

Career guidance and its impact on graduate employability

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“A career choice is an expression of personality”
John Holland

Abstract

The upward growing of globalization and the constant extension of active employees are increasingly requiring job seekers to adapt their skills in order to be one-step ahead of any predictable change as well as maintain a balanced position in the career path. Effective career guidance helps individuals to reach their potential, economies to become more efficient and societies to become fairer. This process highlights the importance of discerning individual talent and maximizing human potential, including mobility in their career development. An improper career orientation renders decision-making difficult, with higher personal, familiar, and social cost, often manifested in inconsistent skills and unsatisfactory employment prospects. For young people, the decisions they make about what they will study, both during and post compulsory education have become more important and more difficult. This paper intends to inspect the features of an effective career guidance practice, including the emerging necessity for schools to start introducing and encouraging student vocation at an earlier age combined with the essential role of exposure to the working realm. This small-scale research examined the effectiveness and models of seeking help for educational and career planning issues through a sample of 103 individuals; 92% of them employed and 8% master students, with previous employment experience.

Although career guidance is the most common source of support regarding their future occupation, 61% consider it as a pointless process, 17% are neutral and 22% consider it helpful. The results show inefficiency in career guidance provided and a need to plan alternative applicable strategies.

Keywords: Career guidance, vocation, education, strategy

Introduction

Several adolescents interviewed expressed their concerns and lack of confidence about how they would live their lives. They do not believe they will be able to see their dreams realized; they are afraid that if they make the wrong choice, it will affect their lives in long term perspective; they feel that they cannot discuss with their parents on what is currently happening to them; they are afraid that they will not find themselves and discover their passions. There are many constantly changing circumstances, and this makes them feel insecure; they do not know enough about all available occupations to be aware of what suits them best (Amursi, Haxhiymeri, Qirjako, & Ndrio, 2010).

Questioned “What will they do in the future?” teenagers are not prepared to give a thoughtful and analyzed answer. This statement implies that adolescents need more sources of information to clarify their perspectives on the employment domain (Bilgili & Kara, 2020). Furthermore, interviewed adults state that they chose what to study under their parents’ persuasive encouragement. Despite the capacities for good education and space for practicing the profession, they felt that it was not the field that would make them happy. This would affect the quality of their life. International data show that in many countries access to career guidance is insufficient, especially for those most in need (Cedefop, et al., 2021).

We have come to the point where “res publica”, as a general issue and “res priva”, as a personal interest come together. The biggest challenge that individuals face is defining their identity and self-discovery. Unless they are still clear about their likes, dislikes, desires, dreams, fears, abilities, and personal qualities they will not be capable to determine what they can achieve in the future. The whole guidance process should be led by the question “What will I become based on who I am?” If an individual is not aware of the personality traits, interests and what is significant for them, they risk choosing the wrong academic discipline and consequently looking for the wrong job. Such a risk implies dissatisfaction for the rest of their life. Only being fully aware of our potentials and desires leads us towards productive use of energy and work with more convenience and efficiency. In his book ‘The Element’, Robinson elaborates the astonishing

diversity of human talent and passion and their tremendous potential for further growth and development. It is also about understanding the conditions in which human talents can flourish or fade. It is about how we can all prepare and fully engage ourselves in the present, choosing the only best way towards a completely unknown future (Robinson, 2009).

Guidance includes activities that help young people gather, understand, and analyze information, apply it to their situation, as unbiased guidance, and expertise-level support to help them understand themselves and their vocation, to overcome barriers, to resolve conflicts, to develop new perspectives and make progress (Watts AG, 2013). Holland, in “Hidden Order” recommends finding “the strong points” in every person’s personality. There have been so many cases which have shown that a small hint has produced large, predictable, and desired changes, with a fundamental effect on the individual. RIASEC’s basic principle that professional preferences are somehow a hidden expression of our character is considered a helpful model for individuals to identify occupations and working environments that match their characteristics. Every individual should become aware of their inner voice to have a deeper understanding of themselves. When personal qualities match the requirements of the profession, the ideal combination for having a successful career is achieved (Holland, 1996).

Development theories, on the other hand, assert that for everyone, career is a dynamic process accompanying different life stages and experiences. Rottinghaus, Day, and Borgen describe vocation as a tendency that affects the way an individual learns to understand their ability to predict and adjust changing work agendas. According to them, adaptability is the flexibility and competence to adapt to changes and make new career choices (Bilgili & Kara, 2020).

Operational job consulting and education systems do not accurately predict specific needs which can become visible in the future, and neither can they predict the specific on-the-work practices. Nevertheless, they can prepare successive skills for the potential range of changes and a more balanced approach to overall skills, considering individual skills as well.

