

## **PROACTIVE DIMENSIONS OF CAREER COUNSELLING AND ORIENTATION SERVICES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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**Abstract:** The creation of career counseling and orientation centers has brought opportunities to students in regards to self knowledge (in the form of interests, needs, abilities, etc) and consequently in the proper awareness of one's appropriate professional route.

Providing quality career counseling and orientation services (the proactive type), consists firstly in establishing an optimum relationship between the counselor and the beneficiary.

For this to happen, a crucial role is held by the counseling competence, defined as a sum of scientific, moral and social competences and as an intersection point of managerial, teaching and therapeutical abilities.

First we aim to analyze from a theoretical standpoint the two essential dimensions of the counseling competence, which are: scientific and moral competence of the career counselor.

On the other hand, the study follows the measure in which the career counseling activity undergone in the higher education system by career counselors is of a proactive type. For this we aim to answer the following questions:

1. Who are the specialists that provide career counseling services, under the followed specializations?
2. To what degree do career specialists know and respect the ethical norms that are specific to their own profession?
3. What are the challenges that they face at the level of the counselor-beneficiary(student) relationship and how do they respond to this challenge?

The study is realized on a lot of 50 career counselors in the career counseling and orientation centers of several universities across the country, the research methods used in gathering the data being the survey-based research and document analysis.

Upon processing the data, we can conclude that the services provided by career counselors are of a proactive type, a fact which indicates an efficient counselor-beneficiary relationship.

The conclusions of the study take into account a few recommendations regarding the conditions that must be respected and that should contribute to the optimization of the beneficiary-counselor relationship, implicitly in the optimizing of career counseling and orientation services within the universities in our country.

**Keywords: scientific competence, moral competence, career counseling and orientation**

### **1. Argument**

The profession of career is the defining element of human-human relationship, which one falls into the category of helping professions.

Career counselor profile analysis generated two distinct approaches over time.

Some researchers (Jevene, 1981) have argued that career counselor personality is more important than his skills.

At the other extreme, the authors identify those who support the importance of qualifications and training of career counselors as critical elements for effective counseling process.

More recently studies show, however, that the counselor's personality and his professional skills are as important in relation to the client. An effective combination of these two aspects determine the appropriate reporting counsel to reality, the people themselves, as well as goals (apud. Murro, Kotmann, 1995).

### **2. The counseling competence**

We are interested to look for the Council, especially since this was the subject of many investigations, the reason being given for the conclusion that, professional attitude and behavior counselor determines the client, therefore the act of counseling success.

Competence adviser "is measured and assessed by the number and quality / effectiveness of solving customer issues. If the work of counselors demonstrate his knowledge and skills necessary for solving different and more complex cases, the prestige and public respect grow "(Dumitriu, 2008). Professional competence is "a combination of knowledge, savoir - faire, experience and behavior that is manifested in a concrete and specific and is found at the time of its implementation in professional situations, which validates and fact" (Jigau , 2001).

In general, professional competence involves three types of competence:

- a) scientific competence, assumes all knowledge and skills necessary for optimal deployment of a profession;
- b) moral power, provided by those features that allow ethical and moral conduct;
- c) social competence, determined by those interpersonal skills that allow optimal networking.

We analyze below two of the three powers above mentioned, namely: scientific competence and moral competence career counselor.

### **3. Scientific competence**

A competent career counselor should be primarily a solid theoretical (scientific competence), which requires knowledge in several fields: psychology, psychotherapy, pedagogy, sociology, etc.

After Strong (1968), scientific adviser competence is demonstrated by: specialization, professional conduct and reputation expert. Specialization means the sum of diplomas, degrees and certificates in the field that enhance career counselor credibility.

Professional conduct or ability to apply knowledge in practice and specializations obtained, requires the proper career counselor solving customer problems, primarily through their exact definition and selection of appropriate means of settlement. Reputation as an expert is provided by experience in the field and places considered career counselor in a position of authority.

All this is possible, however, through two major components: initial training and continuing education.

Initial academic advisors providing training in basic social and human sciences (psychology - teaching - sociology - social assistance), which allows the formation of knowledge, skills and general abilities in areas such as (apud. Baban, 2001):

- Behavioral psychology;
- Psychology of development;
- Social psychology;
- Pedagogical counseling techniques.

Continuous training of counselors in career involves completing postgraduate, master or doctoral kind and is required as a condition of development of specific skills and abilities in the field.

#### **4. Moral competence**

Moral competence resulting from the manner in which professional career comply with specific conduct the counseling process.

Career counseling is subject to rules of conduct to be observed.

Some of these involves a degree of difficulty, which is why career counselor should consult other specialists experienced something career in the profession of ethics.

By knowing your own limits, career counselor should identify whether the problem lies with the client to, or be placed in another specialist.

Any professional code of ethics starts from a basic rule that any person should be respected and protected. In terms of professional ethics counselor should do so (as cited Dumitriu, 2008):

- Have the customer's consent before you provide support and guidance;
- To provide customer support and guidance, acting with competence and professionalism;
- To deal with customer issues seriously;
  - To meet customer decisions, acting always in his interest;
  - To ensure the confidentiality of the discussions;
  - Not require client values and beliefs;
  - Continuing to form and pursue obtaining a high professional prestige for its customers confidence;

- To know themselves and have a positive image of itself.

The scientific competence and moral condition of an act of good development advice.

In terms of scientific competence, it becomes essential to the way in which counsel refers to the act of counseling: theoretical ability to sound the practical knowledge and problem-solving specializations obtained counseling applicants.

And to prove the act of moral competence when counseling career professionals comply with ethical confidentiality, honesty, proper orientation and customer confidence in its ability to succeed.

**The purpose** of the study is to see to what extent career counseling activities carried out in higher education in career counseling is typically proactive

### **Sampling**

Research was conducted in January-June 2011 and focused as a group - target career counseling (70 people) of counseling and career guidance in public and private universities attached.

## **5. Methods and tools used**

**5.1 Document Analysis:** The website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in 2011 operates a number of 56 state higher education institutions and 35 private accredited higher education institutions.

Of these, according to web pages, more than half are in subordinate counseling centers and career guidance for students. Counselors from 25 counseling centers (out of over 50 centers) answered the questionnaire.

### **5.2 Questionnaire-based survey**

The questionnaire items applied counselors working in career counseling centers in higher education I received answers to the following questions:

**1. Who are professionals engaged in career counseling services, in terms of specialization that followed?**

Specialty career counselor concerns the amount of diplomas, certificates, diplomas in the field. Specialization respondents is most cases (55%), psychology, pedagogy followed by 30%. An 8% of the respondents is specialized in Sociology 4%. Other specialties (3%) are right (those who work in the center as a lawyer: provides advice about employment law, legislation to start a business on their own, etc..) and political science (the operating the center with responsibility for communicating and promoting the image of the counseling center).

Skills for career counselors are a result of initial training and continuous professional. Respondents assessed the effectiveness of initial training in the professional field current 70%, "due to theoretical training which provided a significant knowledge base." The remaining 30% considered ineffective initial training, motivating courses covering what they found ineffective in practice. Respondents said they had to use after graduation from courses, workshops and other training for the acquisition of specific skills.

Lifelong learning is therefore considered an essential condition for achieving and maintaining a successful professional conduct irreproachable. Depth studies (master) are the most common form of continuing education, followed by training in the workplace.

Table 1. Forms of continuous training that advisers were involved in university counseling centers

Types of training	Importance
Studies, master	95
PhD	29
Training in the workplace	50

## **2. What are the challenges they face in the counselor-customer relationship (student) and how these challenges?**

Questionnaire items focused on identifying challenges facing career counseling for the counselor-customer relationship (student) and how we respond to these challenges, actually define professional conduct of counsel, as part of scientific competence.

Professional conduct of counsel refers to the ability to apply practical knowledge and problem-solving specializations obtained counseling applicants.

First is the need for precise definition of the problems beneficiaries, then the establishment of appropriate methods of intervention. The main issues requests of the beneficiaries are:

a) Educational and professional information holds the largest share among the services required of beneficiaries. This problem occurs most often in counseling:

- Assisting on study abroad opportunities;
- Assisting on opportunities for internships, jobs available
- Training courses, conferences, workshops with different themes: communication, negotiation techniques, first job etc..
- Develop and regularly update "Study Guide".
- Assisting with the appropriate legislation (how to develop a business on their own individual and collective labor contracts, etc.).

- Assisting on: knowledge, skills and competencies for each course and each specialization, the system of credit transfer arrangements for accommodation, scholarships, etc. mode.

b) Self-knowledge, any other service requested by students, is motivated by those with a need for better relations between students, between students and staff and integration, as appropriate behavior for students in life and the labor market. This occurs most often request advice by:

- The use of tests (personality, skills, intelligence, etc.) And questionnaires (the aspirations of graduates, professional interests, emotional intelligence)
- Forms of psychotherapy techniques specific academic misadapting (impairment of learning performance, reactive neuroses overload, stress tests, etc..).

c) Development of skills and abilities necessary for career planning is another problem students. Counselors often occur through the use of techniques for: establishing learning paths, setting a career plan, strategies to promote personal.

d) Optimizing learning is another matter to which recipients want an answer. Intervention methods most frequently used by counselors refer to: rigorous planning study time, establish a concrete plan of study (objectives, means, conditions), acquire the best techniques for taking notes, reading skills formation of effective acquisition of effective learning techniques.

e) Career debut, a problem to students who want to work from students or because they are close to completing undergraduate studies, requires intervention from technical advisers on: making maps employment interview simulation

Also professional conduct and other activities aimed at:

- Organized activities to increase access to as many people to offer services and information

- Achieving an annual (or several times a year) surveys on educational options or professional interests of students in their final years.

Proactive nature of advisory services and the types of activities shows organized by career professionals. Of these, the principal place of counseling has daily work with students, followed by the small difference fairs offer jobs (internships, part-time sites, jobs full - time) organized for interested students.

Other activities that are involved in career counseling centers: the university open days, fairs offers education and training, training on various topics of interest and student visits and internships in companies of interest to students.

Table 2.

<b>Organized activities to increase access to as many people to offer services and information</b>	Importance
Daily schedule for the beneficiary counseling and guidance	31%
Fairs job offers	28%
Open days at universities	23%
Fairs of education and training	23%
Training	21%
Visits and placements in enterprises, companies	13%
Other	8%

Other activities mentioned by advisers: collaboration with various companies willing to support / work with students to achieve the thesis research, recruitment of students / graduates for jobs or internships vacancies companies, presentation of companies and available positions, internships practice, some dedicated students in the last year of study and master the technical specializations.

Another activity that increases the proactive nature of professional advisory services offered counseling centers are annual surveys or more times per year on educational options or professional interests of students in their final years. This activity allows for proper adjustment counseling and guidance services to students, because it relies on some information directly from the beneficiaries. The data show that almost half of the centers that participated in the research carried out such surveys, information from being communicated to the university leadership and faculty in order to provide a more realistic about the usefulness of study programs in filling a job and provision of skills to match.

The surveys were to: a) identify career path of graduates of higher education to one year after graduation; b) The graduating options aimed at the professional route and expected educational process evaluation conducted in the University; c) issues related to project future career (line integration degree, further study - master, postgraduate, doctoral, postgraduate training and specialization), acceptance of different occupations to prepare the study.

### **3. To what extent career professionals know and respect specific ethical norms of the profession carried out?**

Moral powers resulting from the way professional career comply with specific conduct the counseling process. Data in the table shows that career professionals are aware and comply with ethical rules of confidentiality, honesty, proper orientation and customer confidence in its ability to succeed.

Table 3.

<b>Moral competence</b>	<b>Importance</b>
Sincerity	60
Confidentiality	70
Confidence in the ability of successful client	54
Flexibility	48
Orientation towards obtaining concrete results	63

The results presented show that the hypothesis "We expect career counseling activities carried out in higher education (technical and beyond) for career counselors to be proactive type" is confirmed.

In terms of skills, proactive resulting from:

#### ***Scientific skills:***



a) The forms of continuous training that advisers were involved in university counseling enters: further studies - master, doctoral training at work. Training is considered a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining a successful professional conduct irreproachable.

b) professional conduct of counsel, the ability to apply practical knowledge and problem-solving specializations obtained counseling applicants. First is the need for precise definition of the problems beneficiaries, then the establishment of appropriate methods of intervention. The results show that specialists use a variety of methods and techniques to address and solve the problems beneficiaries.

### ***Recommendations:***

Another activity that increases the proactive nature of professional advisory services offered counseling centers are annual surveys or more times per year on educational options or professional interests of students in their final years. The data show that only half of the centers that participated in the research carried out such surveys. Proactive nature of services would increase if all centers would conduct such a survey, especially since this type of activity allows a correct adaptation of guidance and counseling services to students, because it relies on some information directly from the beneficiaries. Other factors that increase the proactive nature of services performed by guidance counselors are to improve students' attitudes about counseling activity, increased interest in academics for such services and to attract extra-budgetary funds remain as problems to be solved for professionals of counseling and career guidance in universities.

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