work. It focuses on the beliefs emerging through communication and these processes allow the identification of differences between groups of people according to their experience and of the role of events. Many studies have underlined the existence of differences between groups and have confirmed the role of specific experience and of communication and relations on the views people have on the world of work. (See for example the works of Doise and Moliner)

Relation to work

- More recently, some researchers have talked about the relation to work as a set of psychological processes that can be analyzed separately or jointly: commitment towards work, motivation to work, involvement to work, satisfaction to work, interests regarding work. Many psychometric tools allow to develop precise analysis on these different aspects of this construct. All these dimensions can be studied in connection with what is called here “relationship to working”. The underlying idea of this expression puts the stress on the personal, subjective, evolving complex relations that individuals have with a workplace activity and a role that is changing, singular, interactional.

Relationship to working

- If you have a look in the literature in order to find other concepts that could be brought close to this one, we could use the notion “Ethics of Work” originally created by Max Weber and recently used by Mercure and Vulture, sociologists of the University of Laval, Quebec, who define the meaning of work as “*Values, attitudes, and beliefs on the basis of which an individual in a particular sociohistorical context defines or tries to shape his/her way of living according to what he/she judges as good and desirable for him-herself*”. Relationship to working could also, to some extent, be brought close to the notion of Life Theme also, developed by Mark Savickas, that could be applying more particularly to activity at any workplace . “*The theme denotes a moving perspective that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences and future aspirations. This meaning is held in implicit themes that weave through explicit plots that compose macronarrative about vocational identity*” .

Relationship to working

- This notion allows to report the increasing individualization of the meaning of working in our societies. It underlines the role of reflexivity to figure out the specificities of the relationship to working of each individual.
- The core aspect of this reflexion would be to identify what “the real work” (opposed to “dirty work”) is, which is a personal relationship with a beam of tasks that produces an internal and personal differentiation of the working activity.
- This round table aims to discuss this notion of relationship to working with the idea of enlightening the role of social and cultural contexts, as well as the role of the evolutions of the relationship to working analyzed in different parts of the world.

- We have submitted **4 questions** to our guests that We thank very warmly to have accepted to participate in this discussion :

Questions:

- 1/ What major developments, changes or transformations in the individual's relationship to working are you observing today in your country? Do certain groups of workers seem to you more affected by these transformations?
- 2/How do you address in your research the question of the individual's relationship to working? (What are your main questions? Your main concepts? On which theoretical models your research are based on?)
- 3/ How would you define the notion of relationship to working?
- 4/ Which are the main themes that seem important to you to develop in research on relationship to working for the next years?
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