

## A STUDY ON THE NECESSITY OF VOCATIONAL CAREER COUNSELING IN EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** *A person's fulfillment may be achieved only when the three levels: personal, family and professional interweave. In the dynamic society in which we live, the trend is to emphasize only one of these levels, in the prejudice of the others. Therefore, the term "workaholic" is very often used. This, namely having a job to consume almost all our time, is often associated with the idea of career.*

*The concept of vocational career has recently appeared in Romania, along with the transition to a society founded on performance. A strong emphasis is laid on vocational career in multinational companies as the managers cover all the necessary stages when hiring an individual, their choice being founded on the convenient profile of the employee, suitable for the company needs. Thus, vocational motivation appears as a gain for both parts. The respect towards the employee is shown through the company concern for his career development. It is what is called in the specialty literature the paternalist model of welfare, promoted by David Guest. The reciprocity within a company will bring forth the desire of assertion, of improvement and implicitly of performance. In general, the choice of a career in a field or another is a subjective motivation, dictated by certain factors at a given time. The study carried out in this article is based on the administration of questionnaires in the attempt to discover which are the motivations of pupils and students in choosing a university, a profession, if such choice is based on judicious information or influence of subjective factors. Also, the role that skills and qualities of each plays in choosing the career path is not negligible, aiming to whether individuals are aware of their professional profile. The importance of vocational counselor in educational institutions, schools, universities is of great significance because it is a professional who can guide pupils and students objectively in choosing a future profession that is consistent with their abilities and skills.*

**Keywords:** *career, counseling, career guide, counselor, performance, organizational success, needs, skills, competences.*

**Jel Classification Codes:** O15, J24, J28

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Need to have a career arise as an important need of any evolved man. Awareness of this need is becoming even more present in the Romanian society, as a result of development which the labor market experienced in the recent decades. Changes made in the society require an alert evolution of the modern man's needs. Human adaptation to the demands of society, to the needs that different organizations have in terms of know-how is becoming increasingly obvious. The term "career", as well as becoming aware of the need for personal and vocational development are relatively recent in the society to which we belong. Most times, the haste by which people want to obtain vocational success may just lead to failure. This is caused by lack of information or incorrect information on what is a vocational success.

By treating this subject, my approach will focus on identifying the main weaknesses that we may encounter in trying to configure our vocational career. The study will analyze two

aspects: on the one hand testing real skills that an individual has to develop a career in a particular field, on the other hand, the need to train some teachers who might identify the students' potential (in preschool and school education) and students (higher education). Subsequently, by questionnaires applied, I will seek to identify aspects regarding the motivation of teachers, their job satisfaction and thus the effects generated.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Although in the current language, „career” notion is widely used, „career” concept has a lot of meanings, because, so far, there has not been any official widely accepted definition meeting the agreement of specialists; in the specialized literature are known many statements or views. Generally, the popular meaning of the term „career” is associated with the idea of upward movement or promotion of a person in a desired field of activity, in order to get more money, more responsibility or gain more prestige and more power (Ivancevich, J.M., Glueck, W.F., 1986, p. 521).

Although the concept of „career” is clearly work-related, it must be broad enough to include not only work experience, but also the livelihood or living conditions, as extra-professional life of a person plays a significant role within the career (Gibson, J.L., Ivancevich, J.M., Donnelly, J.M., 1988, p. 652).

According to specialized literature, the concept of „career” has several meanings (Klatt, L.A., Murdick, R.G., Shuster, F.E., 1985, p. 380): promotion, profession, sequence of positions throughout life.

Other authors (Mathis, R.L., and his collaborators, 1997, p. 135) understand, by career, the sequence of positions, in ascending order of prestige, which an employee crosses in an orderly manner, according to a predictable rule.

Also, Gary Johns, in his reference paper, „Organizational Behavior”, presents career as an „evolutionary sequence of professional activities that a person reaches, as attitudes, skills and related knowledge that develops over time.”

In the same meaning, other specialists in the field (Torrington, D., Hall, D.T., 1995, p. 437) define career as a series of separate interrelated experiences, whereby any person passes throughout life. The carrier problematic is very actual, making the subject of many studies. It's obvious that the career and the management's career are important for the activity of the organizations (Manolescu, A., 2003, p. 303) and have an main role in their efficiency. That's why every human resources department needs a career guide (Secara, C., 2009, p. 287).

## **3. THE PUPILS AND TEACHERS CAREER'S PERCEPTION**

Approaching the careers of teachers in the Romanian education is a very important aspect, due to the fact that the training of the future generations depends on their vocationalism. The concept of vocational career corresponds to the education field, because the two prerequisites are met, namely stability and continuity. Fluctuations in taking up a job or other work will lead to vocational instability, the inability or failure to have a vocational career. Although apparently it is relatively easy to build a career in education, results coming out from the study will look completely different.

