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# International Perspectives on Research in Educational and Career Guidance

## Promoting Equity Through Guidance

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# Introduction

We live in challenging times, where precarity and insecurity in all areas of life, along with a global pandemic, has replaced the certainties of the past. Straddling the boundaries between self, community, and society; access and opportunity; education, occupation, and employment; critical and high quality educational and vocational guidance (including career education in schools and career development activities with adults) plays an important role in assisting people to manage their lives in this brave new world. Hence, as the chapters in this publication show, there is a need for ongoing research and inquiry into what young people and adults consider to be important, a deeper understanding of how they understand, construct and enact their 'career(s)', and increased insight into how they make decisions about their futures. Allied to this is the importance of identifying barriers to career construction and progress, identifying the foundation of these, and developing strategies that challenge and, where possible, demonstrate how such hurdles might be overcome. Clearly, educational and vocational guidance has the capacity to make a difference, not only to individual lives but also to communal well-being and the promotion of equity.

The chapters in this book present different research projects carried out in the field of career education and guidance, as well as two theoretical chapters in which the basic assumptions of a current paradigm are questioned, as well as the hegemonic discourse in guidance, in the light of equity and social justice. Different methodologies have been used, reflecting the diversity of research methods in the field of educational and career guidance, as well as strategies to promote equity through guidance.

The ten chapters are distributed in three sections: Part I, Lifelong Career Transitions, brings together those works that deal with different career transitions. Part II, Career Guidance and Higher Education, contains three chapters that address research outcomes and theoretical approaches within the framework of Higher Education. Finally, Part III, Career Guidance in Elementary and Secondary Education, includes four chapters dealing with research studies carried out at these educational levels.

Chapter 1, by Barrie Irving, William Borgen and Lisbeth Hoejdal, questions the basic assumptions that underpin the life-design paradigm and its efficacy. They

contend that for a life-design career paradigm to be/come meaningful, and promote equity and social justice, it must be outward-looking and multifaceted, encompass a sophisticated understanding of the socially constructed (and located) 'self', and critically engage with the sociocultural and political realities of, and constraints on, life-career construction and notions of choice.

Adopting different standpoints, they engage with a range of issues in their critique of the life-design career paradigm. These include the relationship between life-design and trait-factor theories, approaches towards career decision-making, the assumed 'nature' of the individual, the psychotherapeutic processes employed by counsellors, the notion of career readiness, the importance attached to vocational personality, and the multifaceted contexts in which 'careers' are formed and enacted. Questions are also asked about the extent to which a personal-historical narrative or 'truth' (which is seen to inform desires, shape vocational aspirations, and provide insight into the 'selves' we aspire to be/come) can be meaningfully understood in isolation of the wider sociocultural, economic, historical, and political context which actively positions individuals, and affects what is deemed to be possible and acceptable at different points in time. Moreover, the preoccupation with occupational choice and/or academic progression in the life-design career paradigm is brought into focus as this can exclude other forms of meaningful life choices that are not realized through economic participation or progression.

Beatriz Álvarez-González, María Fe Sánchez-García, Beatriz Malik-Liévano and Magdalena Suárez-Ortega, authors of Chap. 2, focus on the need to describe and define the situation of self-employed individuals in their career development, discussing the partial results from a larger research project conducted in Spain. Adopting a largely qualitative perspective, the aim is to identify and further develop the definition of the barriers and needs in training and guidance facing self-employed individuals, from the perspective of guidance practitioners and career advisors in support services.

This phenomenon has been addressed by gathering information and data from the career practitioners who work at the services that provide support for entrepreneurship, and through the application of a protocol involving a sample of services providing guidance and support for entrepreneurship within the Spanish context.

The results reflect the needs expressed by individuals in any one of the stages of entrepreneurship, whether this involves a start-up, a new enterprise or a consolidated business activity; as perceived by the practitioners. They present the results regarding two main dimensions: (a) needs in training and guidance; and (b) the barriers or conditioning factors involved in entrepreneurship. Understanding an entrepreneur's career requires identifying the barriers that may appear in their path, as well as their perceived needs, which may give rise to best practices that prove to have a favourable impact on their success.

In Chap. 3 of the section Lifelong Career Transitions, Óscar Jara and Beatriz Álvarez-González present a study which is part of a larger research, carried out between Ecuador and Spain. The major focus of this study is the situation of

qualified migrants in the Spanish labour market. The final sample was extracted from the Ecuadorean population living in Madrid. These migrant men and women drafted their perception on two main issues: first, to what extent they consider that their level of professional and academic level has allowed them to access jobs that required similar competencies; and second, which are the specific career guidance needs that must be addressed to help migrants exploit the education brought with them from their home countries, identifying goals and itineraries that may adapt best to their mobility.

The study involved four discussion groups, reflecting upon the education they have brought with them, its use to them when looking for and finding work, and whether they received career guidance (in their home country or in Spain) to increase their chances of improving their personal and professional outlook through retraining.

Part II, Career Guidance and Higher Education, opens with Chap. 4, by María Inés García-Ripa and María Fe Sánchez-García who analyse higher education students' guidance needs, in the context of an Argentinian university, using a mixed-method design and providing a triangulated study of the results. It is important to be aware of students' guidance needs when they first go to university. It is equally important to know why they choose a certain discipline because of its relationship to the possibilities of adapting to the university and completing their studies. It is therefore vital to be able to provide a comprehensive response to such needs, with guidance mechanisms for reinforcing the reasons that better regulate a student's academic performance.

With this in mind, their study serves several purposes: (a) identify and describe the guidance needs of first-year students at the Universidad Católica de Argentina (UCA) based on their learning strategies and on their motivational processes; (b) obtain a complete depiction and interpretation (triangulated) of the above results in terms of guidance needs.

The triangulated analysis of guidance needs involved a mixed design (quantitative and qualitative), conducted in four study phases. The first two phases involved a quantitative approach, while the third and fourth were addressed from a qualitative perspective. In response to the second goal, the fourth phase involved a triangulated study for a more complete approach to the guidance needs of first-year students.

Hector Magaña, on his part, carries out an interesting analysis on the discourse of guidance counsellors in Mexico in Chap. 5. He analyses the hegemonic discourse on educational guidance in Mexico, through its publications. The research carried out follows a qualitative-interpretative methodology, the Political Discourse Analysis, particularly the Political Analysis of the Educational Discourse. It also takes up Foucault's philosophical perspective (1982) on the archaeology and genealogy of ideas, to analyse the emergence and origin of guidance in Mexico. The foregoing shows the polysemy of the term educational guidance and the author proposes 4 categories of analysis: emergence and origin of the concept of educational guidance in Mexico; educational guidance as an empty signifier; the

hegemonic discourse of educational guidance; and emerging discourses. The research questions are: What are the meanings in relation to the concept of educational guidance in the discourses of counsellors (period 1990–2011), which allow understanding of the identity of the discipline as a field of knowledge? What conceptual and ideological perspectives of educational guidance are expressed in field publications? What are the hegemonic and anti-hegemonic discourses of counsellors in their publications, and the expression of the antagonisms present in these discourses? How has the identity of the professional field of educational guidance been built in Mexico? What are the theoretical and/or disciplinary debates in the publications on educational guidance? What are the arguments on which the identity of the field has been built in the different discourses of the authors? Who are the educational counsellors in Mexico, and what do they propose to build a voice of their own in the field of guidance?

Part II closes with Chap. 6, by Pilar Figuera-Gazo, Mercedes Torrado-Fonseca, Juan Llanes-Ordóñez, and Soledad Romero-Rodríguez, who present part of a larger research aimed at validating a predictive model in relation to higher education students' trajectories during their undergraduate studies, taking into account dropout, continuation, and graduation in the field of Social Sciences. This study focuses on the final results of tracking a total of 1,130 Business Administration and Management students from the University of Barcelona (UB) during the years 2010–2016. An analysis of the institutional database for this cohort showed significant differences between the trajectories of the non-traditional student body (coming from Higher Vocational Education Training as well as those older than 25, 40, and 45, who accessed university through specific courses), and those from secondary schools, which casts doubt on the achievement of equity. Students who enter university via non-traditional pathways are more likely to drop out, and they have worse academic results and significantly lower graduation rates. This emphasizes the importance of planning specific guidance programs for this group.

Lidia E. Santana-Vega and Olga González-Morales open Part III Career Guidance in Secondary School, with Chap. 7, addressing entrepreneurship in secondary education. They reflect on the importance of promoting entrepreneurship skills at school, and present some relevant initiatives carried out in Europe and more specifically in Spain. They share the results of a research project that studied the entrepreneurial aspirations of 3,987 adolescents regarding self-employment and the influence of gender, age, nationality, type of school, location of the school, educational level, and performance. These indicate that the pupils' aspirations to be self-employed increase in the case of foreigners, of studying in a state school, of having a lower educational level, and of demonstrating a low academic performance.

The results were not statistically significant for the gender and age variables. Differences between those who prefer to start their own business or have a salaried job are observed in multicultural schools. This could be explained in part by the entrepreneurial character of immigrant families and, in part, by the need to create a business for self-employment. In Spain, immigrants are more predisposed to being entrepreneurs than the native population as immigrants do not usually have networks of family members and friends who can help them to access the labour market;

generally speaking, immigrants have to 'fend for themselves' by setting up their own businesses. The curriculum and guidance programmes need to promote a spirit of entrepreneurship and creativity in young people. It is necessary to exploit the synergies of foreign students; these students, as found in the investigation, are more entrepreneurial and want to start their own company in the future.

Chapter 8, by Annemarie Oomen, focuses on parental involvement in career education, highlighting the relevance of collaboration between career teachers and parents when designing career interventions. This Chapter describes a qualitative study with six Dutch career teachers who were involved in the design and execution of a parent-involved career intervention at their school. In designing and performing this parent-involved career intervention, career teachers reported the need for specific knowledge and skills, and particularly an attitude to actively being able, as well as wanting to, discover and focus on the unknown needs of parents. Additional competences are also needed by other members of school staff such as tutors. The study showed that a ten-hour long intervention (apparently 'light') challenged both their competences as well as the school organisation. The author contends that parental involvement in career education and guidance should be treated as an educational innovation.

The research team formed by Luis M. Sobrado-Fernández, Cristina Ceinos-Sanz, Elena Fernández-Rey, Miguel A. Nogueira-Pérez, Camilo I. Ocampo-Gómez, and María L. Rodicio-García, in charge of Chap. 9, conducted a Research & Development project in which the competences designed for the initial training of educational counsellors in secondary education were analysed at two Galician Universities (Santiago de Compostela and Vigo—Ourense Campus) and they established the correspondence with the European Standards produced in the framework of the projects NICE I and II (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe) between 2009–2014 (NICE, 2015).

Guidance professionals' training in the educational, labour, and social contexts occupies an important place in the international field in European Union countries (NICE, 2012), especially in Spain at university level through the Master's Degree for Counsellors in the framework of Secondary Education Teachers' Training, specialty in Educational Guidance (SETTG-EG). It is also relevant to identify the quality of the Master's programmes in Counsellors' Training through the contrast criteria and correspondence between the designed competences in it and the European Competence Standards (Schiersmann et al., 2016), which was done in this study.

A qualitative research methodology was used, based on document analysis, discussion groups, and in-depth interviews. The topic should be studied in-depth as it can have great impact and can be very useful, especially at university level and in the delivery of guidance in Secondary Education. The study presented is transferable, with the necessary adaptations, to other European and international contexts.

Chapter 10, by Berta García-Salguero and María José Mudarra, focus on the importance of social skills (SS) as a critical protective factor for the social and personal well-being of secondary education students in Spain, and provide empirical evidence through a research study carried out, with particular reference to academic achievement. Through guidance, and teacher and student training

strategies that take into account their perception of SS according to individual and context variables, the goal is to help prevent risk situations and overcome barriers to coexistence, such as the risk of bullying and disruptive/aggressive behaviour.

Among the main results of the study discussed in this chapter, significant SS were identified which, being consistent with teacher expectations and specifically taught, can help to prevent inadequate behaviours (from a social point of view), diminishing the vulnerability of certain students and optimizing social relations and academic achievement. Among the prosocial behaviours with the highest potential of student well-being, which are consistent with teacher expectations, and extend beyond individual characteristics or the schools they belong to, are cooperation, responsibility, and assertion. Evidence is provided in relation to guidance practice that, based on an accurate assessment of SS, contributes to educational equity, enhancing students' academic pathways and, above all, helping to prevent risk situations that might threaten their well-being.

The above studies look into the future and try to meet significant challenges ahead for educational and vocational guidance if it is to continue to have relevance. Growing inequality between rich and poor citizens *and* nations, declining opportunities to engage in decent work, the effects of environmental degradation brought about in particular by corporate practices and governmental in/action, and the current global health crisis, with tremendous consequences in all spheres of life, have put in jeopardy both the well-being of humankind and the future of the planet. However, the 2019 global protests against climate change which, estimates suggest, was attended by over four million people (many of whom were of school age) was an indication that there is now a real desire for a fairer and more just society. This, as well as the drastic changes brought about by the COVID-19, should act as a wake-up call to those engaged in the educational and vocational guidance community.