Our personal general interests, skills and characteristics are incessantly shifting, thus bringing consequently shifting requirements; a few years from now, job seekers may need to adapt to a different profession from what they might have anticipated to suits them best. Therefore, they find themselves into a twofold dynamic that can either make it difficult or facilitate the resolution of individual choices.

P.S. *Terminology such as “career consulting”, “career development”, “career information, advice and instructions”, “professional consulting” or “professional guidance” are used in some countries are used to refer to the wide range of activities related to the term career guidance (Cedefop, et al., 2021).*

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods are used in data collection to serve the purpose of the study. A questionnaire (compiled by the researchers and conducted in Google form) and face-to-face interviews have been used as measurement tools with this study. The questionnaire was piloted in advance in order to test it on a small-scale sample of 22 people. Based on its feedback, the questionnaire proved to be reliable and understandable for this study. The sample consists of 103 randomly selected people with pre-determined criteria. First, the target group should consist of individuals employed in the public and private sector, as well as second-year students. Second, the age group this paper intends to study is from 18 to 35 years old. The geographical distribution of the sample includes the cities of Tirana, Elbasan, Durrës. The ethical code was maintained throughout the questionnaire and the conduct of interviews by ensuring and upholding participants’ anonymity. The quality of this study is guarded through validity and reliability during collecting and analyzing data which are seriously considered. SPSS program was used for processing data, attaining the purpose and objectives of the study, as well as evaluating the findings.

Literature Review

The 2018 OECD report based on PISA data from 79 different nations and economies, including some middle-income countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America which are not OECD members, show that teenage career aspirations are frequently narrow, confused and distorted by social background. Too few teenagers have access to the guidance they need to make informed decisions about their futures. On average, just half of students in OECD countries have spoken to a career counselor in school by the age of 15. Many occupations and learning routes, such as apprenticeships in some countries, are stereotyped or poorly understood, so contributing to skills shortages and risk of educational disengagement. Participation in career guidance activities is often linked to the social background of learners, running the risk of inequitable outcomes (Cedefop, et al., 2021). According to a recent Deloitte survey of 3,000 full-time U.S. workers, across job levels and industries, only 20% say they are truly passionate about their work. Research that others and I have conducted show that many—if not most—of us don’t know how to pursue our passion, and thus we fail to do so (Jachimowicz, 2019).

New education opportunities and new occupations on the job market may not be well understood by students, teachers and parents, making career guidance

services even more important. Young people need to have more access to better information regarding the consequences of their decisions at an early age and to build effective decision-making skills for their study choices, focusing on their desired occupation. Research has shown how easy it is for young people, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, to fail to choose the right direction, due to the cost or lack of opportunity to become employed after education (Blanden & Gibbons, 2006). After 2004, the phrase “through the life span”, was added to the term “career guidance” used mainly in EU documents, completing the perspective of lifelong learning. Services and activities like these, aim to help individuals make educational choices and manage their careers.

Career Guidance describes a wide range of network-related activities. These would include career information on courses and professions, study opportunities, career choices, as well as information on where to find help and consult on how to approach what they aspire to. Early experiences of unemployment are linked with long-term economic and psychological damage for individuals. Today’s young people are working to build up education, qualifications and skills that will qualify them to find a decent work.

However, rapid changes in demand for labor (due to automation, digitalization, globalization, population ageing, the climate-related challenges, and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic) makes decision-making about education and training options much more difficult. With many new occupations emerging and many existing ones changing or diminishing, young people need heightened support as they prepare themselves for working life. During the Covid-19 pandemic, surveys have shown that many young people are actively reconsidering their career plans. (Cedefop, et al., 2021).

The model for evaluating career guidance properly is a very complex one (Maguire & Killeen, 2003). The labor market is characterized by the mismatch between persistent unemployment and difficulties in recruiting in certain sectors, and guidance provides a means of responding more effectively to labor market needs; Social inclusion and equal opportunities are still major challenges for education, training, and employment policies (UNION, 2008)

Career education aims to expand in students the ability to discover opportunities, as well as to self-assess their interests and preferences to decide on further education / training and then employment, to learn to be efficient members of the society (Amursi, Haxhiymeri, Qirjako, & Ndrio, 2010). Just a personalized interview-based approach is not enough to develop students’ skills for career self-management and decision-making (OECD, 2004).

Career orientation as a primary part of career education, should be regarded as a need to develop a person’s responsibility in solving problems generated in his or her career development, in addition to the developments on the nowadays

labor market. Direct contact within the sphere of work intends to give young people first-hand understanding and labor market experience, hence showing the way towards career aspirations upgrading. (Hughes et al., 2016).

