CAREER COUNSELLING FOR HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The article is a quantitative study on the factors involved in the high school students` career counselling. We have applied a questionnaire to a sample of 100 students from the 11th and 12th grade coming from six high schools of Arad. The interpretation and the statistical analysis show their intention or lack of intention in continuing their studies, the choice of their profession, the profile and field of study as well as their desire to be active persons in Romania or abroad.*

Keyword: *counselling, parents, quantity methods, students, option, career*

Theoretical approaches

The issue of career counselling is essential in a dynamic and constantly changing society from two perspectives. On the one hand, the youth`s demands from themselves and towards their career are higher than before and on the other hand, family faces dilemmas in defining alternatives for the future profession of their children.

The preparation for life offered by school involves counselling and orientation towards a certain type of studies or a group of professions. This aspect cannot be covered without a careful career planning. Career planning is the process by means of which a student decides upon a career, sets the goals regarding the career and initiates actions to achieve these goals. A. Ilica states that being a student in a university means "sharing its values, fitting into its organizational culture and adhering to rituals and a certain climate". (A.Ilica, 2010, p.452)

The aims of career counselling activities are the students` personal development and the development of knowledge, abilities and competences required by an effective career management. This fact is completely necessary in the present society which faces constant changes both in its external configuration (change in the relationship between different professions and their frequency on the labour market) and in its internal one (changes in the requirements of different professions). Moreover, the requirements evolve constantly and this brings about the training of youth for independence and flexibility.

The methods for studying the society fall within some essential paradigms which seek to discover the power or the role of education in the development of personality (A. Roman, T. Dughi, 2007, p.27). They are also transposed in the

definition of identity style which seeks a genuine understanding of rational and irrational aspects of human actions (Vilfredo Pareto). In this respect, the first demarcation to be carried out in any research involves the discovery of foundations and bases of an individual and of communities, including in terms of institutions (J. C. Alexander, S. Seidman, 2004). Schools play a decisive role in shaping the personality of youth and crystallization of their socializing elements (Kelemen, G., 2013). In essence, we accept the idea that any national culture mentions the distance and social dynamics in the social context and establishes inclusion and exclusion relationships between individuals and groups both nationally and on a global level.

M. Zlate (2002, p.352) mentions the following fundamental elements in the conceptual analysis of career:

▪ *Interdependence between objective and subjective:* the individual`s successive choices throughout the career, career success/failure are determined by characteristics, constraints and job objectives and by skills, interests, values, needs, experiences and expectancy of the person concerned;

▪ *Career paths* (ascending/descending, stationary/ multidirectional/ flexible) depend on the individual`s resources but also on the actions taken by the organization to orient, counsel and manage the career of its members.

Career development as a process, targets the person in the context of a constantly changing life. Therefore, W. Kolb suggests the analysis of certain factors, external pressure, significant relationships and experienced events (Wolfe, Kolb, 1980).

Deciding upon a career is the process that leads to choosing a career alternative from the set of options available at a certain time (Lemeni şi Miclea, 2004, p. 170) and it presents the following components: the content of career decision, the decisional process, and the decisional context. The decision content refers to the choices the person has to make: school or study profile; profession; educational path; ways to develop professional competences. The decisional context contains internal factors (self-knowledge, knowledge about educational and occupational alternatives and decision making skills) and external factors (parents, career patterns, group of friends, decisional structure) that determine a certain career decision. The decisional process is quite heavy and with a variable period of time. It contains different stages with various factors involved and it also requires counselling (Lemeni şi Miclea, 2004, pp. 171-176).

The issue of social mobility and the intention of enrolling in a university or choosing a profession is essential in today`s society. It is constantly changing, values the youth`s aspirations towards themselves and their career, shaping the national, regional and global dimension according to the cultural values they have been taught. The criteria of selecting the alternatives for a future career should take into consideration educational elements developed through experiences from formal, informal and nonformal environments. The inquiry on "Career counselling for high school students" was applied between February 17th and March 7th on a sample of 100 students in six relevant high schools of Arad, with an error margin of +/- 2,8%.

Methodology

The objectives of the empirical study (survey by questionnaire)

- Validation of direct survey data;

- Identification of mechanisms for school choice and study programme, as well as of the foreshadowed career path;

- Identification of correlation degree between the parents` and students` answers;

- Determining the degree of professional insertion of high school graduates;

- Establishing university areas of interest for prospective graduate students.

