CONCEPT, DEFINITION AND ACTIVITIES OF CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

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Abstract
This document aims to clarify the concept and activities of career guidance and counselling. Career guidance plays a key role in helping labour markets work and education systems meet their goals. Social mobility relies on wider acquisition not just of knowledge and skills, but of an understanding about how to use them. In this context, the mission of career guidance is widening, to become part of lifelong learning.

Key words
lifelong learning, lifelong guidance, career guidance and counselling

Concept and Definition of Career Guidance and Counselling

The concept of career guidance has been widely used since the early seventies, although only lately it has been insisted on a comprehensive approach of managing career during the entire lifetime. Professional orientation and career guidance represent an organized system of social and professional work on providing continuing help to the individual for the entire duration of his career development, in free choice of direction and orientation, in education and professional activity, with the goal of achieving a professional identity, in accordance with personal traits and the labour market demand for specific occupations.

Professional orientation is a concept that has been used since the twenties, when first counselling centres were established. During the seventies, the term career guidance and counselling started to emerge and be used simultaneously. The wider, non-professional public understood the concept of professional orientation narrowly as “helping the individual make decisions about the choice of occupation and educational paths”. In its original expert layout, this concept covers the individual’s lifetime cycle and all kinds of professional support and activities that he needs for making well-founded decisions about his career and activities that contribute to his personal development and the society in which he lives and thrives. In countries with a tradition of professional orientation, the term “educational and professional guidance and counselling” is also used for “an organized activity that helps the individual realize his competencies and trains him to plan the appropriate steps to develop essential skills that will lead to personal, educational, economic, and social advancement for the individual, family,
society and nation” (International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 2001). The same declaration emphasizes that it is a continuing process, and not a onetime intervention, the goal of which is to avoid or shorten periods of unemployment, create equal possibilities for all, and contribute to the wider and sustainable economic development.

Professional orientation, in countries where it is institutionally well established, is regarded as systematic social and professional support to the development of human resources, in accordance with the developmental policy and plans of the country.

The concept of career guidance and counselling surpasses the initial choice of school and profession, and includes the matching of the individual’s professional and private roles, job and leisure, and mental health. It more directly leads towards the goals of this systematic activity, and emphasizes not only the benefit for the individual, but also its strong social component.

Career guidance is worldly recognized as:

- training individuals to plan their education, training and work;
- providing help to educational institutions in motivating individuals to take responsibility for their own education and work;
- providing help to companies and organizations in motivating their employees for further education, flexible professional development, career management, training and finding adequate job position, as well as professional promotion;
- contributing to the development of local, regional, and national economy through the labour force development.

The EU Council of Ministers’ Resolution on Lifelong Learning from 2004, defines career guidance as a series of activities that train individuals of any age, at any moment of their lives, to identify their own abilities, competencies and interests, to make decisions that affect their education, work, and other areas where they might gain and apply abilities and competencies.

The definition of career guidance by OECD and the World Bank: “Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their live, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their career. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis,
and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample option before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.” (OECD, 2004).

Activities of Career Guidance and Counselling

The definition of career guidance and counselling includes the creation of information on labour market, educational options, as well as employment options and their accessibility for the interested parties, at any moment. Also, it includes the presumption that individuals can receive professional help in defining areas in which they can realize their aspirations, interests, competencies, personal traits, qualifications and abilities, and to connect them to available training and employment options. In accordance with this definition of career guidance and counselling, the activities of career guidance and counselling can be classified in six categories:

1) career information is all information necessary for planning, achieving, and maintaining employment and volunteering. It also includes information on occupations, skills, career pathways (pathways in career realization), trends, and situation at the labour market, educational programmes and options, educational institutions (of all kinds – formal, non-formal), government and non-governmental programmes and services, job perspectives. This information is regarded as the foundation of career guidance;

2) career education is received in educational institutions, and it is administered by professors, pedagogues, and psychologists. This education helps individuals understand their motives, values, and the way in which they can contribute to the society they live in. It gives them the knowledge of the labour market, skills that enable them to make choices in the field of education, work and life, and it also teaches them how to plan their career and prepare for work. That is, career education promotes understanding of the world of work through school programmes, and in different forms. Activities that include career informing and career counselling can be integrated into subject and teaching areas in school or they can be realized as special group activities for students. Unlike career counselling, career education promotes understanding of the world of work through school curricula. That can be realized in different forms within the teaching process. Those can be different forms of career informing and career counselling that are directly integrated into subject areas by teachers, or acquiring specific skills needed...
for employment, organized as a special segment of the educational work, that is also included into the school curriculum. Special employment skills can include the skills of career management, transfer from school to work, etc. These school activities support the goals of career guidance and counselling:

3) career guidance (as a specialized expert activity) helps individuals understand their own goals and aspirations, their own identity, helps them make informed decisions, commit to activities, and manage changes in their career whether they are planned or not. The forms of career counselling are often themselves conditioned by the need for employment, as well as the number and types of barriers that need to be overcome in order to find the right employment or develop career. Three levels of activity within career management are commonly distinguished, and these are initial career planning, learning based on the work process, and networking activities. Initial career planning includes initial interests and competencies assessment, participation in career and work experience research, development of initial CV or professional resume, and development of initial employment plan. Work-based learning includes direct on-job training and recognized work experience, a wide area of training for different fields of work, on-job mentoring work. Networking activities include actions that encourage employers and workers' unions to participate in career counselling activities, introducing students to work options and conditions, helping connect learning in school with learning within the very work process, connecting students, parents, employers and employment services, providing help for graduates in finding adequate job or additional training within the work process, monitoring individual's progress;

4) counselling for employment helps individuals define immediate employment goals, understand and engage in job training and gaining the needed skills and competencies, and acquire the skills needed for job searching and maintaining it.

5) job placement (mediation in employment) is organizing or placing individuals in vacant job positions. It can be organized through public institutions or private initiative. Some secondary schools and faculties organize this kind of activities for their students (job fairs);

6) career guidance and counselling for employees represent providing them with help and support with the goal of enabling them to advance in their career, maintain their job and move through the labour market. It also represents providing support for employers in the process of professional education of employees when it is required by the work process and organization.
References:


