

THE INFLUENCE OF CAREER EDUCATION ON PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT. Career choice represents both a necessity and a challenge for the contemporary man. The option for a particular domain or socio-professional status occurs from knowing and confronting personal principles, motivation, attitudinal characteristics, interests or other determinants specific to an individual.

Current educational and professional backgrounds suffer major and continuous changes. They claim an increase in workload complexity, expanding knowledge, skills and abilities, improving communication skills, enforcing initiative and motivation in all activities, decision-making capacity, as well as the presence of flexibility in adapting to different social and professional situations. All of them require career education as early as possible.

Keywords: *career education, career guidance, career counseling, professional success.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Karriere Wahl ist für den modernen Menschen sowohl eine Notwendigkeit als auch eine Herausforderung. Die Option für einen bestimmten Bereich oder sozio-professionellen Stand entsteht aus Wissen und Konfrontation von persönlichen Prinzipien, Motivation, Einstellungen Eigenschaften, Interessen oder anderen Bestimmungsfaktoren eines Individuums.

Die aktuellen Bildungs-und beruflichen Umgebungen sind stätig in eine große Veränderung. Sie behaupten, eine Erhöhung der Arbeitsbelastung Komplexität, Wissen erweitern, Fertigkeiten und Fähigkeiten, die Verbesserung der Kommunikationsfähigkeit, Eigeninitiative und Motivation, Durchsetzung in allen Aktivitäten, Entscheidungsfähigkeit, als das Vorhandensein von Flexibilität bei der Anpassung an verschiedene sozio-professionellen Situationen. Alle von ihnen verlangen, die Notwendigkeit zur beruflichen Bildung so früh wie möglich.

Schlüsselwörter: *Karriere Ausbildung, Laufbahnberatung, Berufsberatung, Berufserfolg.*

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INTRODUCTION

The technical-scientific progress, determining the evolution of society has increased the role of the human factor, where man became both the initiator and beneficiary of this accelerated development. In this context, the increase in human adaptability to new social and economic realities is particularly significant and the need arises for these changes to be designed and conducted for the purposes of exploitation of the creative potential of every individual.

Education and career guidance - conceptual issues

Preparation for career does not begin with work but with education, as a result of activation and efficiency factors and their specific educational valences. Thus career guidance must play a primary role in the education and become an essential part of one of the basic aims of the educational process.

The term "career" must be perceived in a positive sense, meaning an educational, professional, social path of complex personal development and successful socio-professional integration of an individual, a process developed throughout their life. Career, a term which comes from French, is perceived in Romanian as a profession, occupation, and by extension as either a good situation or position in society. The English dictionary of human resources defines it as a job for which you are prepared, and that you are expected to do all life.

The current meaning of the concept of career is linked to the idea of evolution or the promotion of a person in a particular field in order to obtain more money, more responsibility, more prestige and more power.

The term "career" is given multiple meanings by different authors:

- seen in terms of mobility, of rising in an organization, career is perceived as "promotion";
- regarded as an occupation, it is perceived that some occupations represent a career (soldiers, teachers, managers), while other occupations are perceived only as jobs (waiters, drivers, salesmen etc.);
- in another vision, career is perceived as "a succession of occupations throughout life" or a "sequence of functions", in an ascending order of prestige, through which employees climb after a predictable rule;
- in a subjective approach, the career is presented as a series of roles related to a lifetime experience (personal views, aspirations, successes, failures, etc.), a succession of roles in a person's work, or a series of separate and interrelated experiments;
- in terms of individual perception, career is considered to be a sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work experiences and activities during personal life. This approach refers to both the subjective career, provided by experiences and roles that occur in the individual's life as well as the objective career, which is based on occupation specific attitudes and behaviors.

Other authors, in a subjective interpretation, see their career in a dynamic sense, in which a person perceives life as a whole and interprets the meaning of various personal attributes, actions and things that have happened.

