Vocational, College and Career Counseling in Switzerland – Blended Information and E-Counseling in a digitized world

Marc Schreiber[1], Daniel Reumiller[2]

[1] IAP Institute of Applied Psychology, Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Zurich, Switzerland

[2] BIZ Berufsberatungs-und Informationszentren des Kantons Bern, Switzerland

Abstract

In the course of the 2030 agenda of vocational education and training (VET) in Switzerland, career development and career management skills in a digitized working world play an important role (SERI, 2017). Therefore the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned a scientific report on the future of career counseling in Switzerland (Hirschi, 2018) as part of the mission statement for vocational education and training in Switzerland. In this paper we will present two stand-alone initiatives directed at fostering vocational, college and career counseling in Switzerland by incorporating elements of automation and digitization.

First, a blended information concept for the media libraries of the public career guidance centres in the Canton of Berne / Switzerland and second an e-counseling concept for vocational, college and career counseling at the IAP Institute of Applied Psychology at Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW).

Keywords: automation, digitization, blended information, e-counseling

Introduction

In the course of the 2030 agenda of vocational education and training (VET) in Switzerland, career development and career management skills in a digitized working world play an important role (SERI, 2017). Therefore the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned a scientific report on the future of career counseling in Switzerland (Hirschi, 2018) as part of the mission statement for vocational education and training in Switzerland. In this paper we will present two stand-alone initiatives directed at fostering vocational, college and career counseling in Switzerland by incorporating elements of automation and digitization.

Richards and Viganó (2013, p. 994) speak of online counseling or e-counseling as one branch of cyberpsychology that involves "the study of human experiences (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) that are related to or effected by

developing technologies." Furthermore Richards and Viganó (2013, p. 994) define "online counseling as the delivery of therapeutic interventions in cyberspace where the communication between a trained professional counselor and client(s) is facilitated using computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies, provided as a stand-alone service or as an adjunct to other therapeutic interventions."

Blended information as a basic concept for the media libraries of the public career guidance centres in the Canton of Berne / Switzerland

In the above mentioned report of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), Hirschi (2018) defines vocational, college and career counseling as follows:

"1. Vocational, college and career counseling should be understood as a methodologically and content-wise diverse service which supports and accompanies all individuals in actively shaping their individual employment biographies throughout their working lives. 2. In addition to the needs of providing information and assistance with training and career decisions, vocational, college and career counseling must also be able to meet the needs of developing and maintaining a sustainable employability and working ability, the flexible structuring of an individually meaningful employment biography and the development of personal potential…." (translated by the second author)

The cantonal career guidance centres in Switzerland usually have not only counseling services but also information centres in which numerous printables on education and professions are available, which can be taken along or borrowed free of charge. In most cases, computers workstations are also available to search for information on the Internet. In the digital age, however, the question of the raison d'être of these library-like information centres is becoming more and more important. From the point of view of the extremely diverse web-based information services, is there still a need for information centres in which mainly printables are available? What added value have computer workstations to the retrieval of web-based information at a time when most customers have web access via smartphones or other portable devices, while the search does not differ from that in the information centres?

As the second largest canton in Switzerland, the Canton of Berne has developed a concept for its eight information centres which takes previous developments in other cantons into account and develops them further. This was based on two questions:

- How can young people and educationally disadvantaged sections of the population and people who have limited IT skills be introduced to web-based information in the information centre in such a way that they can retrieve high-quality information in a targeted and simple manner and deepen it independently even after visiting the information centre?

- How can the examination of career development issues be promoted in the information centres in the most sustainable way possible and how can a targeted reference to web-based in-formation be established on site

and, if necessary, in a personal discussion, which can be deepened online after the visit?

Under the keyword "blended information", the concept of the Canton of Berne includes the systematic combination of personal information on site and online-based information. For this purpose, experience-oriented theme islands are being created, which, in addition to information on education and occupation, will invite people to examine a broad spectrum of issues relating to personal career management. These include, for example, the proactive management of one's own career, further education, compatibility of family and career, job search, career decisions, financing of further education, retirement, etc.

Each theme island has three levels of information. On the first level, eye-catchers and playful elements are used to stimulate an intuitive and emotional approach to the subject. On a second level, those interested will receive short, analogue information. Postcards are available, which can be taken along and, in addition to brief information, contain one or more QR codes that lead to relevant websites for in-depth information on the third level. Practically no other printables are used. The QR codes on the postcards can be scanned on site or elsewhere by mobile phone or tablet, but scanning stations are also available on site, and people with little IT knowledge can be personally supported in their use directly on site.