Based on Abraham Maslow's (Kermally, S., 2004, p. 47) hierarchy of needs, the need for social status and esteem would coincide with the need to develop a vocational career. This need arises from the need for power, the ability to make decisions. Satisfactions which the development of a career generates are often large. This is commonly met in multinational companies, where vocational development and training coincide with financial satisfaction (financial reward). In those companies where the stated purpose is to obtain performance

measured quantitatively as profit, care towards the employee is high. In schools, teachers' performance may be measured qualitatively through the performance of pupils and students. In this case, the interest shown by employers towards the staff's motivation is much diminished.

Tools/ methodology used in the treating the proposed subject are particularly qualitative (questionnaires applied, interview) and quantitative (analysis, statistical interpretation of results). The career's analysis is based on a pilot-study who included 100 students from some colleges in Pitesti, with different specializations, studying in the final year and 120 students at the University of Pitesti. Every student has to complete a formular with a number of questions and after this operation the answers will be evaluated.

### **3.1. Route of vocational career at students**

Projection of a career should begin as soon as a child is able to be evaluated in terms of skills, abilities and capacities. Initial idea is "right person at the right place." Each individual has a series of personal qualities that, being identified in their early stage, may progress and turn into real skills. The skill we may acquire must be in close relation with our skills. A frequent mistake is that people think they can take almost any job, that they can do almost anything as well enough. This is the trap where very many young people may fall, leaving themselves wrongly influenced by family, friends and acquaintances. This influence is not beneficial. It should turn into proper career counseling, made by vocational counselors, psychologists and teachers qualified in this respect.

The role of neuro-linguistic programming is significant because, unconsciously, parents are the first ones to plan the career for their children, according to their own desires, ambitions, omitting the most important aspect, namely what inclination the children have to do in their life.

In this respect, the first questionnaire aims at issues such as self-knowledge, communication skills and awareness of their own skills to pursue a career in a particular field. The questionnaire contains 20 questions and has been applied to a number of 100 students from some colleges in Pitesti, with different specializations, studying in the final year.

Responses to some of the most relevant questions revealed the following:

When asked, "Do you think that choosing high school/ college that you attend was a good one?", 46% of students respondents said yes, it was a very good choice, 28% - it was a good choice and 26% - it was not a good choice.

As regards the desire to have a career, 85% say they want very much to have a vocational career, 12% of them want it much and 3% do not want that.

When asked, 'Do you think you know your skills and capacities?', 7% think that they know them very well, 25% responded that they know them relatively well, while 68% said they do not know them.

When asked, "Do you think that the skills, capacities, information gained so far will help you to have a successful career in a particular field?", 20% believe that the information and skills they possess will help them, while 50% consider that they will be helpful to a little extent and 30% believe they are insufficient at the present time.

As regards the person who will guide them in choosing a faculty, students responded as follows: 82% of parents, family, 9% teachers, friends and colleagues and the remaining 9% say that the decision belongs exclusively to them.

To highlight the role of teachers in the training of students, the following question was formulated:

"Are the recommendations made by your teachers about the real possibility of developing a career in a particular field important for your further choice?". Answers were: 30% believe that teachers' recommendations are very significant, 20% - significant and 50%- less important.

When asked, "Do you know what having a career suppose to mean?", 45% answered they know very well, 25% - relatively well, while 30% - do not know.

Question "What is important to you in your vocational career?", 45% responded that the financial aspect, 32% responded that it is the vocational reputation and the respect from others, while 23% answered that both aspects.

To succeed in their careers rely on" 41% rely on their own forces (information gained, skills acquired, etc.), 18% rely on luck, chance, while 41% hope to have support from the parents, acquaintances.

When asked, "How confident are you that you will succeed vocationally?", 38% are very confident, 25% are fairly confident and the rest of 27% are not confident that they will succeed.

Regarding the competence of teachers in counseling them for a career: 28% believe that teachers have the necessary competence, 41% believe that teachers are fairly competent in counseling them and 21% do not believe that teachers have such competence.

When asked, "Do you want to attend a college following high school graduation?", 82% said yes, 9% - are not determined and 9% - do not want.

Regarding the question "Do you know what kind of jobs / professions are currently required on the labor market?", 53% of the responding students answered "yes", 31% answered they knew fairly well, while 16% do not know this.

When asked "Have you ever been vocationally counseled?": 5% responded "yes" and 95% responded "no".

When asked "Would you like to be counseled in choosing faculty?", 84% of students want this, while 16% did not deem necessary the counseling for choosing high school to attend.

Regarding the need for vocational counseling, 43% of students deem it necessary since during primary and secondary school, 32% deem it appropriate during high school years and 25% of the surveyed students deem it necessary during university studies.

