

## **A RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING AND CAREER GUIDANCE IN ROMANIA**

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### **Abstract**

Young people need counseling and guidance to be able to discover abilities, inclinations and to outline their future. Career guidance and counseling should be made permanent from primary and secondary education. With a permanent reformed educational system that does not value counseling and vocational guidance of scholars, Romanian educational system has a major minus. But the insufficiency of counselors in the pre-university education, determines the high rate of disorientation of the potential students in choosing the faculty that they want to graduate from, or worse, determines school dropout. The article aims to present the main results of a sociological research conducted in two regions of Romania on a number of 900 students, in order to underline the need and usefulness of counseling and vocational guidance.

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**Keywords:** Counseling, career guidance, Romania

### **Introduction**

Careers guidance is a process that aims to provide individuals a clearer understanding of themselves and their potential for future career development. Particularly careers guidance helps people to:

- Clarify their goals for the future;
- Assess their career development needs at different points in their life;
- To understand the actual process of choosing a career;
- Take appropriate measures to implement these objectives (Ali & Graham, 1996: 1-2).

The main purpose of guidance is to assist individuals in the exploration of their complex needs, “to make greater sense of their current situation and to build confidence in their ability to complete the review process and move forward from the point at which they seek help” (Ali & Graham, 1996: 5).

A. G. Watts presents careers guidance as operating “at the interface between the individual and society, between self and opportunity, between aspiration and realism. It facilitates the allocation of life chances. Within a society in which such life chances are unequally distributed, it faces the issue of whether it serves to reinforce such inequalities or to reduce them” (Watts, 1996: 351).

Career counseling includes all counseling activities related to career choice on a lifetime. In the career counseling process, all matters regarding the individual needs (including work, family and personal preoccupations), are recognized as an integral part of career decision making and planning. Career counseling includes also activities related to the inadequacy of employment, mental health issues, stress reduction and development programs that improve work skills, interpersonal relations, flexibility, adaptability, and other development programs leading to self-agent (Zunker, 2006: 9).

Career guidance and counseling appeared in the early part of the 20th century, due to the increasing industrialization (Gysbers, 2008: 249).

Frank Parsons is known as the father of vocational guidance movement. He established the Vocation Bureau in Boston in the year 1908 and he promoted the concept of careers guidance. Parsons primarily pointed out that a clear understanding of the individual's skills, interests and limitations was necessary. Secondly, to know the requirements and conditions for various types of jobs was essential. Finally, a capacity to accommodate these two would lead to successful guidance (Gothard, Mignot, Offer & Ruff, 2001:10).

In a globalized world with continuous changes in the work environments and with fewer certainties, openness and flexibility are required and it is generally accepted that career guidance is a lifelong support process (Van Esbroeck, 2008: 36-41).

In the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the work on the development and implementation of career guidance and counseling in educational settings intensified (Gysbers, 2008: 249).

Analyzing school guidance situations, career guidance cannot be separated from other types of guidance. In general three types of guidance are identified:

“- Vocational (career) guidance:

Support in relation to development, choice and placement in educational options and occupations or work roles

- Personal guidance:

Support in relation to personal and social development and well being

- Learner support:

Support to maximize the effect of the learning process. It includes support to acquire appropriate learning skills and methods, attitudes and motivation” (Van Esbroeck, 2008: 36-37).

With a perpetually reformed educational system and a institutional construction that does not value vocational interests of scholars, career guidance and counseling should be made permanent since primary and secondary education. But the deficiency of specialists (the inequitable ratio of 1 counselor to 800 students in pre-university education), maintaining blockage of the jobs in Romanian schools and high schools, will only confirm the hypothesis of school dropout and disorientation for students in the decisive stage of self-discovery and crystallization of skills, abilities and preferences.

Our research, based on a sociological survey conducted in 2010-2012 in two development regions of Romania on a sample of 900 students, aims to present the factual situation in our country regarding educational counseling and career guidance.

### Research methods

In the study survey it was used the method of opinion investigation based on administered questionnaire, filled in by students in the last year of high school and by people who have finished high school in the South-West Oltenia and Wallachia South Regions.

The target group consists of 600 students in final years of high school in South-West Oltenia and Wallachia South Regions and 300 people who have finished secondary education.

Table 1. Sample structure

Interviewed people	South-West Oltenia Region	South Wallachia Region	TOTAL
Students in final years	250	350	600
People who have finished secondary education	130	170	300

The period to collect information was September 1st 2010-September 1st 2012.

### Findings

#### The opinions of students in final years on career counseling and guidance

For start students were asked if they have plans for a future career.

Table 2. Answer to the question: Do you have a future plan for a career?

Future plan for career		
1.	Yes	64.7%
2.	I stated to outline it	27.3%
3.	No	7.5%
4.	I cannot appreciate	0.5%
Total		100%

Most students (64.7%) claim they have built a future plan, while 27.3% of the respondents barely started to outline it, 7.5% of them not having a single plan by the time of the research.

Table 3. Answer to the question: Who conducted the career counseling and guidance offered in school?

1.	Class master	57.8%
2.	Psychologist	11.2%
3.	Other people or institutions	12.7%
4.	I didn't benefit from counseling in school	17.5%
5.	I cannot appreciate	0.8%
Total		100%

A very important thing in the development of students is counseling. Young people need professional counseling and guidance to be able to discover their skills, inclinations and to outline a future. The study shows that in school, this is however taken into consideration, the class master being the one who guides young people. However, 17.5% of the respondents said they did not receive counseling in school, 12.7% partly received counseling, the fewest students being counseled by a psychologist (11.2%).

There is a marked lack of qualified personnel in the field of school counseling and guidance, the role of specialists being substituted by other people without appropriate qualification. Most respondents claim that the counseling and guidance services provided by the school were performed by the class master or other people or institutions (Niță, 2011:101).

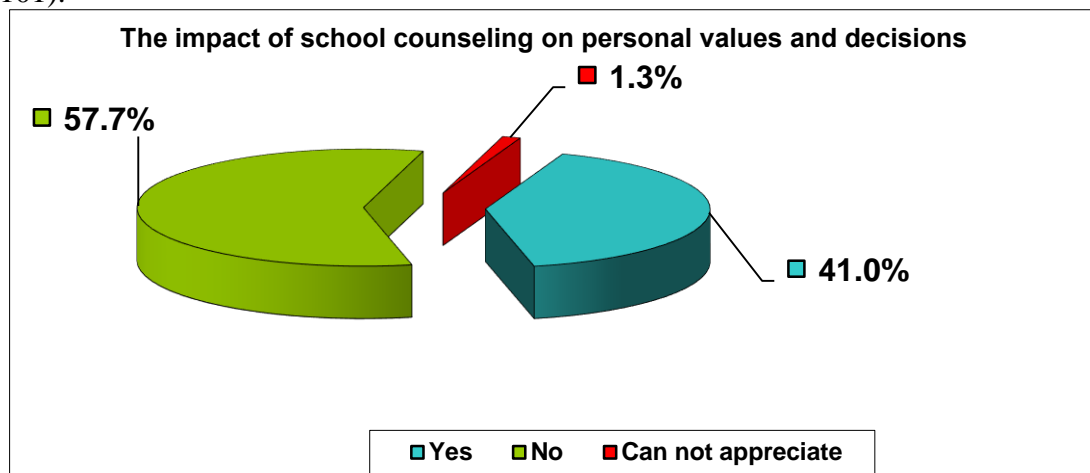


Figure 1. Answer to the question: Did school counseling have an impact?

The purpose of counseling is to actually change the behaviors of individuals and to attempt to discover and develop individual skills in order to achieve maximum results in job / profession they will practice, and especially to be satisfied with what they do at the future place of work. The counseling achieves its objectives if there is a change in the conduct of those who benefit from it. However, 57.7% of interviewed students believe that this counseling had no impact on building a set of values and the decisions they have taken or intend to take, and only 41% think that had a decisive impact.