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# Part I
# Lifelong Career Transitions

Part I, *Lifelong Career Transitions*, addresses career guidance from different standpoints and scenarios, all related to the complexity and uncertainty of our time, as well as the need to take into account the multiple sociocultural, political and structural factors that shape and influence an individual's career throughout her/his life. It is also of utmost importance to acknowledge an uneven distribution of power and the growing injustices in the world, which affect a great number of people in their different transition processes. The authors of the first chapter contend that there is a need to think more deeply about the concept of 'career', and critically review any career paradigm that positions the individual as being the sole (or primary) author of the direction their life-career path takes. They claim that greater attention needs to be given to the sociopolitical context, as well as a deep understanding of the multiple and complex ways in which injustices may be perpetuated and reinforced. The second chapter focuses on entrepreneurship, which is precisely one of the work schemes that usually flourishes in times of insecurity, and the most affected by structural and external factors, especially in the case of small and medium entrepreneurs. The research study in this chapter seeks to describe and understand the barriers, both internal and external, that can threaten entrepreneurship projects. These barriers relate closely to how people adapt to the different transitions involved in entrepreneurship. When characterizing the profiles that may or may not be successful in facing entrepreneurship, the authors of this chapter place emphasis on a specific external threat, the lack of adequate response to the identified needs, along with the internal threat of fear of failure. The third chapter in Part I refers to one of the transitions that has transformed and is transforming societies, over time and across the world: human mobility. The research study presented addresses the case of Ecuadorean migration in Spain, in particular of men and women with high educational qualifications, analysing the multiple adaptations that this population must undergo in order to advance and progress in their migratory project. The study also tried to verify, through the participants, the impact that career guidance processes (either their presence or absence), could have on migrants, both in Ecuador and in Spain.

# Chapter 1
# Challenging Perspectives on the Life-Design Career Paradigm: Critical Reflections and Re/constructions


**Barrie A. Irving, William Borgen, and Lisbeth Hoejdal**

**Abstract** Key career theorists such as Savickas (Life-design Counseling Manual, 2015) have argued that the life-design paradigm provides meaningful ways forward for individuals in a twenty-first century labour market characterised by uncertainty, insecurity and the end to long-term employment. Based on a psychological constructivist approach, 'life-design' is positioned as the new, future focused, career counselling paradigm. Briefly, through its use of narrative, the counsellor's identification of key life themes, and the co-construction of a known 'self' through psychotherapeutic counselling and aptitude matching, it is assumed that individuals will be enabled to design and manage their future career(s). In this chapter the authors raise key questions about the basic assumptions that underpin the life-design paradigm. They contend that for a life-design career paradigm to be/come meaningful, and promote equity and social justice, it must be outward looking and multifaceted, encompass a sophisticated understanding of the *socially* constructed (and located) 'self', and critically engage with the sociocultural and political realities of, and constraints on, life-career construction and notions of choice.

**Keywords** Life-design career · Career counselling · Equity · Social justice · Self-governance

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## 1.1 Introduction

The authors of this chapter question the efficacy of the life-design career paradigm (Nota & Rossier, 2015; Savickas, 2012), which has a tendency to be positioned as *the* way forward for client counselling in a fluid and globalised contemporary world. Although the key assumptions that underpin the life-design career paradigm appear to be reasonable on the surface, a deeper examination uncovers numerous gaps, omissions and weaknesses that challenge its presumptive claim to be *the* career counselling approach for the future.

Adopting different standpoints, they engage with a range of issues in their critique of the life-design career paradigm. These include the relationship between life-design and trait-factor theories, approaches towards career decision-making, the assumed 'nature' of the individual, the psychotherapeutic processes employed by counsellors, the notion of career readiness, the importance attached to vocational personality and the multifaceted contexts in which 'careers' are formed and enacted. Questions are also asked about the extent to which a personal-historical narrative or 'truth' (which is seen to inform desires, shape vocational aspirations and provide insight into the 'selves' we aspire to be/come) can be meaningfully understood in isolation of the wider sociocultural, economic, historical and political context which actively positions individuals, and affects what is deemed to be possible and acceptable at different points in time. Moreover, the preoccupation with occupational choice and/or academic progression in the life-design career paradigm is brought into focus as this can exclude other forms of meaningful life choices that are not realised through economic participation or progression.

## 1.2 What is the Life-Design Career Paradigm?

Briefly, the key tenet underlying the life-design paradigm is the belief that individuals construct, and give meaning to, their own career by uncovering an embedded past and relating it to the present, enabling them to shape their future actions. This is facilitated through a process of storytelling in response to leading questions posed by the counsellor, requiring the client to engage in a process of historical introspection and mediated critical reflection on past life experiences, expectations and perceptions of self. From this, it is anticipated that individuals gain a deeper insight into how their past has implicitly shaped their views, attitudes, desires and aspirations. From the analysis of the responses given to such questions, the counsellor is thus able to identify significant life themes and construct a life portrait which gives the client a clearer understanding of who they are now, what has influenced this, who they would like to become in the future in relation to their career and whether any unresolved problems remain. The client and counsellor then engage in a process of co-construction, giving a material substance to the client's career aspirations through the clarification of future intentions and identification of real-world actions. The role of the counsellor,

therefore, can be seen as central to the development of a workable career plan that encompasses mindful career intention, meaningful career choice and practical career adaptability which is responsive to the demands of a contemporary globalised labour market characterised by instability, precarity and uncertainty. It is important to note that little is said about the effects of inequality, social in/justice or 'difference' in the life-design literature. Using this brief outline as a backdrop, the three authors of this chapter draw on different standpoints to critique the life-design career paradigm. Through their engagement with alternative perspectives they question the extent to which the life-design career paradigm should be positioned as the foundation for career practice.

## 1.3 Context Counts

William Borgen draws attention to the importance of changing context in vocational guidance and counselling. Heavily influenced by models developed in North America during times when there was a stable or expanding labour market and relative constancy in relation to occupations and job opportunities, current career/vocational guidance has appeared to rest on a range of assumptions that reflected this context. These assumptions include:

- There are a series of individual attributes or traits that draw people to certain occupations.
- These attributes or traits are pivotal to effective and desired decision-making.
- Occupations that match the vocational interest of individuals are accessible to them.
- Occupations stable enough in their characteristics for assessment instruments that match the traits of individuals with occupational characteristics are useful over time.
- Once secured, individuals have the capability to stay involved in desired occupations or career trajectories (Bandura, 1997; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006).

The context, however, has changed radically in the last number of years. Many countries are now struggling to meet the occupational/vocational and career needs of their populations, within a context of rapidly changing and evolving labour market opportunities.

Key points have emerged within and across these countries:

1. Career/vocational issues have a direct and visible impact on broader society. In several countries, governments are looking to guidance and counselling to provide assistance in ameliorating these issues.
2. Societal expectations are a major factor. In many countries, for example, there is a strong bias against technical and vocational education compared with university education because of the prestige, as well as apparent security and higher salaries traditionally associated with these occupations.

3. Attempts at changing attitudes and practices related to vocational/career planning are often conducted in isolation of cultural orientations. This has led to problems with recruitment and retention of students into educational programs, or their successful attachment with the labour force upon completion of their studies.
4. Perhaps most pervasive is that the occupational, vocational and career decision-making context is evolving rapidly and unpredictably. This requires the re-thinking of the approaches that will be effective in this new contextual reality, as well as the assumptions that drive them (Borgen & Hiebert, 2014).

## 1.4 A Revised Set of Assumptions

In recognition of these changing contextual circumstances, a revised set of assumptions are needed (Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006):

- Several factors influence choice of occupations or career paths, including individual attributes or traits, family expectations, rapidly evolving cultural influences such as poverty, addiction, conflict, displacement and discrimination, along with internationalisation and rapid and erratic changes in labour market opportunities.
- These factors are differentially important across cultural contexts, but appear to be an influence in most of them.
- Occupations of choice may not be accessible.
- Many tasks and processes related to occupations are unstable.
- People need the skills and attitudes required to be robust and sustainable to successfully manage rapid and unpredictable changes that characterise many occupations and career trajectories.
- In many countries career development is considered to be an emerging professional activity.

The diagram in Appendix 1 illustrates some of the influences on occupational/vocational and career decision-making in people's lives. The figure suggests that all decisions are made within a larger societal context. The traditional approach tended to situate career decision-making according to conventional views regarding career development, with the main assumption being that if a person had the aptitude and ability, the societal context would provide the occupation and career trajectory they desired. The rapid and evolving nature of labour market opportunities have, for many people, shifted the direction of influence from the individual going out to obtain what they need to societal circumstances influencing the viable choices available to individuals, affecting their career/employment opportunities, their friendship and family relationships and their sense or understanding of themselves.

## 1.5 Implications for Practice

Research regarding occupational choice and progression indicates that for a growing number of people in North America and other regions of the world labour market opportunities offer more restricted and erratic opportunities, leading to protracted periods of stagnation in occupational involvement. A number of research studies from the 1980s to 2019 have indicated that employment transitions can be psychologically debilitating in ways that affect family and friendship relationships and ultimately an individual's sense of who they are as a person, not just as a worker (Amundson & Borgen, 1982, 1987; Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Standing, 2014; Borgen & Edwards, 2019). These and several other studies indicate that any consideration of occupational, vocational and career issues needs to take the whole person and his or her context into account (Amundson, Borgen, Iaquinta, Butterfield, & Koert, 2010).

The need to recognise the psychological distress experienced by many individuals who are experiencing a challenging career/employment transition also suggests that those involved in providing services need to be informed regarding the psychological correlates of the transition processes (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). The importance of understanding the effects of transition experiences is underlined by the fact that increasing numbers of workers are engaged in precarious work often involving part-time or temporary contacts, which will result in them experiencing repeated work/employment transitions throughout their employment lives.

This volatile and changing employment context also challenges career/employment service providers to realise the need for an expanded role for and expertise in utilising career counselling processes in their work, in addition to offering advising and guidance services (Gunz, Evans & Jalland, 2000; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006). Having expertise related to both the tasks involved in helping people make informed choices regarding their employment or career paths, and the counselling approaches and skills to assist those individuals to consider their situations with self-acceptance, self-confidence and reality based hope and optimism, can make service providers powerful resources in increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of people in navigating protracted and challenging career/employment transitions (Borgen, 1997; Borgen & Edwards, 2019).

## 1.6 A Programme Example

A number of years ago a provincial government in Canada requested to adapt a group counselling needs assessment programme called *Starting Points* for long-term unemployed individuals (Borgen, 1999). The results of a study on the effectiveness of the programme pointed to some interesting observations. Firstly, it seems

clear that clients who attended the programme were in a period of protracted transition (Bridges, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984) and were experiencing considerable confusion about what specific problems they faced. The transition had become pervasive—it had overwhelmed them (Lipman-Blumen & Leavitt, 1976). Secondly, group members found both task-focused and process-focused activities valuable. As such, they needed to be involved in employment planning activities and in discussions of their transition experience (Amundson & Borgen, 1988). Thirdly, the components of the programme involving identification of specific barriers, normalising feelings, focusing on strengths, providing information tailored to specific needs and developing specific action plans (Borgen, 1997) were found to be useful. Fourthly, the way in which clients were referred to the programme and the availability of resources following it seemed to be of crucial importance in promoting or detracting from clients' sense of strength, dignity and motivation to succeed. Fifthly, the follow-up study of the programme indicated that the participants were more robust and sustainable in managing their lives after the programme, where their transition challenges had developed boundaries that did not overwhelm them.

## 1.7 Implications for Considering the Outcome of Career/Employment Interventions

Since Parsons initiated career/employment services, a major emphasis has been to engage in exploration to determine aptitudes, skills and interests to determine a good fit with employment opportunities. Interventions have been viewed as successful if that match was made, a perspective that rested heavily on the traditional assumptions outlined at the beginning of this section. From what participants in the *Starting Points* programme indicated, normalising the experience of initial action plans not working out was extremely beneficial. Discussing plans B, C, D etc. opened the door to consider other options for employment that may not satisfy their passions but will fulfil other needs. Moving forward, it will be important to increasingly disconnect defining success of interventions in terms of matching jobs with psychological passions and assisting individuals in exercising these interests and passions outside paid work—on a temporary or longer-term basis.

## 1.8 Life-Design or Lives Confined?

Irving draws from a different theoretical tradition, suggesting that if we examine the life-design career paradigm through a critical lens it highlights how its psychotherapeutic underpinnings turn attention away from the multiple ways in which sociopolitical influences impact self-construction. This author argues, therefore, that greater attention needs to be given to the relationship between the multifaceted dynamics of

self-construction by locating it within a sociopolitical context through which social in/justice plays out. He contends that what is deemed to be possible is shaped by the dominant sociopolitical and economic discourses of the times as these create the collective conditions through which individuals come to make sense of who they are, and discover who they might be/come (Irving, 2015).

## 1.9 Looking Differently at Career Re/construction

Viewing the life-design paradigm through a critical discursive social constructionist lens, the life-design career paradigm appears to be incomplete; it seems to lack articulation, pay little attention to potential limitations, place inordinate focus on the individual's psyche and reflect a cultural specificity that is embedded within a white American context. Whilst it is not the intention here to discount notions of agency (which is shaped, constructed and constrained by the discursive resources made available to individuals), disregard the value of aspiration or belittle the role of counselling, from a social justice perspective the concern is that therapeutic interventions such as this contextualise *all* career problems as forms of individual responsibility-deficiency and/or deep-seated psychological trauma. Of concern is the way in which the auto/biographies elicited by career counsellors, *their* interpretation of stories, (re)framing of past experiences and co-construction of alternative narratives for/with individuals have a tendency to occur in a depoliticised psychological frame that fails to account for the discursive constraints of the social (Irving, 2010). Life-career counselling might be better understood, therefore, when positioned as a social construction rather than an act of internalised cognitive processing. This takes us beyond psychological constructivist approaches as constructions of 'who I am' and 'who I may be/come', as individual narratives are shaped by the influences of master discourses which, in contemporary times, are those of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) and neoconservatism (Apple, 2011).