As regards the confidence shown towards vocational counselors, students show the following attitudes: 42% have a high degree of confidence, 31% - a medium confidence level and 27% show a little confidence.

If we analyze the answers given by students surveyed, we shall notice the following:

- The notion of career is relatively familiar to them;
- The overwhelming majority of them want to have a career (97%);
- The benefits gained by career are clearly defined to them, attracting them (financial, as well as emotional- moral issues);
- Choosing high school/ college was a relatively appropriate one;
- Both in choosing a school and in the decision to follow a particular career, the role of family and friends is a large one (91%), to the prejudice of school and teachers (9%);
- One of the problems identified occurs at the following aspect: self-knowledge, where students got the lowest score (only 7% know themselves very well);
- Regarding vocational counseling, students answered negatively (95% had never been counseled);
- Need to be helped, advised related to the chosen career direction is felt by students (84% want this);
- Lack of information held on vocational counseling makes students consider it necessary no earlier than during high school studies (32%) and during faculty studies (25%).

Thus, the desire to make a career is expressed by most respondents but they do not know very clear what job would suit them best. The main cause is the lack of counseling since the elementary school and throughout the school studies. Also, the confidence shown in individuals less specialized in vocational counseling (parents, friends, colleagues) will lead very often to vocational failure of future employees. In schools, at the time being, are taught classes of counseling parents by teachers, but, as will be seen, most of these teachers do not have the necessary training to provide counseling. However, this type of counseling offered by the

teaching staff (teachers, schoolmasters – form-masters) is not a vocational, but a general one, rather informative - advisory.

Need for vocational counselors appear as an urgent necessity in schools. They must be vocational, have interpersonal communication skills, psychological knowledge and human resources.

### **3.2. Awareness of need for a career at students**

Switching to another stage of personal development is made at the same time with the transition to another level of cognitive and information development within the university studies. It is assumed that at this level, students have already begun vocational specialization on the field chosen by them (medicine, economics, engineering and so on). If we relate to the previous questionnaire, we find that the decision to attend a particular college is largely dictated by the family and not by objective people specialized in this respect.

Questionnaire applied to second and third year students aims at correctness of the choice made in attending the faculty chosen, the extent to which the studies made will help in developing a career etc. the questionnaire consists of 16 questions aiming at specified scales, comprising a number of 120 students at the University of Pitesti.

Answers to questions relevant for the studied aspect revealed the following:

When asked "Choosing the attendance of the selected faculty was a proper one?", 20% of students responded that it was a very good choice, 45% answered that it was a good choice and 35% - a wrong, inappropriate choice.

When asked "Do you think that will make a career in the field for which you attend university education?", 18% said "yes, certainly", 23% responded that it is possible and 59% responded that it is unlikely to build a vocational career in the same field.

As regards the question "Do you think you have enough information and knowledge in the field to develop a successful career?", students responded as follows: 34% - yes, to a great extent, 41%- relatively much, while 25% considered as insufficient the knowledge acquired.

When asked 'Have you been vocationally counseled during college years?', only 15% answered positively, while the rest of 85% responded negatively.

„Who provided you vocational counseling?", 81% - teachers entitled thereto, within projects developed by European funds, 7% - teachers at seminars and 12% responded that they had received both advice from specialists within POSDRU (Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development) projects, as well as teachers' counseling in certain subjects.

As regards the question "Do you believe that the recommendations received during counseling are helpful to you?", 76% answered that they are helpful to a very large extent, 15% responded that they are useful to a large extent and 9% believe that they are useful in a less extent.

When asked "How necessary is the presence of vocational counselor in your college?", 92% said it is necessary to a large extent, 5% said it is necessary to a small extent and 3% said it is not necessary at all.

Following the review of answers provided, the following ideas are to be considered:

- Students received vocational counseling in a great measure due to projects undertaken by European funds and following the attendance of certain courses;
- Need for existence of vocational counseling in university is an urgent necessity (92% deem it necessary to a large extent);
- Vocational counseling usefulness has been proven and it materially helped the students in choosing the right career.

As regards the reason and motivation of teachers to develop a successful career in the Romanian education, the following conclusions resulted from the interviews and questionnaires applied:

- Financial motivation is the largest deficiency noted in the education system, along with legislative instability on promotion criteria;
- Motivation of each person is different, but the desire for social status and esteem as a result of the profession ranks the first position.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Therefore, practical treatment of the vocational path still has many gaps. On the one hand, the pupils and students are confused about the skills needed to conduct a vocational career in a particular field, reaching to choose by chance, on the other hand those who train the next generation, teachers are demotivated both financially and in terms of career.

After the answers evaluation, the conclusions are:

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The proposal to have a vocational career is the establishment of some vocational counseling centers for young persons since primary and middle school and parents should cooperate actively with the vocational counselors in order to choose the successful path for their children, the future workforce of an efficient and modern society.

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