Career is a dynamic process over time, which has two dimensions:

- External career - objective succession of positions that the person goes through in time;

- Internal Career - interpretation given by a person to real experiences related to career, in terms of his/her subjectivity.

The career involves interaction between the individual and organizational factors. Job perception, as well as the position taken by the person, depend on the compatibility between what the individual sees fit for himself (skills, needs, preferences) and what the job actually represents (constraints, opportunities, obligations).

Compatibility between a person and his profession has serious consequences for individual behavior and work attitudes and the state of balance and satisfaction. Socioeconomic situation increases the gap between occupational choice and aspiration. It is possible to gradually restrict freedom of choice and the need for acceptance of compromise on career development.

The main directions of career assist

In literature, there are three commonly used terms related to career assist: career education, career guidance and career counseling. The terms mentioned above refer, as a whole, to activities aimed at the harmonious development of personality, acquiring knowledge, developing skills and abilities in order to achieve an efficient management of personal careers.

Delimitation of the three concepts is quite difficult to realize from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. All three involve activities that ultimately lead to the development of the ability to consciously achieve a career choice in line with personal interests and skills.

Differentiation of these three components of career assist determines a segmentation of a timeframe in which they can be achieved successfully. Thus, we must keep in mind that during adolescence, the first steps in realistic career choice are taken, because it is then that the person is able to analyze their choices, skills and abilities. These factors also include the social and educational influences, inclinations and personal ambitions, awareness of resources available to an individual. Considering this aspect, adolescence imposes an emphasis on career education activities, which are closely intertwined with the educational and vocational guidance.

Career Education - involves all the steps of directing the training of individuals in accordance with the awareness of their characteristics, qualities or flaws that allow them to make informed choices some professional route.

The term career education defines, according to Herr and Cramer (1979, as cited Abdo and Oweini, 2006), the experiences through which individuals acquire knowledge and develop attitudes towards self and work through the activities included in the curriculum. Therefore, career education represents both information and educational intervention of development of skills and abilities of young people necessary for the development of their careers.

The specific activities of this type of education are aimed at personal development and equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve an efficient management of their careers. This is absolutely necessary due to a flexible and largely unpredictable labor market which is constantly changing both its external (share of various professions in the labor market and the relationships between them) and internal (changes in the requirements of various professions) configuration.

Any option for a professional career involves issues such as probing and decisions, retraining, returning to the system of training courses, improvement. Modern society requires lifelong learning and therefore requires as a necessity, lifelong guidance, directly associated with lifelong learning. In this context, a special role is career education conducted at any age, which can facilitate effective professional guidance, properly adapted to an individual's potential.

Activities that may constitute an effective program of career education range from lectures on various professions, workshops on career topics, group discussions, interviews with various specialists, to visits to various enterprises and institutions, documentation, consulting with specialists in the labor market, gathering collections of information and pictures about various jobs and professions, making resumes and cover letters.

Herr and Cramer (as cited Abdo and Oweini, 2006) define **career guidance** as a systematic program that, by combining theoretical knowledge with practical experience, is intended to facilitate personal development and career management. They point out that the term career guidance is a broad concept that includes a wide range of activities including career counseling.

The school orientation activity precedes professional orientation, with both representing components of career guidance. School guidance work focuses especially on those entering the new stage of initial school education; vocational guidance work is addressed primarily to students in the final grades of schools at all levels and adults seeking a new workplace, or that want to change it, etc. Career guidance takes into account both aspects.

School guidance implies, by default, a professional orientation as a specific career option that also requires some schooling option, reflected in additional training courses. In practice, career guidance is a continuous activity with periods of higher or lower interest based on concrete situations of professional and social life of every applicant for such services. Orientation is

not intended only for young people or adults only, but is a whole part of continuous education/orientation, conducted during school and after graduation (even after retirement: how to spend your free time, what productive activities could you occasionally do, etc.).