Study sample: 100 students from the following high schools: Economic College of Arad, Moise Nicoară National College, „Dimitrie Ţichindeal" Pedagogic High school, „Sabin Drăgoi" Art School, "Alexa Popovici" Baptist High School, „Aurel Vlaicu" Industrial High School of Arad. The students` fields of study are different and significant covering theoretical human and real fields as well as vocational.

Method of data collection: direct survey based on a questionnaire filled in at school.

The questionnaire (I. Culic, 2004) contained eight questions aiming to identify the students` knowledge of the following issues:

• The high school graduates` intension to continue studies;

• Field of interest at post high school studies and vocational school in terms of the high school graduates` intention to continue studies.

• Personal motivations for choosing to continue or not their studies and social motivations involved.

• Identifying mechanisms for selecting a university and a study programme as well as a foreshadowed career path.

• Identification of correlation degree between the parents` and students` answers.

• Knowledge of the parents` and students` information sources on career orientation.

The questionnaires sought to highlight the mechanisms of choosing the type and level of education, in general, and of career, in particular, to see if there is any correlation between the parents` and students` opinions. Therefore, we have asked parents and students about their information resources, the manner of communication, about who took the decision regarding career and to whom can they turn to with this issue and what profession they want.

The questions were formulated as closed type of questions with multiple choice answers or apparently open questions where the variants offered to the subjects covered the whole spectrum of field of study, areas of study or professional insertion. The questionnaires tried to identify ways of relating to high school graduates` manner of socializing because career choice or studies are linked to personal or social decision making factors. They determine at least immediate career choice.

General results

In this study we have tried to identify structures of education or career choice in our country or in other countries by revealing the core of the Arad youth`s social

identity. Therefore, we present the general results of our study on the dimensions we consider relevant.

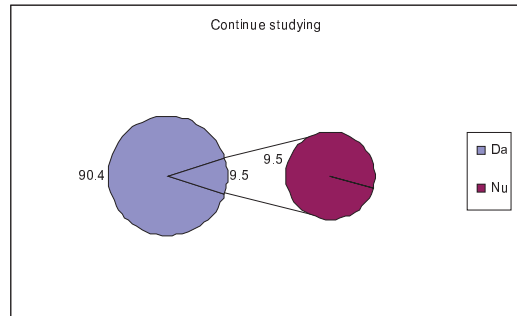The first question was designed to identify the students` aspirations on the vocational training after high school.

Chart no 1. Expression the options on continuing studies after high school graduation

The high percentage (90,4%) of students` who want to continue their studies in universities or attend post high school studies is worth mentioning. It reveals a tendency of avoiding active socio-professional insertion or their desire for continuous training.

Deciding upon the study institution.

Those who have answered positively the first question had to state the place where they would like to continue their studies.
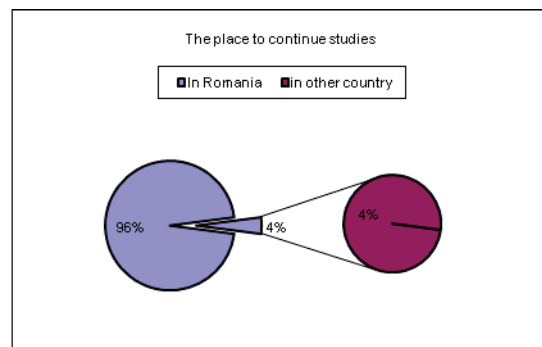

Chart n. 2.The students` option to continue studies with the country borders

The place to continue their studies shows that 96% of the questioned students who responded positively to the first questions want to study in Romania and 4% somewhere else. We can notice a major intention to study in a the university centre in Arad and a significant weight factor to continue studies in the closest traditional

university, Timisoara, in balance with other traditional universities such as Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest and Iaşi.
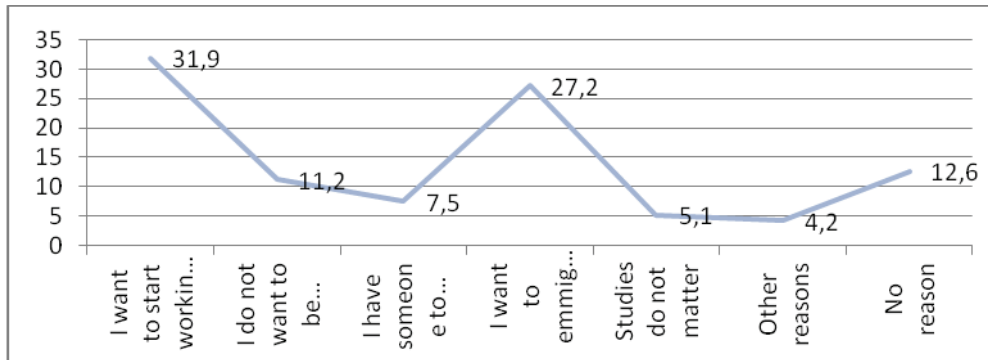

