

PRELIMINARY STUDY ON CAREER COUNSELING NEEDS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Rodica ȚOCU

”Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania (rodica.tocu@ugal.ro)

DOI: 10.19062/2247-3173.2018.20.60

Abstract: *Both choosing the academic specialization and the vocational path need an active, self-consciousness and especially responsible engagement of the adolescent, this making the individual to self-evaluate from the personal values, skills, abilities, and interests point of view, to explore the available opportunities and to make the right decision so that he could answer to the two important questions: “Who am I?” and “Who/What do I want to become?”. The present study investigates the training and development needs of high school students both from a professional and personal perspective. The research was carried on a sample of 134 young people aged 16 years to 18 years. The analysis of the answers given by the participants highlighted mostly the need for self-knowledge, and the need of identification of the relationship between own personality and job characteristics. The necessity of the implementation of a multidimensional career training program is discussed. The career counselling programmes should include both vocational orientation aspects and personal, cognitive and also emotional ones.*

Keywords: *needs of training, professional development, career choice, personal development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast and major transformations which take place in our present society, both from technological, socio-economic and cultural point of view require a high level of the capacity of adaptation and integration of the individuals. Together with these transformations, there occur changes on the labour market and on the educational system from the perspective of the specializations offered/required, of the level of required experience, of the psycho-vocational profile. All these aspects influence the way that success or failures are perceived, the efficiency or inefficiency regarding the vocational activity. In this context, many high school students confront themselves with a major decision, regarding the educational and vocational orientation, the choosing of educational and vocational path. For the last years, at the international level it has been noticed a significant, even alarming increasing abandon rate in the higher education or the major changes of the academic specialization and even of the vocational orientation [6]. Considering that the studies have proved the efficiency of the career counseling, which are the actual training needs of the high school students so that the process of choosing the educational or vocational path could be improved?

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The transition from high school to higher education or to getting a job is extremely difficult, it requires extra efforts that the adolescent must make in order to adapt to his/her new status and to assume his/her new social role.

Many studies have proved some difficulties adolescents meet regarding the way they perceive their future career [5; 10], the way they plan and see their educational/vocational path after graduating the high school [2; 10]. Becoming aware of the importance of the decision regarding their educational or vocational orientation and also, the process of exploring the options in career become extremely stressing for the adolescents [12]. Consequently, they ask for outside help, trying either to determine others to make the decision for them (parents, friends, teachers), or to postpone it as much as possible or to avoid it [4]. Moreover, they use inefficient criteria in their decisional process (e.g. keeping the group of friends). The Andersen and Niles study [1] underlines the high level of stress and negative emotions (anger, anxiety, frustration, lack of hope, discouragement) related to the decisional process [9]. There were also identified as predictors of the attitude towards making the decision, the level of self-efficiency, self-esteem, optimism [3], emotional stability, social adaptability [11]. The Code et al. study [8] identifies seven factors/ fears related to the difficulties meet by the adolescents in making a decision about their future career: formation and education, security/safety, satisfaction, risk of failure, responsibility, a bad choice of the career, making the decision. The exploration of the career options (educationally or vocationally) becomes an essential aspect in the formation and development of identity [7]. Thus, in order to increase the efficiency of the career orientation programs, we must start from the exploration and evaluation of the students' needs and not from the third-parties assumptions [5].

3. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The present study is part of an ample research work regarding the educational and vocational orientation of the young people, investigating the needs of the adolescents from the career choosing process point of view (adequate career and/or specialization of their next educational level). Thus, the present research represents a preliminary study which aims to highlight the type of the adolescent's training needs in order to facilitate the socio-professional or educational adaptation and integration

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The research was carried out on a sample of 134 students, selected from 4 high schools in Romania, with ages between 16 and 18: 79 boys (58.95%) and 55 girls (41.04%). The distribution of the test sample depending on the urban/ rural area where the high school lies is 43 rural (32.09) and 91 urban (67.91%). The participants are students in the 10th grade (23 students), 11th grade (49 students) and 12th grade (62 students). In order to identify the main formative and development needs of the high school students they were given a questionnaire with 12 items regarding the educational or vocational path option, rated on a Likert scale, in 5 points. Although, the questionnaire aim was an exploring one, the 12 items were divided into 3 factors in order to identify as exactly as possible the students' needs: the need of self-knowledge (interests, values, personality, etc.), the necessity to identify the proper occupation/specialization (the relationship between the personal profile and the specific of the occupation/specialization) and the need of practical support (preparing the file, searching for information, etc.). The questionnaires were given at the beginning of the school year. After filling in the questionnaire, the students took part into a half-structured interview which targeted the evaluation of the three factors included in the questionnaire and in the same time offering the students the possibility to specify themselves their needs, regarding the educational or vocational orientation. The interview was individual and it lasted about 15-20 minutes.