To clarify, whilst individuals may seek to gain self-knowledge and effect personal change through reconstructions of their own life histories and lived experiences, at the same time the social world makes available the discourses that both client and counsellor can draw upon to do this. Thus, the 'realities' that emerge are not simply an act of self-construction, but are informed by multiple, and often competing, discourses as they collide with embedded historical, political and sociocultural meanings that infuse everyday experience. Hence, sense-making is shaped (implicitly and explicitly) by the possibilities made available through discourse which shapes how 'we' might interpret the word and the world (Irving, 2013). For example, how clients and/or counsellors are positioned, or attempt to position themselves, in relation to socioeconomic class, gender, culture and such, like through the discursive subject positions that are made available, shape interpretations of 'what was', inform 'what

is' and require a critical understanding of what might be possible if *social* change is to occur that will shift *individual* narratives and intentions.

## 1.10 The Nature of Dominant Discourse

Dominant discourse communicates particular versions of the world, often privileging the interests of the most powerful or influential. Neoliberal ideology and neoconservative thinking continue to exert considerable sway over career discourse ( Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018), positioning individuals as "Masters of our own destiny, yet victims of our own folly" (Graham, 2007, p. 204), eschewing notions of society. Meanwhile, neoconservative discourse harkens back to calls for self-discipline, the reinsertion of 'traditional' knowledge and demands for a common culture which, it would appear, is founded upon Christian values (Blustein, 2008; Apple, 2011). As a result of constant re/articulation via the media, by way of 'official channels' such as policy pronouncements (Irving, 2013) and through everyday text, talk and other signifiers, dominant discourses become rooted within the general psyche as 'accepted truths'. These act to shape social reality, and limit the range of subject positions (i.e. identities) individuals have available. Hence, how dominant discourse impacts career construction is an important consideration, as what constitutes a 'meaningful career', and how career counsellors understand their role, may be far from neutral ( McIlveen & Patton, 2006). This can be seen in mainstream 'career' thinking which continues to privilege education/occupation and economic participation (Richardson, 2009). Moreover, without a meaningful engagement with the political dimensions of life there is a risk that, in contemporary times, *any* career paradigm, unwittingly perhaps, leaves itself open to the pervasive and deleterious influences of neoliberalism and neoconservatism which seek to dictate and direct rather than enable and empower through continuous reinforcement of the notion of the selfish (economically driven) individual (Irving, 2018), allied with a desire for disciplined social stability through the enforcement of common (dominant) cultural values, standards, behaviours and beliefs. Thus, there is a need for life-career paradigms that are more socioculturally informed, politically astute and critically informed, and which encompass multi-faceted conceptions of career that are no longer constrained by (assumed) apolitical psychological assumptions that are caught up with the pursuit of a 'knowable self' which is underwritten by notions of the unfettered individual or romantic calls to the past.

## 1.11 Self-governance: An Objective for Career Counselling?

Finally, Hoejdal raises questions about the extent to which the life-design career paradigm's focus on self-governance deflects attention away from wider structural factors that can both enable and restrict career aspiration and opportunity. During the last decades, various constructivist approaches to career counselling have held widespread appeal in Scandinavia (for example, Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002; Peavy, 1997), and many counsellors base their practice on the assumption that individuals construct 'representations of reality', not reality itself (Kelly, 1963). Accordingly, narrative approaches that integrate the individual's unique biography and life-space dimensions, such as possibility structures and other socioeconomic factors that influence career choices, have been commonly used. In this section, I question whether the shift from constructivism to constructionism, as it is presented in the life-design career paradigm, is at risk of losing sight of the context in which careers unfold and of the environmental factors that limit many people's ability to construct, manage or control their career.

Mirroring the enhanced focus on people's career management skills, several researchers have suggested a need for a new approach to understanding career and career counselling. As the 'the third major paradigm for career intervention' (Savickas, 2015), life-design does not only introduce a new approach to counselling but also reconstructs the human subject and the context in which career choices are being made (Nota et al., 2015). The 'career construction theory' developed by Savickas (2002) adheres to 'epistemological constructivism' which, claim Savickas et al. (2009), is contextualised as a social constructionist model that is integral within the life-design career paradigm. This shift in science-theoretical approach not only implies a new way of understanding humans and the context in which they live but also has implications regarding how counselling needs are understood. Career problems are thus seen to arise due to individuals becoming dislocated from their life-narratives (Nota et al., 2015). Subsequently, the life-design career paradigm focuses on how counsellors can assist clients to deconstruct and reconstruct their life-narrative by assisting them to reinterpret the past and relate this to their future aspirations. In the following the discussion on some of the basic assumptions underlying the life-design career paradigm is offered, paying particular attention to its declared 'new' understanding of humans, and the context in which career development takes place. This is contextualised by reference to the situation of those living in Greenland.

## 1.12 Greenland—A Case in Point

Greenland is an autonomous country within the Danish Realm with a population of approximately 56,000 people. The inhabitants are scattered over vast distances with approximately one third residing in Nuuk, the capital city, and the remainder

in towns or settlements ranging from 21 to 5500 inhabitants. Travelling between cities is both complicated and expensive, since there are no connecting roads. This involves travelling by boat (typically during summertime) or by airplane or helicopter (typically during winter). Along with climatic conditions, physical infrastructure poses the single most important challenge to educational and vocational mobility, impacting issues of career development and choice. The variety of employment options in most towns is limited and many jobs, such as those in the fishing industry, are seasonal. Unemployment rates are high, particularly amongst the young and those living in small communities. Although slowly improving, overall educational attainment is relatively low with only half of the pupils passing their compulsory school exams in some towns. Mirroring the restricted range of job opportunities on offer, not all types of educational courses are offered in all cities, with only a limited range of choices available throughout the country itself. Thus, many people must travel to cities away from their homes, or relocate to Denmark, in order to obtain vocational or higher level certification.

Due to geographical distance and the limited access to jobs or training places, the majority of the population actively 'self-limit' their desired choice of career by adjusting to the available options. Many jobseekers face trouble simply finding any job, hence aspiring to 'meaningful' employment (in an occupational sense) often remains the province of the privileged few. Unequal access to opportunities or differences in life chances cautions against a strong individualisation of career problems where biographical solutions are seen to provide all-inclusive answers to structural problems (Bauman, 2002).

## 1.13 The Context of Work and Career

Savickas et al. (2009) argue that, in building a new research agenda, it is useful to distinguish between core, peripheral and marginalised employees. Core employees work for an organisation on a more permanent basis and must 'learn to adapt' and develop new competencies in order to survive in a boundaryless labour market. For this category of employees, it is suggested that research is needed on factors that encourage the development of new competencies. Peripheral workers are described as workers who must learn how to cope with multiple transitions. Their career decisions will be frequently focused on the shorter term and 'dictated by their employability', hence the focus on competence development. Finally, marginalised workers are described as workers who may encounter additional barriers to and constraints on their employment, sometimes even leading them to concentrate on just day labour.

There is a paucity of (valid) global statistics about the type of employment the workforce is engaged in. However, many researchers agree that a large and growing number of people currently have a marginalised or peripheral connection to the labour market (Castells, 1996; Castells, 2009; Standing, 2014). If that is the case, there is a need to question whether the counselling approach within the life-design career paradigm is of equal relevance for the different needs of the three categories of

workers described above. Although those advocating the life-design career paradigm acknowledge that lives are influenced by environmental factors, it is assumed that opportunity is predominantly self-constructed. Additionally, Savickas et al. (2009) present the current labour market as one in which employment is regarded as mutually beneficial, founded on 'win-win' situations. This raises questions about who (or how many) of those who are actively engaged in the contemporary labour market consider themselves to be in a winning position. Furthermore, does the fact that people encounter barriers and constraints when trying to implement career choices which may additionally be 'dictated by their employability' support the idea that they can actually construct their career freely?

As shown by Standing (2014), even people with university degrees are at risk of becoming unemployed and marginalised, which is currently the case in many European countries. Even in Denmark, with relatively low unemployment rates, a recent survey showed that every tenth academic lives 'on the edge of the established labour market' and many expect to be without a permanent job in the future (Akademikernes Akasse, 2016). Regarding job insecurity, several researchers point to the fact that most workers do not have control over their career. To have the power to govern your career path(s) or gain access to careers that suit future aspirations might thus be limited to a small privileged elite (Castells, 2009; Standing, 2014). This suggests a need for more research on the structural origin of people's career problems, and more debate about how a different counselling model may address a variety of counselling needs.

## 1.14 Careers: An Individual Construction?

Those researchers advocating the life-design career paradigm suggest a need for models that facilitate 'flexible adaptation to or re/construction of one's own ecosystem' which focus upon clients' 'strategies for survival and the dynamics of coping' (Savickas et al., 2009). They present a model in which the individuals are positioned as 'governors of their own career paths and, more generally, of their lives' (Nota et al., 2015). As illustrated through the case of Greenland, structural constraints restrict the career choices of many people, and limit the options available that would enable them to pursue their aspirations. Thus, for these individuals, their career and life-course may primarily be shaped by environmental factors rather than those of 'choice', or the life-career narratives they construct. Many Greenlanders have already developed strategies for surviving and coping with limited opportunities, but does that reflect their ability to design their lives and careers?

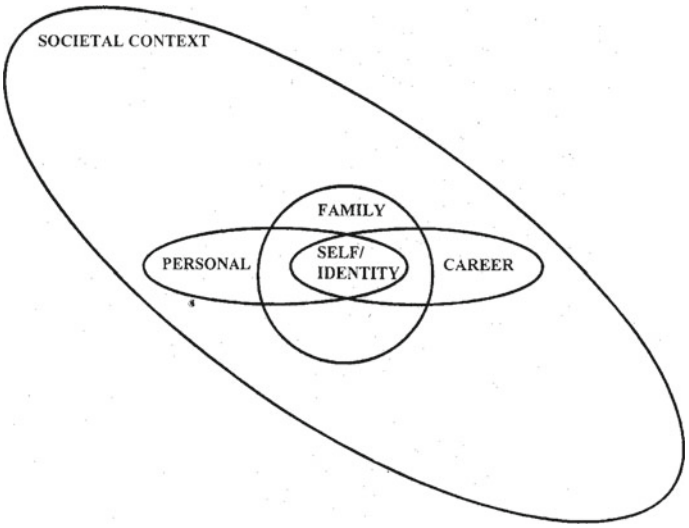
Shifting paradigms from constructivism to constructionism, and understanding life and careers as a result of linguistic constructions, has been given little attention within the career counselling field. Moreover, as Held (1995) argues, the postmodern narrative movement represents a form of 'antirealism' that tends to ignore the importance of the (extralinguistic) reality of personal experience. This could cause us to devaluate or undermine our client's unique personal experiences and result in changing nothing more (or less) than what are described as option-limiting and problem-causing narratives.

## 1.15 Conclusion

Although the contributors to this chapter adopt different theoretical standpoints, they contend that those counsellors engaged with the life-design career approach tend to present individualised solutions to collective career 'problems'. They argue that too much emphasis is placed on a psychological constructivist perspective, thus marginalising the influence of sociocultural, political and structural dynamics on who 'we' might be/come. Generally, all agree with the notion that personal biographies and re/constructed narratives are infused with sociocultural, political and structural influences that shape how meaning is attributed to an individual's career aspirations and expectations. Hence, they assert that there is a need to think more deeply about the concept of 'career', and critically review *any* career paradigm that positions the individual as being the sole (or primary) author of the direction their life-career path takes. Individual freedom in relation to career choice and progression is not simply a product of the discovery of a constructed 'known self' that codifies and categorises their life experiences, as such experiences are inexorably shaped by, and are contingent on, the cultural values, social mores, political philosophies, economic systems and historical events in which self is located, shaped and formed. Hence, holding the individual solely accountable for their successes and/or failures (however these are measured, and by whom), abrogates the responsibility of the state, and society at large, to ensure that mechanisms are put into place that support and value all of its citizens. Therefore, those counsellors (and career practitioners more generally) who engage in any form of 'life-career' approaches will require a deep understanding of the multiple and complex ways in which injustices may be perpetuated and reinforced through cultural contexts, political pronouncements, social practices, economic systems and historical antecedents.

## Appendix 1

## Career Counselling Within a Context of Uncertainty

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# Chapter 2
# Defining Entrepreneurs' Needs and the Barriers They Face According to the Perceptions of Professional Guidance Practitioners and Career Advisors


**Beatriz Álvarez-González, Magdalena Suárez-Ortega, Beatriz Malik-Liévano, and María Fe Sánchez-García**

**Abstract** Theorists have pointed out that when trying to define entrepreneurs, there is a tendency to take the view that those driven by opportunism are usually more tolerant of risk, and this may be one of the reasons they are perceived as necessary in society. This research is part of the R&D project *Career design and talent management in entrepreneurship*. One of its main objectives is to arrive to the definition of the barriers and needs in training and guidance, facing self-employed individuals. In order to accomplish this goal, the authors have adopted a mixed approach to entrepreneurship, considering both, the entrepreneur's traits, and the environment and process in which they develop their entrepreneurial projects. The needs detected in this research vary depending on the nature of the origin of entrepreneurship: through opportunism, or through necessity. Among the main barriers identified, the lack of response to the needs detected, particularly, the lack of a training offer, and the difficulties and hindrances involved in grants and subsidies, are among the major ones to entrepreneurship, as well as the fear of failure.

**Keywords** Training and guidance needs · Barriers to entrepreneurship · Guidance services promoting entrepreneurship · Career advisors · Guidance counsellors

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## 2.1 Introduction

Initiatives in entrepreneurship require qualities such as expertise and self-confidence, as well as a clear understanding of the risks to be assumed. Accordingly, entrepreneurs will encounter difficulties and conditioning factors in their path, requiring them to deploy competencies and strategies that will contribute to their projects' success.