Chart no 3 Reasons for not continuing studies- students' answers in percentage

The first three percentage answers are significant in analysing the personal and social reasons used to justify the decision of not continuing studies. In positive cases they describe the subjects` desire to start working immediately and in negative cases their attempt to emigrate, due to the fact that they cannot identify themselves with the socio-professional structures from Romania. They also mention that they do not have a particular reason, or a reason they are aware of.

The answers provided by students and their parents allowed us to identify the actors involved in the career decision-making process. School and friends seem to play a secondary role as we can see from the parents` and students` answers, as compared to family.
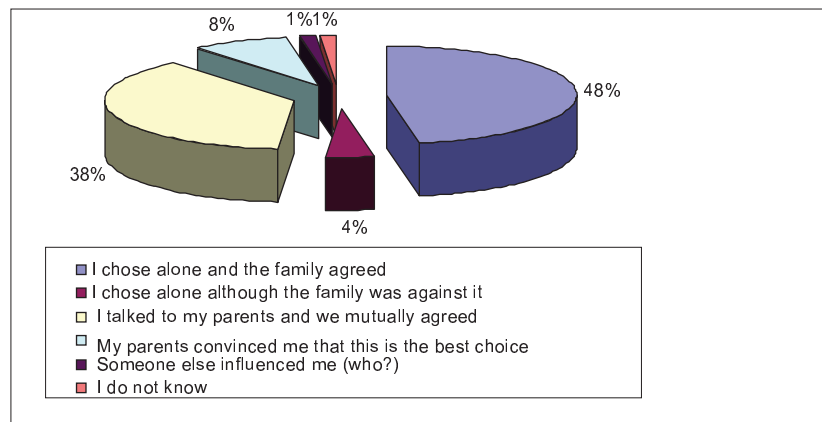

Chart no. 4 whom does the decision on career belong to – students` answers
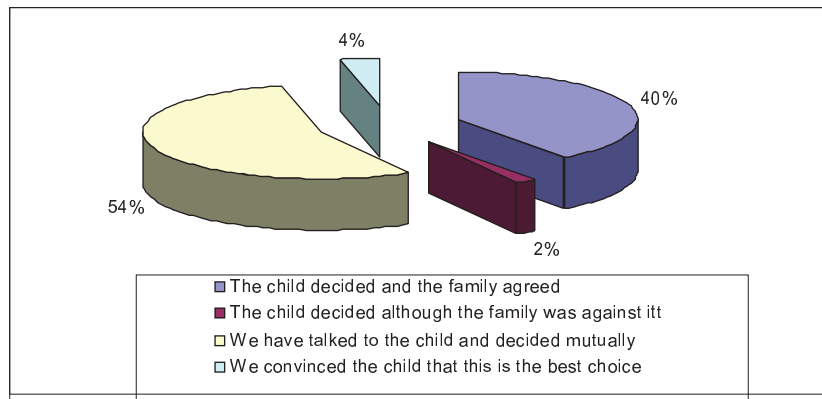
Chart no. 5. Whom does the decision on career belong to – parents` answers

As seen in the charts above, decisions related to choosing a university, a study programme belong to the teenagers along with their families, at least in our sample. The chart below shows us that parents consider that it has been a mutual decision, while teenagers think that it has been their own choice and parents agreed to it. Even if it might be the teenagers` freedom of choice or the parents` involvement in decision-making, we have to notice the important role played by the family.

Family constraint is not very common and can be regarded as rare, especially by the parents. This aspect can be discussed in terms of communication within the family which is seen as a long-lasting and indirect process.