Professional orientation should not be conceived as a static process, or a specific activity to final grades (VIII or XII), but as a dynamic process that includes all study years, and finds its place in the cultural and educational activities organized by the school. Educational institutions have the role of vocational identity development of young people and their preparation for future careers, with these activities becoming the central objective of the whole educational process. Knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in school should offer the opportunity to develop appropriate professional careers.

Career orientation includes, besides the collection and use of information on careers, labor market status, overall economic developments, training opportunities and the construction of personal identity (which requires aspects of innate and acquired characteristics of personality), identification with models of personality, ways of interaction and conflict resolution, control of behavior, social roles adopted by the individual at a given time as well as the investigation of characteristics relevant to career, followed by the decision, which is the selection of an alternative career, from a multitude of possible variants at a time.

Career counseling is defined as an interpersonal relationship in which the individual, through supporting interventions, develops his/her personal resources in order to establish, implement and adjust life plans, both short and long term (Nilsson and Akerblom, 1999). This essentially concerns a psychological intervention to develop a person's abilities to solve specific various problems related to careers (indecision, anxiety related to career, academic or professional dissatisfaction, compiling a career plan and so on).

The need for these activities is imposed due to a flexible and dynamic labor market, changing both in terms of emergence of new professions and the altering of requirements of various professions and jobs. As a result, strict and unidirectional guidelines based on a static model of overlapping personal characteristics with characteristics of the occupational field are no longer valid. As stated by Savickas (1999), orientation activities should be aimed at educating young people towards independence and flexibility in five areas of expertise:

- knowledge of self;
- occupational information;
- decision making;
- planning;
- solving problems.

Acquiring these skills can exercise control over their own development, and provides the necessary flexibility in career management. The success of career management within an organization depends largely on professional orientation, career preparation and career education that will decisively influence the whole process of human resource management, ensuring a high efficiency.

One conclusion that emerges is the need for active cooperation and collaboration between educational factors and those in human resources management, in order to ensure an effective social inclusion in the labor market. Without this cooperation and collaboration, recruitment and selection as well as socio-professional integration of employees and managing their careers becomes a very difficult task, and without much hope of genuine social and economic efficiency.

Elements of career planning through career education

“The emergence and decline of occupations will be so fast that people will always be uncertain” said Alvin Toffler in his “Future Shock” in 1973. This means that continuous training must be more than a mere quantitative extension of knowledge, given that today it is no longer enough to excel only in one domain.

Job requirements are constantly evolving, aspect that leads to the need for development at school of some features in students such as: increased complexity of skills and work skills, increased communication skills, the capacity to make individual decisions, imposing initiative, motivation and flexibility in the performance of learning or work.

Starting at about 14-15 years old, when students have already developed formal thinking skills and analysis/self-analysis, various exercises can be performed that are designed to promote the proper education and guidance for their career. To be successful with these applications, it is necessary to take into account the opinion of the students, which is relevant in the effective training for the desired profession.

For this reason I wanted to do a research summary among students in some classes at the end of school cycles (VIII, XII grades), but also among students who are in their final year in order to observe their ability to reflect on the impact that school curricula has on training. By identifying potential problems and inconsistencies between the curriculum and students’ interests and needs, we can modify the subjects and topics of study or counseling activities, which provide more support to those who are preparing to choose a schools or a profession.

The results of a student survey are presented in the tables below. To note that 52 students were questioned from 8th grade, 58 students from 12th grade from a vocational school, and 43 students in the third year of study at the Pedagogy of primary and preschool education specialization:

Table 1. The percentage reflects the satisfaction of eighth grade students regarding the curriculum and training

Characteristics of curricular content	Large extent	Moderate extent	Small extent
Relationship with professional interests	9%	34%	57%
Providing theoretical knowledge base	67%	21%	12%
Providing practical skills and abilities	5%	16%	79%
Developing communication and interpersonal skills	44%	32%	24%
Providing practical experience	12%	15%	73%

Analysis of Table 1 shows that the eighth graders have not yet identified a close relationship between curriculum and professional interests, perhaps because they are still young. Although it seems that they believe that they are acquiring enough theoretical knowledge to prepare the desired profession, practical skills or experience are only slightly highlighted.