This research is part of an R&D project called *Diseño de la carrera y gestión del talento emprendedor* (Career design and talent management in entrepreneurship), with a nationwide scope, funded by Spain's Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness. Specifically, we are addressing its second objective, which focuses on the need to describe and define the situation of self-employed individuals in their career development, with this study providing partial results from the larger project, adopting a largely qualitative perspective. In sum, this study's aim is to *identify and further develop the definition of the barriers and needs in training and guidance facing self-employed individuals, from the perspective of guidance practitioners and career advisors in support services.*

We have addressed this phenomenon by gathering information and data from the career practitioners (advisors and counsellors) who work at the services that provide support for entrepreneurship and through the application of a protocol involving a sample of services providing guidance and support for entrepreneurship within the Spanish context.

The results explore the practitioners' perception on the needs expressed by individuals in any one of the stages of entrepreneurship, whether this involves a start-up, a new enterprise or a consolidated business activity; as we were interested in their opinions regarding a series of core dimensions of analysis. We specifically focus on presenting the results of two main dimensions: (a) *needs in training and guidance*; and (b) *the barriers or conditioning factors involved in entrepreneurship.* Understanding an entrepreneur's career requires identifying the barriers that may appear in their path, as well as their perceived needs, which may give rise to best practices that prove to have a favourable impact on their success.

Leading international organisations acknowledge the need for entrepreneurship as one of the main drivers of economic growth. In fact, the past decade has witnessed an increase in the scientific literature on entrepreneurship, although few studies have focused on career guidance. Furthermore, economic growth should not be the main reason to support entrepreneurship, but rather the career development and fulfilment of individuals, also in search of a collective good. However, in many cases, people are forced to go into entrepreneurship in conditions that do not really fulfil their interests or career goals. In this field, there is still a paucity of studies designed to shed light on the factors that promote or curtail projects in entrepreneurship, or on an entrepreneur's key qualities and their needs for professional development, through a holistic view of the individual, business contexts, people's environments and training and guidance provision, from an interactive perspective.

When analysing entrepreneurs' circumstances with a view to identifying the main barriers they face, as well as their needs in training and guidance, we should clearly

delimit the nature of that reality. This study has therefore adopted a mixed approach to entrepreneurship (Baron & Shane, 2008), which considers both the entrepreneur's traits and the environment and process in which their entrepreneurial projects are framed.

As regards the environment, Robayo-Vera (2011) indicates the following: "The environment has a crucial influence on entrepreneurs' attitudes, activities and aspirations. Therefore, the three key players responsible for developing a favourable climate for entrepreneurship are the following: state, private business, and academia. Each one has a vital role to play, and should tackle their own challenges" (p. 17). Some studies indicate that lifelong training and the development of competencies are vital in higher education (Yaniz-Álvarez de Eulate, & Villardón-Gallego, 2006; Álvarez-Pérez, González-Afonso, & López-Aguilar, 2009; Molero López-Barajas & Reina-Estévez, 2012; Hernández-Fernaud, Ramos-Sapena, Negrín, Ruiz-de la Rosa, & Hernández, 2011).

The 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report (Pablo-López de, Santos-Urda, Angoitia-Grijalba, & Valdés-Lías, 2016) singles out Madrid as one of Spain's best cities for business projects. Its most highly rated features include access and the availability of physical infrastructures. Nonetheless, as of 2016, the experts that have collaborated on this report have noted a downturn in conditions in the business environment compared to the previous year. The recommendations are therefore geared toward the improvement of, among other aspects, social and cultural standards, training and instruction in entrepreneurship at school and the furtherance of education in entrepreneurship.

This is the scenario for the gathering and analysis of the results in this study, seeking to use the information provided by the experts to identify the indicators of difficulties and barriers in the environment that new businesses have to negotiate, entrepreneurs' needs and the key aspects for the provision of guidance services that respond to those difficulties, obstacles and shortcomings in their training.

## 2.2 Purpose

Considering the above, this study has the following goal:

> To identify and define the barriers and needs involved in the provision of training and guidance for self-employed people, from the perspective of the guidance practitioners and career advisors involved in these services.

In order to respond accordingly, we have designed and applied the protocol described in the method section to gather and record data from the agencies and practitioners taking part. Prior to that, however, the theoretical framework that underpins this study is presented, focusing on the dimensions of interest and demarcating the state-of-the-art on the matter.

## 2.3 Theoretical Underpinnings

Prior to the theoretical review of the target dimensions, needs and barriers, we should first clarify that a potential entrepreneur is someone who needs to undergo a change, and is aware of this. Such a person is also motivated to develop a business activity within a specific market segment.

Several studies (2018 GEM Report; Díaz-de León & Cancino, 2014; Marulanda, Montoya, & Vélez, 2014) distinguish between the entrepreneurship driven mainly by necessity and the opportunism prompted precisely by identifying employment situations that require a response in the form of an entrepreneurial activity.

This differentiation seems to point to a relationship between entrepreneurship and growth, with both pivoting around the state of the labour market. This distinction has also been highlighted by the following authors, among others: Lévesque and Minniti (2006), Hechavarría and Reynolds (2009), Kirkwood (2009), Hatak, Harms, and Fink (2015). They all indicate that in most cases people tend to want to earn more and become more independent, while in others they are simply forced into self-employment because they cannot find any other way out of unemployment.

In other studies, this differentiation has been conceptualised as an opportunity or pull—a necessity—as noted by, among others, Verheul, Thurik, Hessels, and Van der Zwan (2010). The push-pull paradigm provides an analysis framework for interpreting the reasons for entrepreneurship and the forms it takes. In this vein, and when seeking to define entrepreneurs, it tends to be posited that those driven by opportunism are usually more tolerant of risk, and this is one of the reasons they are perceived as necessary in society (Block, Sandner, & Spiegel, 2015).

As regards the needs in some way linked to people's characteristics and to circumstances in the environment, authors such as Thurik, Carree, Van Stel, and Audretsch (2008), Kautonen and Palmroos (2010) consider that unemployment is one of the main factors prompting people to start a business, with this individual initiative sometimes being seen as almost the only route to survival. Yet this impulse does not in itself guarantee the enterprise's success, and in this sense, the characteristics of both the individual and the collective to which they belong, along with their employment situation, will give way to the expression of those needs.

One of the needs that has been clearly identified within the framework of this research involves the importance of the context in an entrepreneur's education; specifically, the need to foster an enterprising spirit during their schooling, something that our informants claim is not the case. This view is also confirmed in the GEM Spain Report (2016), specifically by the indicator Educating for entrepreneurship at school. Spain stands in forty-sixth position out of 65 countries studied, and scores below the average (2.7/3.1). In the specific case of the Autonomous Community of Madrid (GEM 2016, Madrid), it is again stressed that education is precisely one of the factors that encourages entrepreneurship. According to this same report, the second block of measures recommended for this city considers an educational model that boosts creativity and a readiness to start a business.

Following this description of the main needs in education and guidance related to entrepreneurship, we now focus on the importance of the entrepreneur's gender and their perception of their own worth.

As regards the needs that may stem from belonging to certain groups, this section highlights the possible differences perceived by professional guidance practitioners in business projects and processes undertaken by men and women.

An early report issued by Acs, Arenius, Hay, and Minniti (2004). Global entrepreneurship monitor. GEM 2004, dedicated to women and entrepreneurship states that factors with an apparent influence on starting a business have a similar impact on men and women (Langowitz, Minniti, & Arenius, 2005; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007); however, subsequent studies (Baughn, Cao, Le, Lim, & Neupert, 2006; Mueller & Dato-On, 2008) have found that men have more interest in entrepreneurship, apparently due to a higher opinion of their own self-efficacy. According to these authors, self-efficacy is a psychological state defined as self-confidence in the performance of a task.

The studies by Gupta, Turban, Wasti, and Sikdar (2009), and Alda-Varas, Villardón-Gallego, and Elexpuru-Albizuri (2012) has singled out the stereotypical features that tend to be attributed to men and women as one of the factors that could inform the decision to pursue a specific job or profession, depending on whether it is perceived as feminine or masculine.

The consideration of self-efficacy in women has also been described by Suárez Ortega (2008), who specifically refers to their low expectations of success, as perceived by the women themselves, as a limitation that prompts them to experience low self-esteem and little self-efficacy in terms of improving their employment situation.

The findings in a study by Mueller and Dato-On (2013) reveal certain changes regarding structural barriers and gender stereotypes in matters of entrepreneurship, as they seem to be rapidly disappearing, with the ensuing success of women in occupations that have traditionally been considered male domains, such as management and entrepreneurship.

Another study by Mueller and Dato-On (2013) contends that business self-efficacy can be increased or reduced through steps of an educational nature. They therefore highlight the importance of including business self-efficacy in training courses on entrepreneurship. If these programmes adopt a balanced approach to the type of competencies they aim to develop (those considered to have a masculine focus and those with a feminine focus), they will increase the success of business projects among men and women alike.

The 2016 GEM Report reveals changes in a series of data along these lines. On the one hand, and regarding the different stages of entrepreneurship, it notes a certain prevalence in businesses undertaken by men. The report has identified this tendency in all the stages, in both planning and consolidated states. Nevertheless, a change then appears to have come about in 2016, when women start to dominate the scene, both in the planning stage of entrepreneurship and in the start-up stage. Nonetheless, as time passes and in general terms, the report identifies a clear dynamic in men's businesses, which once again outperform women's enterprises. In the case of Europe,

and compared to the rest of the world, women play a smaller role in the initial stages of a new business' activity (6%). Likewise, Europe also records the lowest level of gender parity. In contrast to what happens with men, European women are half as likely to take part in self-employed activities.

Alvarez and Urbano (2011). Álvarez, Noguera, and Urbano (2012) have investigated possible factors in the environment that may inform female entrepreneurship in Spain. Their study distinguishes between informal factors (perception of the skills required, social networks and the family's role), which have a significant impact on a women's likelihood of starting a business, and formal factors (non-financial support activities and education, among others) which do not have significant effects; they attribute considerable importance to these informal factors, which should therefore be taken into account when catering for the needs of female entrepreneurs.

Certain studies in Spain (Mora & Martínez, 2018; Sánchez-Cañizares & Fuentes-García, 2013) have focused on the barriers and obstacles female entrepreneurs and their projects face, and the authors of these studies agree that 2008, the year when the recession began, saw a significant increase in new business projects.

One of the main barriers described in these studies is the fear that the business will fail. Diverse studies, Haro, Ceballos, and Salazar (2010); Michelacci, (2003); Minniti (2012), Chacón et al. GEM 2013, give it such importance because it is a barrier that, in turn, depends on myriad factors, which tend to be directly linked to the entrepreneur and their more immediate family environment, and stem from the individual's wider context (community, policies etc.).

In the first case, we will refer to the direct consequences that business failure may have on the entrepreneur's family, which may range from a loss of self-esteem through to an impairment of the entrepreneur's professional reputation. As regards contextual factors, Romero-Martínez and Milone (2016) mainly point to the financial costs of the new business project, which range from the investment required for the start-up to the expense of winding up the company.

## 2.4 Method

This study has been conducted within the framework of Stage 1 in this research, specifically the qualitative analysis of entrepreneurs' characteristics and profiles within a Spanish context.

The qualitative nature of this initial stage involves an analysis of the opinions expressed, in this case, by guidance practitioners and career advisors involved in support services and agencies for entrepreneurs, all in relation to the implications arising for the users' career development. This study has therefore applied an ad hoc protocol as its data-gathering strategy. It is a semi-structured report that is open-ended in the recording of answers, while at the same time it is a constructive one, as it enables the guidance practitioners involved to include any information they deem convenient, attach any documents they consider to be of interest and deliver data to

the extent and breadth they wish, according to the characteristics of the service in which they are employed and their reference context.

The data have been gathered from three main sources: (1) experts/managers of agencies supporting entrepreneurs; (2) these agencies' websites; and (3) literature sources, as a way of helping to understand the situation. Thirty-three protocols have been administered nationwide in Spain, which have been completed by managers/coordinators and practitioners in agencies cooperating in the implementation of the R&D framework project to which this study belongs. These data are supplemented by social indicators and the analysis of documentary sources, which provide the platform for focusing a national entrepreneurship plan that has been drawn up by other members of the team (Suárez-Ortega et al., 2018).

The protocol for describing and recording the data on self-employed individuals and the resources and services provided for entrepreneurs (Suárez-Ortega, Padilla-Carmona, & Sánchez-García, 2015) is an instrument for registering the different findings and data obtained from the aforementioned sources. It is structured into four parts: (1) description and definition of the situation of self-employed individuals in the Autonomous Community; (2) identification of the barriers facing self-employed individuals (from a technical standpoint); (3) information on the agencies related to entrepreneurship (training and guidance services and resources); and (4) description and definition of self-employed individuals' needs (technical perspective).

This document is organised into four sections, with two parts; the first involves Sects. 1 and 3: Description and definition of the situation of self-employed individuals; Information about the agency related to entrepreneurship (training and guidance services and resources). The second part comprises Sects. 2 and 4: Identification of the barriers facing self-employed individuals (from a technical standpoint); Description and definition of self-employed individuals' needs (technical perspective), which is our focus here.

Once the information was gathered through the electronic delivery of the protocols to the various services and agencies, the next stage involved importing, coding and classifying the information. The qualitative analysis of the data conducted here has given rise to a series of categories in different dimensions related to entrepreneurship. Regarding the difficulties involved in starting up a business, both our own research and the GEM Reports (2016–2017) coincide in stating that one of the main barriers is a lack of business culture, as well as the excess burden of bureaucracy identified in our study. In the GEM reports, this is referred to as too much information and paperwork, which involves having to go from one office to another to complete all the official procedures.

Table 2.1 features the general categories mentioned by the guidance practitioners and career advisors, including their frequencies.

Based on these category systems, an analysis has been conducted of the content the participants have provided, obtaining results that shed light on the issues addressed in the research. These results are presented in the next section, organised according to the core dimensions under study.