In addition to providing high-level information for people seeking information, the newly designed information centres are also to be used within counseling services, e.g. by dealing with questions between face-to-face counseling sessions or within group counseling settings.

The first new information centre in the Canton of Berne will be opened in autumn 2019 as a pilot project. After a short pilot phase, during which the concept will be critically reviewed and optimized, the remaining seven information centres will be redesigned in 2020 and 2021.

E-Counseling

According to Andersson (2016, p. 158) the following terms are used for interventions involving the internet: Web-based treatment, online treatment, computerized psychotherapy, digital interventions, e-therapy, Internet-delivered cognitive-behavioral therapy (ICBT), and Internet interventions. Andersson (2016) states four central points to consider when providing online counseling: First, a secure and stable online platform allowing for real time or asynchronous contact with the counselor. Optimally the treatment platform consists of a closed system with personal login (not email, sms). Second, assessment procedures such as online self-report questionnaires that allow for valid measures of the relevant characteristics. Third, treatment contents and especially the mode of treatment delivery has to be defined: Text, streaming videos, audio files, web-based training (WBT), individualized emails, discussion forums. "What is referred to in face-to-face psychotherapy as a "session" is rather called a treatment "module" or "lesson" in internet treatments." (Andersson, 2016, p. 162). Fourth, therapist involvement that ranges from automated treatments with no human interaction to face-to-face treatment has to be specified. According to Andersson (2016, p. 159) "automatic reminders, and some fully automated treatments are as effective as guided interventions".

The Federation of Swiss Psychologists (FSP, 2017) has developed quality standards for online interventions for psychotherapy practitioners as well as for counselors. The standards cover four main topics: Transparency (offer, price, structure); limitations of online counseling; confidentiality and data protection; professional code of ethics. There is a branch of publications for online therapy, while we do not find many publications on online career counseling.

At the IAP Institute of Applied Psychology of Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) we started in 2016 with our online offer for career counseling which we subsequently will present in detail. We will present the tool along the four central points mentioned by Andersson (2016):

Treatment platform: We use CAI World (https://www.cai-world.com/online-coaching-leistungen), a secure online coaching platform with possible server locations in Germany or Switzerland. CAI World allows for Video- and Audio-counseling. Furthermore the tool integrates a whiteboard function, the possibility to upload documents such as questionnaire profiles, and a desktop-sharing function.

Assessment procedures: We can upload any document (self-report questionnaire, tests, tasks) to the CAI World or we can use the desktop-sharing function for sharing important information between client and counselor.

Treatment contents: We do not differ treatment contents between face-to-face and online counseling. Our offer is designed to be very flexible and adaptable to the client's needs. Some clients want to start with face-to-face counseling in order to build up a working alliance and switch to distant counseling from the second session. Others prefer online counseling from the very beginning. We consider our offer as a hybrid offer as we can switch from face-to-face to online or vice versa.

Therapist involvement: With regard to the counselor's involvement we have chosen not to distinguish between online and face-to-face. Our tool neither integrates autonomous feedback nor reminds clients of the tasks they have to complete.

Our previous experience shows that only a few clients choose e-counseling. But we also see that clients who switch from presence to e-counseling do not switch back to face-to-face. This shows that the e-counseling process conducted with CAI World works very well.

References

Andersson, G. (2016). Internet-delivered psychological treatments. *Annu. Rev. Clin. Psychol.*, *12*, 157–179. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-021815-093006

FSP. (2017). *Qualitätsstandards Onlineinterventionen - Fachpersonen Beratung.* Bern: Föderation Schweizer Psychologinnen und Psychologen. Retrieved from https://www.psychologie.ch/politik-recht/berufspolitische-projekte/onlineinterventionen/fachpersonen-beratung/

Hirschi, A. (2018). *Berufs-, Studien- und Laufbahnberatung (BSLB). Bericht im*

Auftrag des Staatssekretariats für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBFI im Rahmen des Projekts «Beurfsbildung 2030 - Vision und Strategische Leitlinien». Bern: Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation (SBFI).

Richards, D., & Viganó, N. (2013). Online Counseling: A Narrative and Critical Review of the Literature. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *69*(9), 994–1011. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21974

SERI. (2017). *Berufsbildung 2030. Vision und strategische Leitlinien. Hintergrundbericht zum Leitbild.* Berne: State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation.

Contacts: marc.schreiber@zhaw.ch; daniel.reumiller@erz.be.ch