Career orientation as a public service, is being reformulated in the limelight of long-life learning policies, in the vein of active labor market policies and the concept of sustainable employability. Therefore, career guidance should be accessible not only to those who do not attend school and the unemployed, but to all people throughout their lives (Watts & Sultana, 2004).

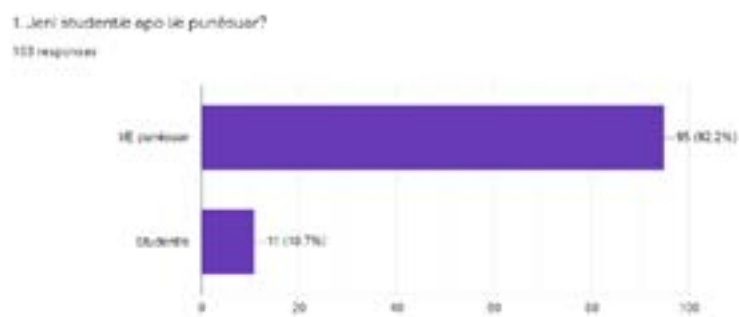
Research shows that effective guidance will begin in primary school, addressing student assumptions and expectations about work and focus on developing the competences that can be estimated to help young people manage their careers in adulthood (Cedefop, et al., 2021).

Let the intelligence of young people be the guide in the wide range of ways in which adults pursue their vocation in life. This can help young people develop their aspirations in choosing their education and career (Armstrong, Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom, 2009). When talking about careers with students, it should be noted that different intelligences are required for each profession. The key to success is to nurture all our intelligences (Armstrong, Other Applications of MI Theory, 1994).

Results and discussions

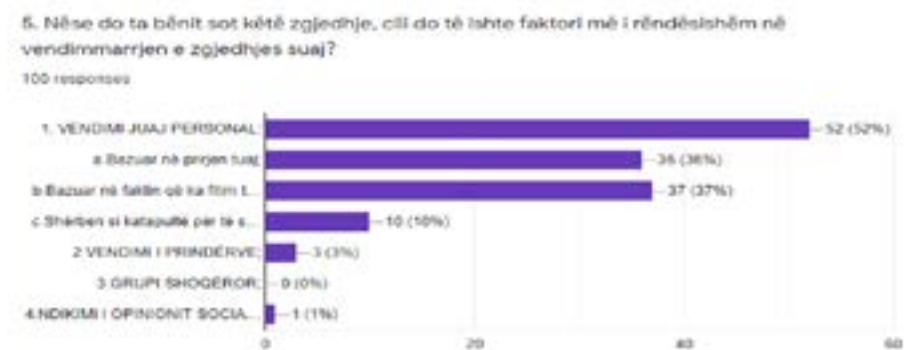
Nowadays, career is a dynamic process that shifts through different stages and experiences of everyone’s life. Labor market dynamics, as well as individual experiences that lead to a deeper knowledge of oneself, interests, skills, and gifts previously undiscovered, can be adapted to professions completely different from the existing ones. This makes it obligatory to find an inner vocation. On the other hand, choices, or solutions readymade for them by an expert opinion may bring resistance from the individual being instructed. Otherwise, leading them to conduct an analysis of their capacities and abilities on a certain subject or field will encourage them to discover by themselves whether a career objective is realistic or not.

TAB.1



In this small-scale study, most of the respondents are employed. Considering this fact, it is taken for granted that the reflection time on the choices made years ago is sufficient for them to have built a more objective judgment. Consequently, it is difficult to make a promising comparison between the perception on the importance of career counseling (absent or not) during the years of study and the same perception after several years of work experience.

TABLE 4-5



The results show that most participants report that the choice for the future career was their personal decision. This was based mostly on the skillfulness they thought they had and then on the financial benefit that their professional choice would bring. Whereas when asked about regrets and possible re-evaluations regarding the choice they once made, we notice a significant change in values when they admit that they would have paid more attention to the profitability of a profession as a decisive factor. Another indicator related to the globalization of the labor market, shows a significant increase related to their choice in case of a second opportunity.

The people interviewed state that job security and payment are much equally favorable when seeking a job in their country. It seems that the financial gain factor is not as important at a young age compared to the importance given afterwards when confronting the reality of an adult life. Surely enough this cannot be generalized as it is usually mediated by other individual factors such as socio-economic status of the family they come from, ongoing financial support, etc. *It becomes evident that the lack of career counseling has created a lack of awareness about the importance of profitability in the future rather than self-awareness of their individual skillfulness; seemingly, individuals mirror themselves as self-aware of their vocational skills and strong points of their personality.*

Another important change is parental influence. Almost all participants who reported being trapped into parental influence at the decision-making time, reported that if they had the possibility to go back in that time, they would choose not to be influenced by their parents' enthusiasm or opinion. The same pattern appears for social or friendship group influence. Young people, their parents, teachers and other third parties often demonstrate insufficient information or poor understanding of some options, including those related to education and training. Their prospective to support young people towards their final employment lacks expert quality orientation.