**Table 2.1** General system of categories: Dimensions/Barriers/Needs

| Dimensions/barriers/needs<br>General opinions | |
|---|---|
| Categories/subcategories | Frequencies of appearance |
| Difficulties accessing credit | 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. A5 ARCA) 1 (P.M2 SAN BLAS) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) |
| Administrative ignorance/barriers | 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. A3 CES) 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) 1 (P. A<br>10 INNOVA) 1 (P. AR4 TRANVÍA) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. AR2 CEOE) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P.C2 ASPID) 2 (P. IB1 GREC) |
| Bureaucratic ignorance/barriers | 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 2 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) 1 (P. M1TOMILLO) 1 (P. M2 SAN BLAS) 1 (P. C2 ASPID) 1 (P. CA1 CANTABRIA) 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. A3 CES) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) |
| Educational ignorance/barriers | 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. AR4 TRANVÍA) 1 (P. M3 UEM) |
| Ignorance of financial matters | 1 (P. A3 CES) 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A5 ARCA) 1 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) 1 (P. A10 INNOVA) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 1 (P. AR1 SACME) 2 (P. AR3CESTE)<br>1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) 1 (P. M2 SAN BLAS) 1 (P. M3 UEM) 1 (P.C1 GENTIS) 1 (P. C2 ASPID) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. IC1 ADSIS) 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. A3 CES) 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A5 ARCA) 1 (P. A6 AID) 1 (P. A7 ARRABAL) 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 1 (P. AR1 SACME) 1 (P. AR2 CEOE) 1 (P. AR4 TRANVÍA) 1 (P. AR6 SACEI) 3 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. M1 TOMILLO) 1 (P. M3 UEM) 1 (P.C1 GENTIS) 1 (P. C2 ASPID) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) |
| Lack of information on starting a business | 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A7 ARRABAL) 1 (P. A10 INNOVA) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) |
| Lack of information on obtaining resources | 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A5 ARCA) |
| Lack of information on business management | 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) 1 (P. AR4 TRANVÍA) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. M1 TOMILLO) |
| Lack of business premises | 1 (P. A4 CADE) |

(continued)

**Table 2.1** (continued)

| Dimensions/barriers/needs<br>General opinions | |
|---|---|
| Categories/subcategories | Frequencies of appearance |
| Sharing information with other entrepreneurs or business experts | 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A5 ARCA) 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) 1 (P. M3 UEM) |
| Key site with reliable advice | 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A5 ARCA) |
| Debts | 1 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. C2 ASPID) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) |
| Fear of instability in the new business | 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. PV CARITAS) 1 (P. A10 INNOVA) 1 (P. AR4 TRANVÍA) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) |
| Lack of business culture | 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) 1 (P. AR3 CESTE) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. M2 SAN BLAS) 1 (P. A9 VALDOCCO) |
| Viability | 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) |
| Ability to pass from theory to practice | 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) |
| Marketing | 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) 1 (P. A10 INNOVA) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) |
| Undervalue the business idea | 1 (P. V1 QUIERO) |
| Depressed markets | 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 1 (P. A6 AID) 1 (P. A7 ARRABAL) |
| Shortage of business competencies | 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) |
| Tax burden | 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) 1 (P. C2 ASPID) 1 (P. A3 CES) 1 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) 1 (P. V3 FEVECTA) 2 (P. AR6 SACEI) 2 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) |
| Lack of training | 1 (P. AR3 CESTE) 1 (P. AR6 SACEI) 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. M1TOMILLO) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. CA1 CANTABRIA) 1 (P. PV CARITAS) 1 (P. A6 AID)<br>1 (P. AR1 SACME) 2 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. C2 ASPID) |
| Instruction in ICTs | 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) |
| Grants/subsidies | 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) 2 (P. AR6 SACEI) 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) 1 (P. C1 GENTIS) |

(continued)

**Table 2.1** (continued)

| Dimensions/barriers/needs<br>General opinions | |
|---|---|
| Categories/subcategories | Frequencies of appearance |
| Alterations to premises | 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) |
| Ignorance of the market | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Work teams | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) |
| Underestimating the industry | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Dealings with suppliers | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Logistics | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Ignorance of the product and patents | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Payment | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) 1 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) 1 (P. AR6 SACEI) 2 (P. CL1 CVE) |
| Sales | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Formal procedures and licences | 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) 3 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) 1 (P. AR1 SACME) 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) 1 (P. G2 ERGUETE) 1 (P. M3 UEM) |
| Lack of free time | 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. A2 AJE) |
| Scant legal protection | 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. AR4 TRANVÍA) 2 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) |
| Customers | 1 (P. A10 INNOVA) 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. IC1 ADSIS) 1 (P. PV CARITAS) |
| Competition | 1 (P. V2 FLORIDA) |
| Sick leave | 1 (P. AR6 SACEI) |
| Competitiveness | 1 (P. CL1 CVE) |
| Responsibility | 1 (P. CL1 CVE) 1 (P. CL3 SALAMANCA) |
| Profit expectations | 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) |
| Lack of experience | 1 (P. CL2 LESMES) |
| Loneliness | 1(P. G1 EMPRENDIA) |
| Adapting to change | 1 (P. IB1 GREC) 1 (P. CA1 CANTABRIA) |
| Reconciliation | 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. A3 CES) 1 (P. A4 CADE) |
| Inequality at work | 1 (P. A5 ARCA) |
| Gender | 1 (P. A2 AJE) 1 (P. A4 CADE) 1 (P. A6 AID) 1 (P. A8 FEJIDIF) |

## 2.5 Results

The data have provided qualitative information on self-employed individuals according to their business project's degree of consolidation, type of activity and context in which it is being undertaken, specifically highlighting the differences identified between rural and urban settings, as well as those informed by gender, while at the same time identifying the general opinions on entrepreneurs held by the guidance practitioners/career advisors in the services/agencies attending to them (Table 2.2).

## 2.6 Discussion of Results and Conclusions

Both the needs and the barriers entrepreneurs may encounter are largely determined by the new business' actual context, which is why this study has adopted a mixed approach (Baron & Shane, 2008) to this phenomenon. In this same vein, and applying the premises propounded by Robayo Vera (2011), consideration has been given to the three factors deemed to be of relevance for fostering a favourable climate for start-ups, namely, employment policies, the business environment and education/training.

Based on these considerations, and as regards the needs detected in this research, it should be stressed that they vary depending on the distinction made by sundry authors (Kirkwood, 2009; Hatak, Harms, & Fink, 2015); that is, regarding the nature of the origin of entrepreneurship: through opportunism when the launch responds to a desire to make more money or respond to welfare demands in terms of employment, or through necessity when the prospective entrepreneur cannot find any other way of finding a job.

This research has noted the greater weight of intuitive entrepreneurs, whose appearance during the data-gathering period coincided with the final stages of the economic crisis in Spain. In this regard, the results of this research are wholly consistent with the findings reported by, for example, Kautonen & Palmroos (2010), who highlight the role these adverse circumstances play as a driver of entrepreneurship. Within this context, individuals caught up in prolonged periods of unemployment have been forced into self-employment; a situation that, in turn, prompts such needs as training in business management or marketing techniques.

Likewise, in a socio-labour context with these characteristics, where policies, measures and resources for labour guidance and life-long training are scarce or limited, the decision to undertake or not undertake a project of entrepreneurship, or the reorientation of trajectories, or professional entrepreneur projects, is committed.

This research has specifically outlined the importance that context has in an entrepreneur's instruction, with this being an aspect that will subsequently impact upon the success and sustainability of new business projects. In this respect, the GEM Spain Report (2016) states that promoting a spirit of entrepreneurship at school is one of the areas for future improvement.

**Table 2.2** Factors with an influence on entrepreneurship as seen by guidance practitioners/career advisors

| Name of protocol | Factors with an influence on entrepreneurship (the opinions of practitioners and advisors) |
|---|---|
| A2 AJE | – Scant legal protection—difficult time management<br>– Difficulties in financing |
| A3 CES | – Red tape—high business rates/taxes<br>– Difficulties/lack of funding |
| A4 CADE | – Lack of funds for reinvesting in the company |
| A5 ARCA | – More expenditure than income |
| A6 AID<br>A7 ARRABAL | – Highly saturated sectors<br>– Lack of commercial and communication techniques<br>– Scant fiscal knowledge (need for professional help and guidance with grants and subsidies)<br>– Difficulties/lack of funding |
| A8 FEJIDIF | – Red tape and need for professional assistance<br>– Excessive business rates/taxes—profile of intuitive entrepreneur<br>– Late payment by the authorities<br>– No interest in training in commerce/marketing |
| A9 VALDOCCO | – Lack of differentiation of product/service provided<br>– Scant knowledge of business management and request for training<br>– Difficulties in financing |
| A10 INNOVA | – Search for customers/marketing<br>– Scant fiscal knowledge (need professional help)<br>– Need and request training in bookkeeping and marketing |
| V1 QUIERO | – Lack of legal adjustment to the diversity of self-employment<br>– Lack of legal flexibility<br>– Use of contact networks |
| V2 FLORIDA | – Lack of product differentiation/high competition<br>– Scant knowledge of management, request training in marketing<br>– Lack of legal flexibility (Social Security contributions not adapted)<br>– Difficulty in distinguishing between family/professional assets<br>– Need for financing and getting known |
| V3 FEVECTA | – Smallness of the company<br>– High welfare costs—difficulties in financing<br>– Need and request training (professional, business management) |
| AR1 SACME | – Specific red tape<br>– Intuitive and opportunistic entrepreneurs (necessity)<br>– Scant group involvement, only through applications<br>– Difficulties in financing (lump sum payment of unemployment benefit) |
| AR2 CEOE | – Intuitive entrepreneurs (necessity)<br>– Difficulties in financing (bank borrowing)<br>– Need for guidance on management and financing |
| AR4 TRANVÍA | – Scant welfare cover—equity risks<br>– Difficulties in financing<br>– Need for guidance on management, financing and networks |

(continued)

**Table 2.2** (continued)

| Name of protocol | Factors with an influence on entrepreneurship (the opinions of practitioners and advisors) |
|---|---|
| AR6 SACEI | – Lack of subsidies—excessive taxes, costly<br>– Late payment of invoices—difficulty in taking sick leave |
| CL1 CVE | – Scant knowledge of management and need for training<br>– High business rates/taxes<br>– Late payment of invoices—lack of flexibility in regulations<br>– Equity risks—Lower level of welfare protection<br>– Financial difficulties (difficult access to credit)<br>– Demand for training in business management, online developments |
| CL2 LESMES | – Lack of subsidies (less than expected)<br>– Lack of experience (business failure)<br>– Discrepancies between expected earnings and real income<br>– Demand for training in economic matters and subsidies |
| CL3 SALAMANCA | – Financial difficulties (difficult access to credit)<br>– Scant legal protection—equity risks |
| G1 EMPRENDIA | – Financial difficulties (difficult access to credit)<br>– Scant legal protection—equity risks<br>– Solitary entrepreneurship<br>– Need for training in commerce and financing |
| M1 TOMILLO | – Financial difficulties (difficult access to credit)<br>– Scant fiscal knowledge<br>– Demand for training in bureaucracy and tax management |
| M2 SAN BLAS | – Financial difficulties (difficult access to credit)<br>– Lack of public subsidies—high taxes (Social Security contributions)<br>– Demand for training in fiscal, marketing and financial matters |
| M3 UEM | – Difficulties with taxes (pre-payment of taxes before receiving payment of invoices)<br>– Scant fiscal knowledge (need professional help and guidance on financing and business activity |
| C1 GENTIS | – Little flexibility in regulations<br>– Financial difficulties<br>– Require training in economics, identification of needs, management models, tax obligations and bookkeeping |
| C2 ASPID | – Lack of differentiation of product/service provided<br>– Scant knowledge of the sector<br>– Need for training in decision-making, tax issues, financing, and bookkeeping<br>– Difficulties in financing—red tape<br>– Difficulties with taxes |

(continued)

**Table 2.2** (continued)

| Name of protocol | Factors with an influence on entrepreneurship (the opinions of practitioners and advisors) |
|---|---|
| IB1 GREC | – Low flexibility of taxation (Social Security contributions)<br>– Scant fiscal knowledge (need professional help)<br>– Late payment of invoices<br>– Scant employment protection (compared to large companies)<br>– Work/life reconciliation<br>– Need for training in business planning, public administration |
| CA1 CANTABRIA | – Difficulties with taxes (pre-payment of taxes before payment of invoices, months of low turnover)<br>– Need for training: taxes, invoicing (self-employed)<br>– Need for support before launch of start-up |
| PV CARITAS | – Discrepancy between business ideas and training capabilities<br>– Advice on the risk of entrepreneurship |
| | *Entrepreneurs' needs in training* |
| A1 MINERVA | – Professional training in target business areas<br>– Training the work team<br>– Importance of communication for business competitiveness |
| A2 AJE | – Legal, fiscal and financial expertise<br>– Need for training in time management |
| A3 CES | – Prospective entrepreneurs need basic training<br>– Need for instruction in the field of entrepreneurship and on new regulations |
| A4 CADE | – Profile of the intuitive entrepreneur<br>– Scant fiscal knowledge (need professional help)<br>– Need for training in professional recycling |
| A5 ARCA | – Scant fiscal knowledge (need professional help)<br>– Need for training in tax management |
| G2 ERGUETE | – High taxes (Social Security contributions)—Scant fiscal knowledge<br>– Financial difficulties (difficult access to credit)<br>– More training required in financing, management and marketing |

Some gender differences are glimpsed. However, this issue is the subject of another in-depth study also focused on the R&D Project, where this study is included.