5. FINDINGS

Following the analysis of the given answers by the participants, it has been highlighted that from 134 students, 105 of them, representing 78.36% consider that they need information regarding the occupation/academic specialization which fits them best, 82 (61.19%), need information about themselves, the lowest scores was obtaining by the items regarding the practical aspects about choosing their vocational or educational path (only 25 students, 18.66% considering they need support for elaboration of necessary instruments to get a job or to enroll at the university). There weren't significant differences between the answers given by the students from urban environment and the ones given by the students in the rural environment (86.04%, respectively 74.73%), both groups putting on the first place as importance the need to find out the proper occupation/academic specialization. Although they know certain aspects of the specializations offered by the universities and of the different occupation, 78.36% from the respondents consider that they need support in order to identify the proper occupation for them. The qualitative analysis of the answers given by the students at this factor during the interview, underlined a low level of the trust in their own abilities in making the right decision, considering that „others must help me to make the right decision for me “or” I don't know if it is the right specialization/occupation for me”, a high anxiety “many times, I am afraid that I didn't make the right decision for me”. Very many answers of the students were related to their need of self-knowledge, clearly expressed with phrases like: ”I wish I knew myself more” or ”I don't know if I am well prepared for...”. The difficulties met in knowing their own personality and in identifying the proper occupation for them are also underlined by the low level of the importance of practical aspects related to academic or vocational evolution, in this respect, students considering that they know (where, how) to look for the practical necessary information or they already know it but, they don't have the necessary abilities to relate them with their own profile.

CONCLUSIONS

This research is an exploratory one; it constitutes a starting point in order to elaborate a career counseling program addressed to the high school students, based on their actual needs, expressed clearly and directly. Being a preliminary study, it has as a goal the exploration of the students' needs, thus the statistical data processing are primary ones.

Analyzing the students choices, from the age particularities and their current educational level point of view, it may be noticed an interest towards self-knowledge and establishing a relationship between their own resources (interests, values, personality characteristics and their abilities) and the vocational domains, being highlighted the students wish to find out more about themselves for personal and professional development, in order to identify those occupations that fit best to their personal profile. There was also noticed an interest for career development and orientation both educational and vocational level. This interest was underlie by their need for information about the occupations and the opportunities they offer, about the requirements, the criteria and the standards necessary to get a job in that area, about the formative and developing ways in that specific occupational area. According to the obtained results, the elaboration and the implementation of a career counseling program must take into consideration the introduction of some activities to facilitate self-knowledge, both from the perspective of personal development and from the educational or vocational orientation, which should support the students in the process of making a career decision, according to their psychological and vocational profile.

REFERENCES

- [1]. W.P. Anderson and S.G. Niles, Career and personal concerns expressed by counseling clients. *Career Dev. Quarterly*. 1995; 43(3): 240–246;
- [2]. A.D. Bardick, K.B. Bernes, K.C. Magnusson and K.D. Witko, Junior high career planning: What students want. *Can. J. of Counsel.*, 2004; 38(2): 104-117;
- [3]. P.A. Creed, W. Patton and D. Bartrum, Internal and external barriers, cognitive style, and the career development variables of focus and indecision. *J. Dev.* 2004; 30(4): 277–294;
- [4]. I. Gati and N. Saka, High school students' career-related decision-making difficulties. *J. of Counsel. and Dev.* 2001; 79(3): 331–340;
- [5]. B. Hiebert, S. Collins and J. Robinson, Needs assessment for program planning and program development: a brief review. *Alberta Counselor*. 2001; 26 (1): 11–18;
- [6]. E. Hovdhaugen, A. Kottman and L. Thomas, *Drop-out and Completion in Higher Education in Europe: Annex 1 Literature Review, European Commission: Education and Culture 2015*; http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2015/annex-1-literature-review_en.pdf.
- [7]. E.S. Kunnen, The Effects of Career Choice Guidance on Identity Development. *Education Research International*. 2013; Volume 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/901718>;
- [8]. M.N. Code, K.B. Bernes, T.M. Gunn and A.D. Bardick, Adolescents' Perceptions of Career Concern: Student Discouragement in Career Development. *Can. J. of Counsel.* 2006; 40(3): 160-174;
- [9]. S.G. Niles, W.P. Anderson and S. Cover, Comparing intake concerns and goals with career counseling concerns. *Career Dev. Quarterly*. 2000; 49:135–145;
- [10]. D. Pyne, K. Bernes, K. Magnusson and J. Poulsen, A description of junior high and senior high school students' perceptions of career and occupation. *Guidance & Counsel.* 2002; 17(3): 67-73;
- [11]. V.B. Skorikov, Continuity in adolescent career preparation and its effects on adjustment?. *J. Vocat. Behav.* 2007; 70: 8–24. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2006.04.007;
- [12]. M.D. Tavieria, M.C. Silva, M.L. Rodriguez and J. Maia, Individual characteristics and career exploration in adolescence. *British J. Guidance Counsel.* 1998; 26(1):89–104.