TABLE 6



Among the answers given in the study, 61% of participants consider school career guidance useless or little useful. This tendency may be partly influenced by the personal preferences of counseling teachers, who may have been influenced by their education. Particularly, in cases of career guidance services being entirely education-based, the labor market expertise may be weak. In addition, those who plan to attend university education may receive more attention than those who plan to work instead. The most objective interpretation we can build in this case is that there exists a proportional relationship between the age and being easily influenced, indicating that the younger the person is, the easier it is to be influenced. This interpretation leads us to the logical derivation that career orientation (missing in high school) would have undoubtedly been helpful. However, career guidance involves a wide-ranging projecting perspective that the individual may not be aware of at a very young age **with or without proper counseling at these significant stages.**

What about their vocational self-awareness? The root of professional guidance and career training is self-awareness. Sometimes, without realizing how, they get lost and find themselves on a dead end. Hence, before professional facilitation is required, the best of all is for people to have reached full awareness of job and occupation environments, which are mostly in agreement with their personality, interests, and values.

This is about how well they know to answer these questions:

- What kind of personality do I have?
- What are my first and foremost needs for the moment? For example, economic security, new incentives...
- What do I like? For example, teaching, solving mathematical problems, communicating/interacting with people...
- What is important to me? For example, making a career, having time for my family...

TABLE 7

7. Në cilën moshë mendoni se është më e përshtatshme të merret Këshillim Karriere?
#/ rreponoc



Attending career vocational training is often associated to social background. Research shows that effective career guidance should begin in elementary school, addressing students' assumptions and expectations about performance and competence development, but this is still not widely supported to be taken into consideration. The age of 16-18 is considered to be the most successful. This may be supported by interviewees' answers regarding the time they think would be preferable to take career guidance training. Only 39% consider the 12-15 y.o. important in finding individual inner vocation. However, this would be a good opportunity that increases their potential for career management in later life as adults. The precondition would be not to over-influence, from an early age, the efforts to approach the type of children's intelligence appropriate for a specific career. This would be too early, bearing in mind their development.

Recommendations

- Better exposure of career guidance topics in meetings, conversations and round tables with specialists, academics and experts who would discuss it professionally.
- Involvement of last graders (of each education levels), in multiple intelligence tests, to stimulate their "inner voice" and natural vocation.
- Frequent "Open Days" meetings from the University according to the programs they offer. It should be clarified that this practice is already applied but the way it is organized is too formal and not efficient.
- It is important to help children recognize their strong and outstanding skills in a study program. The common question to children, "How smart are you?", should be replaced with "In what way am I smart?" helping the children ask themselves the question in order to lead them towards self-knowledge. In the wide spectrum of occupations mostly associated to their self-discovered fields of intelligence, children can begin to make their own decisions about what feels right or what is not relevant for them.
- Establish a special office in QSHA (Educational Services Centre) to plan, monitor and evaluate: the establishment of centers for planning the career guidance process; the support and orientation instruments for students to facilitate their decision-making in this important process; the development of an individual plan for the career that a student intends to build; the course which will meet students' individual needs based on the skills he or she has acquired and demonstrated in class X-XI.
- Publish a syllabus or outline for career guidance and vocation.
- Carry out studies to come up with updated results on labor market trend.

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The dark social capital as an effective way in getting things done: explaining dark sides of social capital in Albania —

— **Dr. Gerti SQAPI** —

Abstract

For almost three decades, social capital has become an important concept (and a variable) that has attracted much attention in the social science literature to explain various social problems and phenomena. In the many debates that have taken place about the role of social capital, conceived at different levels, it should be noted that its value is seen mainly in positive terms, emphasizing the potential benefits that the possession of social capital in itself has for the individual and society as a whole. The negative consequences that “dark” social capital produces on the relationships between people and for the society have been largely ignored in the literature. The focus in this paper will be precisely on the negative societal consequences that the possession of social capital of a certain form, the “dark” one, has on the individuals that make up a particular society. In this study, the role of norms and social structure of society is emphasized as essential for the formation of social capital that individuals within it possess. Social capital understood in this way is seen as reflective of the social structure of society, as it is this structure that generates various forms of social capital. Albania will be the empirical case where the theoretical framework of this study will be applied (in Part III), highlighting the negative impacts that dark social capital has on Albanian society at the expense of breaking its established formal universalistic rules.

Key words: *Dark social capital, norms, social structure, social relations, particularistic norms, corruption, informal networks.*