## 2.7 Proposals for Guidance Schemes in Services in Support of Entrepreneurship

Best practices can be drawn from the services in support of entrepreneurship, considering the actions they undertake, the policies they seek to apply and the barriers and needs identified by the practitioners themselves.

The informants in this study also report the value of education as a driver of entrepreneurship, and the environment is very important in this aspect. Stress is placed on the need for schools to foster a spirit of entrepreneurship. In the informants' view, entrepreneurship is above all a question of intrinsic motivation (especially when referring to opportunistic entrepreneurship).

We should not conclude our consideration of the needs detected in this study without referring to the impact that an entrepreneur's membership of certain collectives may have. One of the most widely studied ones is gender, Allen, Elam, Langowitz, and Dean (2007). Specifically, in a study prior to this research, Suárez-Ortega (2008) highlighted female entrepreneurs' low expectations of success, and they appear again here, both in the needs and the barriers that practitioners and advisors detect in this collective. The majority of women in this situation are negatively affected, above all in matters of self-efficacy and self-esteem, whereas male entrepreneurs appear to enjoy certain advantages in these areas.

Among these barriers that the practitioners in this research perceive, the lack of response to the needs detected in this study tends to constitute a series of barriers of a differing nature. Specifically, the lack of a training offer and the difficulties and hindrances involved in grants and subsidies are a major barrier to entrepreneurship, as well as the fear of failure, which may discourage the launch of other projects. These are obstacles that may appear and which need to be taken into consideration.

## 2.8 Proposals for Guidance Schemes in Services in Support of Entrepreneurship

It is therefore reasonable to understand that any scheme involved in training and guidance in the field of entrepreneurship should give, on the one hand, considerable weight to economic and financial instruction, not only in the initial business plan, and with all the components that it entails, but also as regards the business' subsequent management (taxation, finances, marketing, ongoing identification of needs etc.) with a view to ensuring long-term success. Yet on the other hand, it is also vital, particularly during the initial stages, to conduct a detailed analysis of the entrepreneur's contextual aspects, insofar as they may provide keys to be taken very much into account for overcoming the barriers and obstacles when launching a new business, as well as the connection with the entrepreneur's own life project and professional career.

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# Chapter 3
# The Overqualification of Ecuadorean Nationals Living in Spain—A Study on Migrant People's Needs in Career Guidance


**Óscar Jara-Albán and Beatriz Álvarez-González**

**Abstract** This study is part of a wider research which has been carried out between Ecuador and Spain. This chapter focuses particularly on the situation of qualified migrants in the Spanish labour market by studying a sample of the Ecuadorean population living in Madrid and their perception on two main issues: first, to what extent these migrants consider that their level of professional and academic level has allowed them to access jobs that required similar competencies; and second, which are the specific career guidance needs that must be addressed to help migrants to exploit the education brought with them from their home countries, identifying goals and itineraries that may adapt best to their mobility. To accomplish this goal, the study involved three discussion groups, reflecting upon the education they have brought with them, its use to them when looking and finding work, and whether they received career guidance (in their home country or in Spain) to increase their chances of improving their personal and professional outlook through retraining.

**Keywords** Migration · Overqualification · Education · Career guidance · Qualitative analysis

## 3.1 Introduction

Contrary to what many may think, the migrant population is not always made up of people with no formal education, yet their qualifications may not be recognised or might not be the right ones, or the labour market has not been able to assimilate them. Overqualification is a loss that needs to be redressed, just as under qualification

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is an obstacle to be overcome, in order to develop the full potential of the migrant population living in Europe.

Some migrant workers with a better education might choose to do more menial jobs or those less sought after, reducing their own expectations in a difficult labour market, or because of the need to eke out a living in their host country. This entails a waste of the investment migrants made in their education in their home country, and restricts their social mobility. The crisis has exacerbated this waste of human capital, which means this population is in need of guidance, as a factor for kickstarting their job options and for more sustainable and inclusive growth.

An examination of the level of education among the foreign-born migrant population employed in the Spanish labour market highlights the major differences according to provenance, and discredits the reductionist analyses sometimes conducted that consider migrants to be a single collective (Pajares, 2010).

Generally speaking, the people that migrate are not the ones with the lowest education and least money. The selective nature of migrants is reflected by the departure of a large number of young people, professionally qualified, without a proper job in their home country, and with material resources, whether their own or of migratory networks, involving savings or sufficient borrowing power to afford the journey. Nevertheless, there are differences depending on whether it is rural or urban emigration (Solé, Parella, & Cavalcanti, 2007).

According to the Management System (SGS) of Ecuador's National Secretariat of the Migrant—SENAMI (2012), most Ecuadorean nationals living in Spain have secondary education (66.2%), while 17.4% have higher education.

A study conducted within the European Nopoor project on the levels of employment and education among the Ecuadorean population living in the Community of Madrid has found that most of the migrants (53.5%) consider themselves to be overqualified. Among those of today's migrants that see themselves in this position, 24% have higher education (Mahía & David, 2015a, b; Nopoor, 2015) (Table 3.1).

A major consideration is the higher qualification of the Ecuadorean migrant population compared to their non-migrant compatriots that perform the same jobs at home in Ecuador. The book *Las Múltiples Caras de la Inmigración en España [The Many Faces of Immigration in Spain]* (Reher & Requena, 2009) states that among the migrant population of Ecuadorean nationals working in the building sector, 41% have

**Table 3.1** Degree of correspondence between the level of education of Ecuadorean nationals living in Madrid and their level of employment

| | Ecuadorean nationals living in Madrid (%) |
|---|---|
| Correspondence between job and level of education | |
| Full correspondence | 32.4 |
| Overqualified | 53.5 |
| Underqualified | 2.7 |
| Level of correspondence, applied in a different field | 11.2 |

Nopoor Project (2015)

completed secondary education or have higher education qualifications, compared to 16% among those that have not emigrated, that is, those still living in Ecuador. In turn, among the collective of women working in domestic service, 55% have completed secondary education or have higher education qualifications, compared to the paltry figure of 10% of the domestic workforce with the same level of education living in Ecuador. This returns to the issue of the lack of structural fit between migrants' level of education and the work they do in Spain.

According to figures provided by Eurostat (2011), Spain was the European country with the highest level of overqualification among foreign workers. This study reveals that the gaps between level of education and employment are significant in the case of the migrant population. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Difficulties in the official recognition of the formal qualifications acquired in home countries.
- In the short term, migrant workers are more interested in earning a wage, regardless of the category of job they find.
- An individual migratory project in which the intention is to remain in the host country may favour a greater investment in education compared to the incentives among migrant workers whose aim is to earn enough money to send cash remittances back home (Miguélez et al., 2013).

In its report *Employment and Social Developments in Europe* (2012), the European Commission notes that the economic crisis has had a negative impact on the training of human capital and on the capacity for steering part of the unemployed population toward sectors that foster more sustainable and inclusive growth. This increases the need to intensify the efforts designed to train both the unemployed and the employed to help them acquire new skills and competencies. Nevertheless, these efforts should be supplemented by changes in public employment systems, whereby they can more effectively develop their intermediation work in the labour market (Miguélez et al., 2013).

The crisis has led to a fall in qualifications and competencies not only because migrants have not used the knowledge they gained, even through university degrees, but also because of the effect of long periods of unemployment. Some migrant workers have made the most of such periods of unemployment to improve their education, especially those that already had qualifications, although these new studies are not always a continuation of the qualifications they already had, but instead provide the training they need to re-join the labour market as soon as possible. A lack of guidance means they adopt a short-term and immediate approach (García-Montalvo, 2007).

They also find it difficult to compete in the Spanish labour market, which is the one with the highest rates of overqualification among them, with this situation being aggravated by the onset of the crisis, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008) and the EU statistical office, Eurostat (2008). The economic scenario has a clear impact on the balance between qualifications and job.

## 3.2 The Theories of Overqualification

Overqualification has been approached from both an educational and an economic perspective. The theories for explaining the relationship between a worker's level of education and that required for the job itself are as follows:

(a) **Human capital theory** (Becker, 1964). The premise here is that the higher a worker's level of education is, the greater their productivity will be, and therefore their wage. The concept of human capital considers that not only is education a consumer cost but also an investment that provides a financial yield by increasing the worker's performance (Schultz, 1983). Any increase in their level of education would lead to an increase in productivity. Nevertheless, an increase in the supply of more qualified workers would lead to a drop in their relative wages with flexible production techniques. Workers, in turn, will decide to invest in education depending on what they expect to gain from that investment. This means that in the long run, workers' qualifications will be used to the full, although in the short run there may be a temporary imbalance between the supply and demand of more qualified workers.
Human capital theory also has an explanation for migration, which it considers to be an investment or improvement strategy by permitting an individual to enhance their skills in the new host destination and acquire or extend them through training. Individuals move to places where they can maximise their potential.

(b) **Signalling theory or credentialism** (Collins, 1979). The focus here is on educational credentials, which become a factor for providing access to privileged social positions, considering that alongside productive work there is political work, which involves forging social alliances to influence the perception of certain jobs. The array of social networks is essential for accessing the best jobs in the labour market. Educational institutions award credentials for accessing the most highly valued and best paid jobs, regardless of the knowledge acquired. According to this theory, education in itself does not increase productivity, but instead it is used as a signal to distinguish one worker from another. This means that an employer will first hire those individuals with a better CV, in the trust that their competitiveness and knowledge will be optimal, as they have managed to obtain one or more qualifications. According to the strictest version of this theory, overqualification would be a permanent phenomenon. Individuals will raise their level of education to improve their chances of finding a job, and employers will hire them regardless of the position's requirements (García-Montalvo & Peiró, 2009). One version of this theory indicates that the entry of graduates into the labour market is through low-level jobs, but that in time, and as their employers become aware of their productivity, their position will gradually match their qualifications through internal promotions.

(c) **Queuing or waiting-line theory** (Krarup, 1909). This is a mathematical principle that is applicable to a system. In the case of overqualification based on the labour queue model propounded by Thurow (1996), there are two queues: one of jobs and the other of workers. Each job has its own characteristics in

terms of requirements, wages, etc. Individuals compete for the jobs. According to Thurow's interpretation,[1] the competition for these jobs is based on the informal qualifications obtained in the workplace.

Overqualification and workers' place in the queue are determined by their educational level, and possibly by experience. This means that overqualification may also be a permanent phenomenon in Spain that affects both nationals and migrants alike, as there is a tendency to raise the educational level of the individuals in the queue over and above the job's requirements if their structure remains stable. This explanation has less empirical support than the other two theories (García-Montalvo & Peiró, 2009).

## 3.3 Method: Qualitative Study of the Overqualification of the Ecuadorean Migrant Population in Spain

Ecuadorean migration to Spain is a particularly interesting case study, given that in just over a decade and in a single generation the migratory process has completed its numerous stages: departure, arrival in Spain, consolidation and return. This allows us to conduct an objective analysis of the reasons for the migration, the context of the time spent in Spain and the reasons for the return.

The fieldwork in this study involves the Ecuadorean migrant population living in Madrid, the Spanish region with the most Ecuadorean nationals with work permits, specifically 28.6% of the Ecuadorean population in Spain (Spanish Statistics Office—INE, 2015).

Three discussion groups have been formed in Madrid. The groups are defined by the main features of the sociodemographic profile of the Ecuadorean nationals that have migrated to Spain.

The discussion groups contained between four and six people. The selection was made by quotas, according to the most relevant characteristics of the population under study, in this case Ecuadorean migrants living in Madrid, seeking proportionality in terms of sex, age range and similar education.

These characteristics are based on the indicators provided by the Spanish Statistics Office (INE, 2015) and Spain's Permanent Observatory on Immigration[2] (2015), being as follows:

- Sex: 52% are male and 48% are female.
- Age: The average age is 39.5.
- Education: Primary 16.4%; Secondary: 63.9%; Higher: 19.3%.
- Unemployment rate: 31% of the Ecuadorean population in Spain.

This method was used to gather information on the issues of concern to the Ecuadorean population that continues to live in Spain, or that expect to return home.

[1] Cited in Brunet and Morell (1998).

[2] Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración.

**Table 3.2** Members of the first focus group held in Madrid

| *Discussion group 1: Madrid* | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | Age | Marital status | Occupation | Education | Legal status in Spain | Years in Spain |
| Participant 1 | Male | 36 | Married | Self-employed | Higher | Resident | 7 |
| Participant 2 | Female | 41 | Married | Office worker | Higher | Dual nationality | 13 |
| Participant 3 | Male | 29 | Civil partnership | Unemployed | Secondary | Dual nationality | 10 |
| Participant 4 | Female | 47 | Married | Carer | Higher | Dual nationality | 15 |
| Participant 5 | Male | 41 | Married | Unemployed | Secondary | Dual nationality | 13 |

**Table 3.3** Members of the second focus group held in Madrid

| *Discussion group 2: Madrid* | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | Age | Marital status | Occupation | Education | Legal status in Spain | Years in Spain |
| Participant 1 | Female | 38 | Divorced | Carer | Higher | Dual nationality | 13 |
| Participant 2 | Male | 33 | Married | Security guard | High school graduate | Resident | 10 |
| Participant 3 | Female | 45 | Divorced | Shop assistant | Secondary | Dual nationality | 14 |
| Participant 4 | Male | 53 | Married | Unemployed | Higher | Resident | 14 |

The first two focus groups were held at UNED Faculty of Sociology, and the third one at one of the UNED Associate Centres in Madrid. The composition of the first one was as follows (Tables 3.2 and 3.3).

The third group comprised five people, and the meeting was held at UNED's Associated Centre, Escuelas Pías, according to the following Table 3.4.

### *3.3.1 Variables in the Qualitative Method*

The group discussion sessions included questions on educational level, how useful it has been, and whether the participants have received guidance during the migratory process. The discussion has delved further into certain topics, depending on the drift taken by the opinions expressed.