Table 2. The percentage reflects the satisfaction of twelfth grade students regarding the curriculum and training

Characteristics of curricular content	Large extent	Moderate extent	Small extent
Relationship with professional interests	37%	47%	16%
Providing theoretical knowledge base	45%	39%	16%
Providing practical skills and abilities	15%	28%	57%
Develop communication and interpersonal skills	49%	45%	6%
Providing practical experience	8%	47%	55%

Data analysis reveals that students of the twelfth grade believe that they are provided with a large theoretical basis, as well as practical skills. As with the eighth graders, experience seems to be less accomplished through curriculum content.

Table 3. The percentage reflects the satisfaction of the students in their third year regarding the curriculum and training

Characteristics of curricular content	Large extent	Moderate extent	Small extent
Relationship with professional interests	37%	47%	16%
Providing theoretical knowledge base	45%	39%	16%
Providing practical skills and abilities	15%	28%	57%
Develop communication and interpersonal skills	49%	45%	6%
Providing practical experience	8%	47%	55%

Students believe to a greater extent that there is a correlation between the curriculum and their professional interests, providing both theoretical and practical knowledge (the latter to a lesser extent). The issue also remains poor in the case of experience, which seems to be unsatisfactory at all levels of schooling.

Since we can not express an objective opinion about the professional education of students only through a simple analysis of the curriculum, we have completed research on questioning experienced teachers in educational institutions where the graduates of the Pedagogy of primary and preschool education specialization have started working. In essence, their questionnaire requested a review of experience, practical skills and theoretical knowledge of new employees. The results obtained are shown in Table 4:

Table 4. The percentage reflects the opinion of experienced employees regarding the training of new employees

Characteristics of the training of new employees			
Manifestation of professional interest	65%	32%	3%
Presence of theoretical knowledge	74%	24%	2%
Existence of practical skills and abilities	21%	56%	23%
Presence of interpersonal and communication skills	36%	53%	11%
Practical experience	12%	37%	51%

Comparing the opinions of students regarding the training provided by the school curriculum with the opinions of specialists with work experience, it appears that, in actual practice, abilities, practical skills and experience of students are far below what would be required. However, the students had a better opinion regarding the extent to which the school provided them those skills, which can lead to the idea that there is not a close relationship between school and vocational institutions in order to identify exactly what skills are needed for new employees. It is also likely that future job practice will be insufficient, providing only a superficial training.

Of course, this data largely reflects things we already knew, but nevertheless the curriculum tends to focus on theoretical, otherwise perishable skills, focusing less on practical ones.

For this reason, career education should be intensified in all educational institutions, at all levels.

CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical studies, like the research conducted regarding education and career guidance, lead us to conclude that the school should be concerned with the following student skills:

- Self development, realistic self-assessment skills of personal characteristics, emotional and behavioral self-regulation in various situations related to life and career;

- Communication and interpersonal skills;

- Knowledge management and learning - information skills necessary to optimize performance in learning, decision making and problem solving;

- Career Planning - the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve realistic career plans adapted to market demands;

- Entrepreneurship education - capitalizing on business opportunities;

- Lifestyle management - to increase the quality of physical, mental, social and professional life.

At the same time, two types of professional and career planning must be aimed at: *planning for the future* - from the point where a person is at any given time, establishing another point where he wants to reach future, *planning from the future* - which implies that the most important aspirations be fragmented into smaller, short-term goals that a person puts at the base of their actions.

Long term planning career (more than 5 years in advance) can only be achieved by focusing on transferable skills as well as the updating of expertise. This approach should not miss familiarity with new technologies used in most professional fields.

What must be clearly understood is that career planning is a continuous ongoing process, not a fixed stage, performed only at the end of periods of education (middle school, high school, college).

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