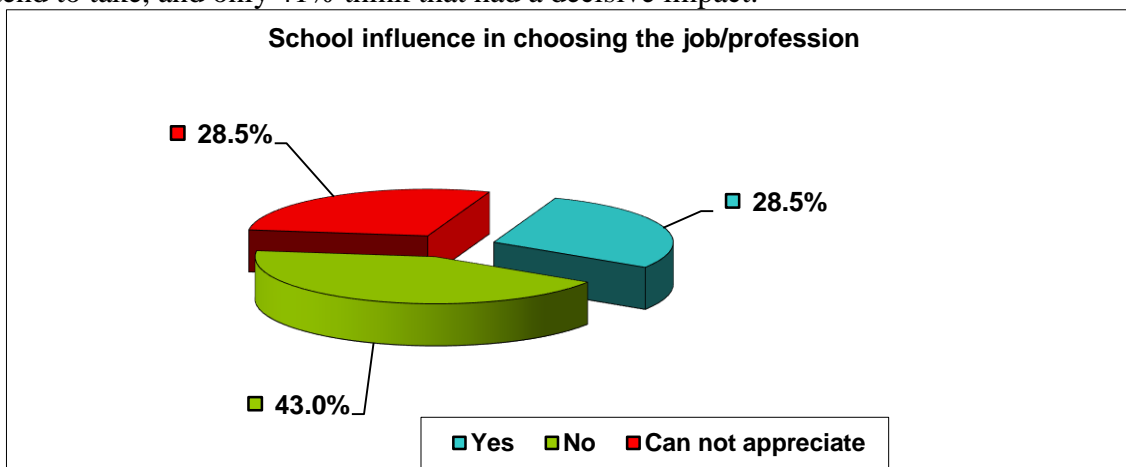


Figure 2. Answer to the question: The choice regarding your job/profession is due to the school?

Although the education received in school and especially the subjects studied in high school by each student should orient graduates towards a particular profession, 43% of the respondents are convinced that the choice of their job is not due to school, 28.5% admit that school has influenced their profession choice and 28.5% cannot appreciate it.

### The opinions of people who finished high school studies on career counseling and guidance

Table 4. Answer to the question: Over the high school years did you benefit by counseling on career guidance?

1.	Yes	63.7%
2.	No	35.3%
3.	DK/ DA	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

A percentage of 63.7% of people in the sample say that they haven't received, during the high school years, counseling on career guidance, only 35.3 percent say they had career counseling sessions.

Table 5. Answer to the question: If over the high school years you benefited from counseling on career guidance, who offered you these services?

1.	Through school by the school counselor	58.9%
2.	Through school by a foreign person	28.2%
3.	I received counseling services outside school	0.9%
4.	DK/Cannot appreciate	12%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

(This question was answered by the people who chose the variant "YES" at the previous question)

When asked who offered them these services, students said they received career counseling through school, by the school counselor (58.9%), or by a foreign person (28.2%).

Table 6. Answer to the question: To what extent do you consider these services have helped/ would have helped you?

1.	To a large extent	41.2%
2.	To a small extent	27.1%
3.	To a great extent	16.5%
4.	None at all	6.3%
5.	To a very small extent	3%
6.	DK/Cannot appreciate	5.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

A percentage of 67.7% of the respondents consider that the counseling services helped or would have helped them to a large and great extent, while 27.1% opted for the variant *to a small extent*.

However, a 9.3 percent of the respondents said that the vocational counseling sessions would have helped or helped them to very small extent or none at all.

### Conclusion

Analyzing research field data carried out in two development regions of Romania, South-West Oltenia and Wallachia South, we can observe that counseling and career guidance services are underdeveloped in our country. Even though over 60 % of the respondents said they had received such counseling in schools, in large part, it is not performed by persons qualified to do it, but by the class master, psychologist, school counselor. Thus, although most people who have finished a secondary education admit career counseling could have helped them to a “large” and “great” extent, about 60 % of students in final years claim that this type of action had no impact on them. In this context, we support to increase the number of qualified counselors in career guidance and counseling, so that each high school student can benefit freely from these specialized services.

Another important aspect highlighted by the study is that very few high school students or high school graduates resort to specialized career counseling on their own initiative, outside the educational institution, so we can see the importance of career counseling conducted in education institutions and at the same time we can highlight the need to develop national policies to focus on the implementation as compulsory of these counseling and career guidance programs in high schools.

The results confirmed the premises drawn, in order to discover the need and usefulness of counseling and career guidance and the exploitation benefits.

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