**Table 3.4** Members of the third focus group held in Madrid

| *Discussion group 3: Madrid* | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | Age | Marital status | Occupation | Education | Legal status in Spain | Years in Spain |
| Participant 1 | Male | 37 | Married | Salesperson | Secondary | Resident | 16 |
| Participant 2 | Female | 38 | Married | Unemployed | Higher | Resident | 6 |
| Participant 3 | Male | 52 | Married | Lawyer | Higher | Dual nationality | 19 |
| Participant 4 | Female | 47 | Married | Office worker | Higher | Dual nationality | 15 |
| Participant 5 | Male | 55 | Married | Unemployed | Higher | Dual nationality | 18 |

The discussion groups addressed four variables, which were presented to the groups as the four following basic questions:

- How was the decision made to migrate? This includes the reasons, whether it was an individual decision, made by someone else, or shared with others.
- What stage in the migration are they currently at? This includes an assessment of whether they have achieved their original goals.
- What is their level of education, and has it been useful in their migration? This includes the level of education they had at the start of their migration, whether at any time during the migration they have been able to work in jobs related to their field of expertise, whether they have continued their education in Spain, and whether this new education has been of use to them in the successive stages of their migration, including the return.
- Have they received career guidance at the beginning of their migration or at any time during it? This includes the needs for guidance that may arise when starting their migration, whether they still need them and if they have received guidance, as well as how useful it has been.

A fourth group was organized, consisting of six experts on guidance, including active professionals, and researchers related to the field of Career Guidance. These experts were asked questions about the guidance needs for the professional future of migrant populations, particularly, Latin migrants in Spain. The information provided by these experts was included together with that corresponding to the three focus groups in the same hermeneutic unit of Atlas-ti, in order to jointly analyze the perceptions of both groups, migrants and experts on guidance.

### 3.3.2 *Analysis of Data*

The data gathered through these focus groups and the group of experts was analysed through the software Atlas-ti, a qualitative data management tool, which allows the data to be viewed as semantic networks that enable semantic research (studying the relations among concepts), that in turn allows the expression of the conceptual structure of the analysed texts, together with the semantic interrelations among the different elements of the network.

The specific Semantic Network (SN) presented in this work is: Career Guidance and its utility. To place this SN within the context of the main investigation, it is necessary to point out that the main research (study of Madrid) is composed of four dimensions with a total of 11 SN, plus two transversal SN.

This SN belongs to the namesake dimension, which is composed by three SN (Career guidance, Professional project and Cultural diversity), and it has been selected in this work for being a clear example of the main results achieved in the main research (Fig. 3.1).

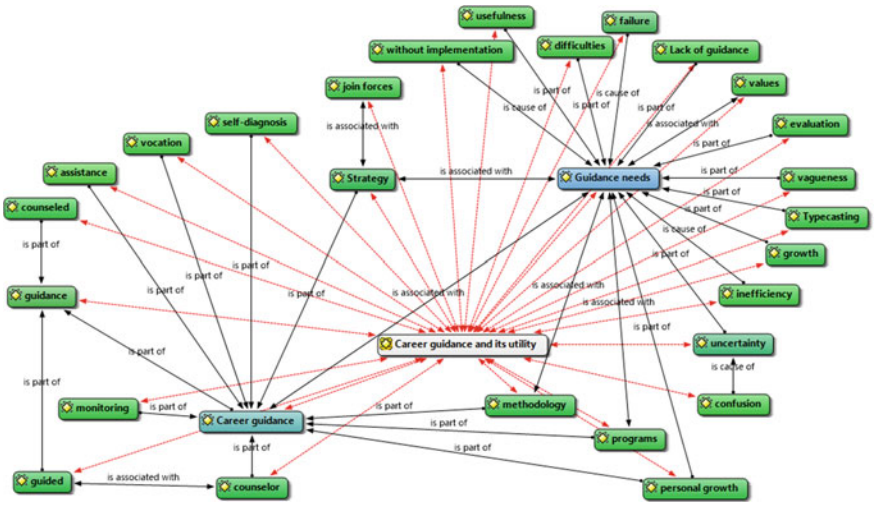


**Fig. 3.1** Primary semantic network. Career guidance and its utility. Prepared by the authors, software Atlas-ti

## 3.4 Results of the Analysis on SN Career Guidance and Its Utility

Career guidance, as a process of integral reflection about the vital goals that people wish to obtain, related to the competences, training, vocation and context of such people, has been one of the axes that have been asked and discussed in the discussion groups. As the main objective of this chapter, the groups have been asked about career guidance, after having reflected on the decision to migrate, the employment situation and their satisfaction, the level of education brought or acquired and its usefulness. In this way we have tried to make a gradual reflection, so that confronting the past, according to the versions of each of the participants, we can identify their situation and see if they have specific needs as migrants and, if they had guidance, what has been the profit from it (utility). From the discussion between the need for guidance and the usefulness they expect, we wanted to obtain answers that could provide elements of the characteristics of a professional orientation for migrants.

Career guidance as a discipline and the programs that apply are little known, or there is only partial knowledge about its content by migrants. The same difficulty that was encountered in differentiating neighbouring but not identical concepts, such as work, employment and work activities, is found again when differentiating career guidance with information for migration or with a professional guidance. The main aim of career guidance is organizing vocational and vital objectives, and not only how to find employment, develop a proper CV or how to migrate in a safer way. In the focus groups of migrants, the orientation was insisted as a reflection on the wishes of the people, the goals that are set and to see whether or not they meet the requirements to achieve them, or what is the possible itinerary to achieve them, and the implementation of a vital project which fits the possibilities and wishes of migrants.

The migrants of the sample made explicit a series of desires and aspirations looking at their vital trajectory, and in line with this reflection, they observe a series of deficiencies that they recognize as their own, as well as others attributed to the countries, to the governments of Ecuador and Spain, the lack of information and inexperience which they saw as reasons for why they have never made a life project.

In group 4 (Group of experts), the study count on professionals from NGOs, organizations dedicated to the study and assistance of migrants, university professors and those responsible for vocational guidance programs. Their backbone arguments were about the conditions of migrants and their needs for career guidance. This information complemented the one obtained from the focus groups formed exclusively with migrants.

The analysis carried out showed that effectiveness of career guidance in Spain is in question, and in the specific case of migrants is yet under developed, even within existing programs and services. In addition, the participants stated that in the case of the return to the home country, the support through guidance should assume the vision of the two countries, Ecuador and Spain, because migrants have already internalized their double membership and, therefore, the needs fall within the two

realities, and the scope of achievements of career guidance would take into account these two scenarios. Confusion and uncertainty are elements that highlight guidance needs. Career guidance would help to better channel migrant trajectories and take advantage of opportunities.

### *3.4.1 Professional Development and Utility of Career Guidance (Some Migrant Perceptions)*

A highlight among the recurring topics in the discussion has been the importance of the level of education that migrants have brought with them from their home country, as irrespective of whether or not they have worked in their field of expertise, they find it useful, even for finding less skilled jobs.

There is an abundant supply of migrant labour, but demand has been falling. In the case of men, jobs have traditionally involved construction and services:

> I always say and recommend that whatever course you take, whatever studies, and the time involved, always benefit you, and the job you are in. You have to study, even if you are only going to work as a labourer. Why? Because it seems that knowledge can be read on your face. It also seems that you gain a bit more respect among your mates and your bosses and all that… (Man, 55, higher education)

Ecuadorean women, participating in this study, stated that in their first jobs (domestic service and caring), a lot of importance was given to appearance, the way they spoke, and education. Although these were low-skilled jobs, it was hard to find work, and the situation has worsened with the crisis, as the people now looking for these type of jobs include Spanish nationals, and education was and still is a positive differentiating factor when looking for a job.

> When I arrived from Ecuador I couldn't find a job in my line of work. I had to work in domestic service, and of course, my training as a teacher opened up doors for me, because at that time I was competing with people from the East, who spoke two languages, all professionals, and most of us working in domestic service had qualifications. But I did find it useful, because even though I was working in domestic service, I was treated differently, treated better, and paid higher wages. (Woman, 47, higher education)

People with higher levels of education consider the possibility of continuing their studies. Less qualified people said that they would like to improve their education, but they doubt about their abilities because of the time elapsed, or because educational services in Spain have quotas, timetables and requirements they cannot meet:

> When I came here, I'd already graduated from university, I spent three years working and then I went back to studying. And I… I couldn't understand anything, my teachers talked and for me it as all gobbledegook, they were speaking in Spanish but all I heard was gobbledegook. I think that part of it is that you think… I come from Ecuador… and you don't have any self-belief. You really don't believe in yourself. We are university graduates and whatever job we may have, we need to get back on our feet and we have to overcome the challenge. That is one thing, for example, that I've learnt. We have to learn to overcome the challenge and say this is who I am. (Woman, 38, higher education)

The participants in the three discussion groups seem to be confused about career guidance as a participatory process in which both mentor and mentee consider a project, based on an understanding of the context, the skills and changing circumstances in the labour market. They understand career guidance as a plain information required for making their migration easier. Bearing in mind this confusion, which comes up over and over again in the sessions, the participants in the discussion groups said that if they had had guidance they would have dealt with their situation better. Those who received guidance, even just sporadically, said that it was useful:

> We need guidance. As migrants we have major needs, in my case, for example, in education. The need to train, to refresh my expertise in the field in which I graduated, so that at some moment I can justify as they say, justify my degree. (Woman, 47, higher education)

> I have received it (guidance) because I've looked for it, to write a CV that is right for the place where I'm going to apply for it (work), draw up different profiles… Also to focus my future career, and maybe to try in a different field… (Man, 41, secondary education)

Part of the participants have not received guidance on how to prepare a life project or find out about the courses on offer for migrants and how to enrol in them. Hence, they valued the experience shared among migrants as a form of informal guidance that helped them to avoid mistakes:

> I haven't received any guidance here, as I said, it doesn't exist, it doesn't exist. And I haven't been to one of those schools either, no, instead I've followed my friends' advice or from other salespeople… they're the ones that have pointed me in the right direction… yes indeed, it was more a case of advice from friends, by that I mean workmates. I haven't been to any institution that has told what I have to do or how I should do it. Everything I've learnt has been from my colleagues. I've had to make my own way in life, like the rest of you, right? (Male, 37, secondary education)

In view of these perceptions, the process of analysis led to the following emerging hypotheses:

**Emerging Hypotheses**

- Career guidance has been absent in the immigration processes and difficulties have increased as a result.
- Career guidance for migrants must be adapted to their specific needs to be useful.
- Experienced processes of guidance, information or assistance, however basic, unstructured or partial, have been useful.

**Conclusions**

The participants in the discussion groups are mainly high school and university graduates, which is consistent with the prevailing level of education among the Ecuadorean population in Spain. This is the reason they appreciate the education they have brought with them, although only one of the participants has used his home qualifications as a lawyer to practice in Spain, following a lengthy process of official recognition and professional endorsement. The others have not been able to work in their knowledge field, even though their expertise is backed by a university degree.

When referring to the education they brought with them from Ecuador, the following points should be stressed:

- The training and education they bring with them is even useful for finding menial jobs.
- Their qualifications help them to make the most of their opportunities.
- As their education has led to a qualification, they may take up their profession once again.

The participants with a university degree stated that the most difficult problem for working in their own profession is not the labour market, but instead the difficulty in having their degree officially recognised so that they can work in Spain. They express their frustration at not being able to work in their field of expertise, but they still hope to do so, above all if they return to Ecuador.

Most of the high school graduates, were people with occupational training as personal assistants or bookkeepers and the participants with higher educational levels stated that they have got training in Spain on activities related to the jobs they had as migrants, or in activities that could help them to improve their labour status, such as promotion or a change in activities.

Most of them have received professional training or educational degrees when they were unemployed, although some have managed to combine their jobs with short training courses. Courses such as cooking and food handling, computer studies or starting up a business were some of the more frequently mentioned. During unemployment, they studied one course after another until job opportunities appeared, even though these might have required fewer skills than their acquired qualifications.

This means there is a pragmatism in making more use of short training courses than of their university degree. They see that this approach provides more real possibilities of finding a job, even though it means giving up chances of finding jobs in what they are actually qualified to do.

### *3.4.2 Conclusions on Career Guidance and Its Usefulness*

When asking the question on whether they have received career guidance, migrants mistake guidance with information on migration processes, which has helped them to make better decisions upon departure and upon arrival in Spain, rather than guidance linked to the specific personal and employment targets they wanted to achieve.

At this stage of the discussion, the participants mention other needs that cannot be considered career guidance, although they are specific to migrants' job situation, which are prior to a career guidance project and may be included as a preliminary stage in the career guidance process adapted to this population. These prior needs are as follows:

- Guidance (information) on how to make the migration safe and secure.
- How to access services in Spain.

- Understanding the basic rules of cohabitation.
- Where to look for work.
- Need for specific guidance (information) on survival.
- Social interaction and sharing experiences.

Both the lack of this information at the time of migrating from Ecuador and not knowing who to turn to in Spain have caused difficulties, serious ones in some cases, in the migratory process. To compensate for this lack of information, migrants have turned to more experienced relatives and friends, with mixed results.

When focusing the discussion on the difference between information and guidance, and asking the participants about their needs in terms of guidance and what a career guidance service should include, the following were the most frequent answers:

- Guidance for improving the past situation and even the current one. With only a few exceptions the participants said they were not happy with their present circumstances, although they admitted that they were better at present than at the beginning of their migratory process.
- Guidance may help to clarify migrants' options and the real openings that Spain and Ecuador can offer them.
- It may also offer support for improving their self-knowledge and their appreciation of what they have achieved along the migration process.