We consider important that family has the leading role in the children`s vocational choices. Friends and school are not mentioned by our respondents as important but family takes an active role. Parents talk to their children and the decision is regarded as mutual especially by the parents.
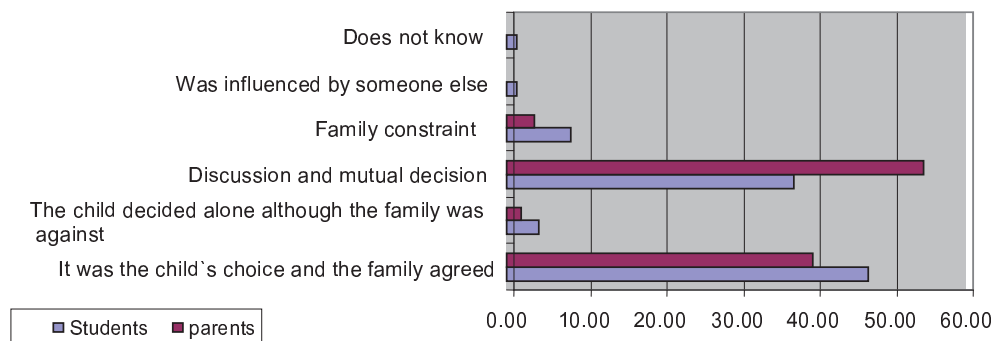

Chart no 6. Decision on career. Comparison between students` and parents` answers

The charts below present the sane issue, namely persons involved in the decision making process. We observe that family is the most important decision-maker also in the decision upon the future career. According to the teenagers` answers, the second important decision maker is the group of friends.

Among parents, the father is less involved in decision-making. In the respondents` families, either both parents are equally involved in the decision, or the mother is more involved.
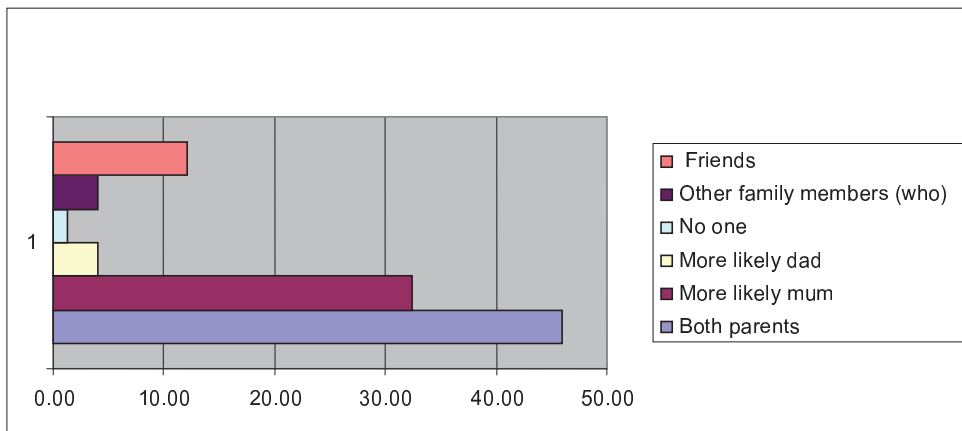

Chart no 7. Discussions about the career – students` answers

Parents have to be properly informed about the educational and vocational opportunities, to know their children as well and objectively as possible, to have good communication skills, to manage conflicts properly so as to be a proper partner for teenagers who face important decisions about their careers. Most parents from our sample state that they gladly take part in the decision-making process. They admit and acknowledge its importance and their willingness to be involved. Exchange of ideas, in other words communication, is the most common method used by parents to support the children`s decision. This corresponds with the above answers that revealed that children mostly talk to their parents when it comes to decision upon their career.

Conclusions

Educational fundaments hall-mark the high school graduates, revealing both the mechanisms of institutional framework and their effects on the inter-relating actors, on parents and high school graduates, namely future graduate students. This is an explanation for the high school graduates` intention to continue studies close to their hometown. Besides the financial facilities, there is also the process of anticipating how education works in a university – 47,5% intend to study in Arad and 31,9% in Timişoara.

Identity is developed by association with self-esteem and self-acceptance which brings about self-assessment and positive or negative acceptance of this assessment. In terms of negative assessment, we find relevant the answers which

state that graduates don`t want to continue their studies for personal reasons. Consequently, self-esteem and self-acceptance are relatively low in respondents who state that: don`t want to be employed yet (11,2%), someone supports them (7,5%), studies have no relevance (5,1%), for no reason (12,6%).

In these circumstances, we consider essential the students` and parents` involvement in a process of vocational counselling made by specialists because "it develops the feeling of psychical comfort, reduces stress and supports the effort of overcoming career obstacles" (Chen, Young, 1999, p.125).

In conclusion, all identity theories reveal the influence of national culture and civilization on the individual`s and groups` behaviour. In these conditions, individuals` are centred mainly on their own perceptions about the significance of the self, and only later on relating to the other one, to group and society. Society is mediated by the institutional framework and inside it, educational institutions; schools have a decisive role in the process of shaping the teenagers` personality and education towards the development of a true spirit of national culture and civilization.

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