As a key conclusion of this study, it is necessary to highlight the need to continue investigating the adequacy between career guidance and attention to populations with specific career guidance needs, and particularly, in this line of research, it will be necessary to include the new theories of migration, as well as to take into account the theoretical evolution of career guidance whose findings will provide new solutions to processes of high complexity and uncertainty, as it is the case of people in mobility.

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# Part II
# Career Guidance and Higher Education

Part II of this book focuses on the analysis of the relevance and need for *Career Guidance in Higher Education,* from a theoretical as well as a practical perspective, encompassing three chapters from different countries: Mexico, Argentina and Spain. Chapter 5 presents a historical overview of vocational / career guidance in Mexico, analysing the influence of hegemonic discourses on the concept of educational guidance, and how those have shaped the identity of the professional field in this country, over the span of several decades. The content analysis of different specialized scientific journals, made it is possible to identify different narratives, perceptions and conceptualizations that have taken place in Mexico in relation to educational guidance. Many of these journals were associated with academics in higher education institutions, and some of them had a very short existence, perhaps due, among other reasons, to the different visions that have coexisted throughout Mexico's history. The author concludes with the need to promote the self-identity of educational and career guidance, as a way to respond to the country's own needs. In this sense, although the analysis presented focuses on the specific reality of Mexico, the debates amongst its academics, and the tension between hegemonic and emerging discourses concerning guidance could be recognizable in other latitudes. Chapters 4 and 6 in this Part II present the analysis of career guidance needs, addressing two different realities: Argentina and Spain. The case of Argentina focuses on the needs of first-year university students, in relation to guidance provision during this particular transition. The main results of the research study carried out highlight the significance of expectations and fears expressed by the students in the sample. These outcomes must be taken into account, in order to design career guidance programmes and specific interventions that cater for the different profiles of these students. The study carried out in Spain focuses on the academic performance of a sample of Business Administration and Management students. The results of this research showed significant differences in academic achievement and the risk of drop out with regards to two profiles of students: traditional and non-traditional, thus defined in relation to their way of accessing University. On the one hand, non-traditional students, coming from VET Courses, and those from the entry courses for students older than 25, 40 and 45, and on the other, traditional students accessing directly from the secondary level.

Lower achievement and a higher risk of dropping out were more frequent in the non-traditional students, highlighting the importance of designing specific guidance programs for this group. These first two parts of the book provide enough data to draw one important conclusion: the need for intervention processes and programmes in career guidance that take into account the differential characteristics of diverse groups, whether they are migrant populations or students who access the University through different routes and at different ages.

# Chapter 4
# Triangulated Study on Guidance Needs and Motivational Profiles Among Argentinean Students


**María Inés García-Ripa and María Fe Sánchez-García**

*Palabras clave*: Necesidades de orientación, educación superior, motivación académica, estrategias de aprendizaje.

**Abstract** Following on from the concept of development of the vital career, the authors have carried out a study focused on identifying the guidance needs expressed by the new students from an Argentine university, a crucial moment in which processes of transition, adaptation and personal development take place. The study aims to: (a) identify and describe their learning strategies and motivational processes; and (b) to obtain an integrated interpretation and display of the outcomes in terms of guidance needs. This study has set out a mixed design (quantitative and qualitative), using two questionnaires (n = 1708 and n = 1156 students respectively) and a discussion group (n = 6), around learning strategies, motivational self-regulation, and the reasons for choosing studies. The study has been completed with a triangulated analysis of the different outcomes through a SWOT matrix. The results highlight the importance of the expectations and fears prior to the university studies, and also the difficulties and challenges they face during their studies, particularly regarding academic adaptation, study organization and social relationship in academic life. The triangulation of information allowed the identification of a variety of needs that must be taken into account in programs and proposals for guiding intervention. It may be concluded that the needs are specific and individual, both at the beginning of university degree studies and during their course, distinguishing specific profiles of students, which can help to establish guidance programs for new students.

**Keywords** Guidance needs · Higher education · Academic motivation · Learning strategies

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## 4.1 Introduction

Ever since the introduction of the concept of Lifelong Learning, higher education has been based on the development of the adaptative competencies required first for academic development and then for professional careers. This means that universities should adopt a more inclusive understanding of education, identifying and respecting the diversity of needs, broadening the access to studies, and their continuity and completion, while at the same time upholding quality standards. One of the challenges this perspective involves entails implementing university tutorial programmes designed to focus more on students and generate an environment that is conducive to learning.

Given the way people's lives develop, guidance is a support strategy for generating the skills and competencies required for a student's holistic development. This requires identifying students' needs in guidance throughout their time at university, and thereby provide a bespoke response to each one of them.

In particular, the first year at university involves a process of transition and adjustment, as well as personal development. This study will show that students' needs are specific and individual, not only because they are entering higher education, but also because they involve different student profiles.

## 4.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

Entering university means being exposed to the specific teaching-learning methods and styles of academic engagement that are very different to what students have been used to at school (Lobato, Nagore, & Bilbao, 2016). A university student has specific needs regarding the study method and the way of proceeding within the higher education arena (Alder, 2016; Dapelo-Pellerano & Matus-Jara, 2013; Freiberg-Hoffmann, Stover, & Donis, 2017; Gairín-Sallán, Muñoz-Moreno, Feixas-Condom, & Guillamon-Ramos, 2009). At the same time, universities have become ever more open and inclusive areas, increasing the number of students entering higher education and the heterogeneity of the needs and characteristics of academic instruction (García-Félix, Conejero, & Díez, 2014).

A review of the literature identifies a series of characteristics that describe the situation of current undergraduates, and these are listed below in Table 4.1.

The initial demands for integration in the university world may be defined in terms of guidance needs (Sánchez-García, 1999). Depending on the different needs, referred to each student's educational record and individual aspirations, universities may respond through educational services or programmes involving tutorial care, viewing the student from a holistic, comprehensive and detailed perspective that transcends matters simply linked to their academic achievements (Lorenzo-Moledo et al., 2013). Along these lines, university guidance is not designed according to an understanding of difficulty, but instead as a response to certain needs or expectations,

**Table 4.1** Common characteristics of first-year undergraduates

| | |
|---|---|
| Highly heterogenous population in terms of social and cultural provenance, their trajectories and their prior academic results | Álvarez-Rojo (2001) |
| They need learning environments that involve new ways of experimenting, and new cognitive and attitudinal processes for successful integration within the new university environment | Gairín et al. (2009), Lorenzo-Moledo et al. (2013) |
| Mismatch between prior knowledge and new requirements, being expected to have competencies that they have not yet acquired, and which, especially in the first years, lead to academic failure and a considerable number of drop-outs | Álvarez-Rojo (2001), Gairín et al. (2009), Torrecilla et al. (2013) |
| They need to deal with new techniques in intellectual work and new sources of information, acquiring strategies for decision-making and for learning to plan their studies | Senise (2009) |
| In some cases, students come from backgrounds with no experience of higher education, which makes the adaptation process difficult | Álvarez-Rojo (2001) |
| In certain cases, they experience difficulties related to a lack of motivation, concentration issues or problems understanding the subject | Senise (2009) |
| The choice of studies does not always involve a firm conviction based on a real understanding of their interests and skills regarding the possible range of courses on offer at universities | Álvarez-Rojo (2001), Senise (2009) |

*Source* García-Ripa (2018, pp. 73–74)

in which the higher education experience is seen as an opportunity for personal development (Gairín et al., 2009).

From this perspective, the impossibility of adapting the student body to the university environment is a shortcoming of the educational system itself. Academic failure or dropping out of university, as well as the failure to attend to the different stages of the transition to higher education (García-Ríos, García-Ríos, Del Toro-Valencia, & Méndez-Toledo, 2013), are situations to which the education system itself should respond in pursuit of a quality education. The key role that universities play in retaining students (González-Rodriguez, García-Gómez, Izquierdo-Dorta, & Torres-García, 2010; Patiño-Garzón & Cardona-Pérez, 2012) requires understanding tutorial guidance as a response to individual needs, and as a way of pre-empting foreseeable situations during a university trajectory.

People perceive and conceptualise different guidance needs depending on the moment or stage they are at in their university studies. This therefore renders it expedient to identify the perceptions that both students and professional guidance providers, academic authorities and teaching staff have of guidance needs, as the

idea or opinion people have of their needs does not always correspond to their real ones. At the same time, people may find it difficult to identify their own guidance needs (Sánchez-García, 1999).

As part of the analysis of guidance needs, it is essential to distinguish between the processes of acquiring and developing learning strategies, as they have a major impact at the beginning of the study process and in its subsequent progression (Villardón-Gallego et al., 2013).

There is, in turn, ample literature on university transition processes from the standpoint of the learning processes required for positively adjusting to the new study context. Coertjens et al. (2017) explain that the period of transition from secondary to higher education involves a change in learning strategies that contributes to academic success at this time.

A concern among universities specifically involves facilitating a new student's learning process and their performance, paving the way for a successful adjustment to higher education. Along these lines, Ning and Downing (2015) report that the most pressing guidance needs for undergraduates starting university are related to both the procedural and attitudinal aspects of academic learning. It has likewise been shown that a broad, flexible and effective repertoire of strategies enables students to successfully tackle different learning tasks (López-Aguado, 2011).

With a view to successfully dealing with study processes, a student should be able to choose and plan the most suitable strategies, and self-regulate them (Ning & Downing, 2015), requiring self-reliance on the student's part to construct and supervise their own learning process.

In sum, a review of the literature on learning strategies among university students enables us to identify three main dimensions:

- Cognitive learning strategies, which allow for coding, understanding and recalling knowledge (Gutiérrez-Ruiz, 2015; Stover, Uriel, Hoffmann, & Fernández, 2015), as well as the selection, drafting, organisation and transfer of what has been learnt, or the reading comprehension of academic texts, among others (Gargallo & Suárez, 2014).
- Meta-cognitive learning strategies, as they involve actions for planning, supervising and assessing academic activities that enable students to self-regulate their learning process at different levels (Stover et al., 2015), according to their motivation, attitude and academic self-concept (Ning & Downing, 2015).
- Emotional strategies, as affective, attitudinal and motivational characteristics, allow optimising of the learning conditions (Stover et al., 2015), and facilitating the actual management of the learning process (Suárez & Fernández, 2011). Accordingly, the acquisition of emotional strategies also facilitates the management of all the interpersonal situations that arise in teaching and learning processes, helping to cope with negative thoughts on one's own performance, reducing the stress caused by study demands or obstacles, and improving the feeling of academic self-sufficiency (Trautwein & Bosse, 2017).

Students bring these procedures or strategies into play when they have a plan of action; in other words, they know what they have to do to learn, and they put it into

practice (Roux & Anzures-González, 2015). This means that the use of effective strategies in their studies calls upon students to make decisions in an independent or autonomous manner.

What's more, the decision to study at university involves a search and selection process that prioritises certain reasons for choosing courses that may respond both to personal reasons and approaches and to external factors reflected in, for example, family expectations or social stereotypes (Abarca, Gormaz, & Leiva, 2012), as well as personal circumstances (Balloo, 2017).

In general terms, the reasons may be classified as more intrinsic or extrinsic and according to how they combine, informing a motivational profile that impacts upon the adaptation to the learning environment (Valle et al., 2016). In other words, while some students are driven by a desire for authority, curiosity, preference for a challenge, interest in learning, satisfaction and self-fulfilment (intrinsic motivation), others want to achieve good marks, rewards, positive opinions about their capabilities, approval by parents or teachers, prestige and status (extrinsic motivation) (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2016).

It has been noted that those young people with a more intrinsic motivation record a better academic performance; they feel proud of their achievements, they are more engaged and effective, and they are less inclined to leave their studies (Mancini, Caricati, Panari, & Tonarelli, 2015). Some studies explain that the combination between the reasons for choosing a specific course and the level of competency perceived by the student has an influence on the way they engage with their academic tasks (Valle et al., 2016). Other studies, meanwhile, explain that choosing a course for extrinsic reasons is associated with a student's lesser engagement with its performance and less confidence in what they are doing, which may have an impact on their academic performance (Gutiérrez-Ruiz, 2015).

At the same time, another group of studies finds a link between the reason for choosing a course and gender, whereby reasons such as associating with other people, altruistic interests, the quest for power, the feeling of achievement or financial security differ depending on whether the students are male or female (Abarca et al., 2012).

Within this framework, a positive attitude or motivation toward learning involves a series of cognitive-emotional variables, such as self-control, which refer to the actions, feelings and thoughts self-generated for achieving learning goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

## 4.3 Study Goals

All the above shows how important it is to be aware of students' guidance needs when they first go to university. It is equally important to know why they choose one or other discipline because of its relationship to the possibilities of adapting to the university and completing their studies. It is therefore vital to be able to provide a comprehensive response to such needs, with guidance mechanisms for reinforcing their reasons that better regulate a student's academic performance.

With this in mind, our study serves two purposes: (a) identify and describe the guidance needs of first-year students at the Universidad Católica de Argentina (UCA) based on their learning strategies and on their motivational processes; and (b) obtain a complete depiction and interpretation (triangulated) of the above results in terms of guidance needs.

## 4.4 Method

The triangulated analysis of guidance needs has involved a mixed design (quantitative and qualitative), conducted in four study phases (Fig. 4.1). The first two phases involve a quantitative approach, while the third and fourth are addressed from a qualitative perspective. In response to the second goal, the fourth phase involves a triangulated study for a more complete approach to the guidance needs of first-year students. As some studies have reported (Campos-Roldán, 2007; Guloy, Salimi, Cukierman, & McGee-Thompson, 2017; Pettersson, Svedin, & Scheja, 2017), the triangulation of knowledge from quantitative and qualitative studies allows for a better explanation and interpretation of the data from multiple conceptual perspectives.

Different data-gathering instruments and techniques are used over the different phases:

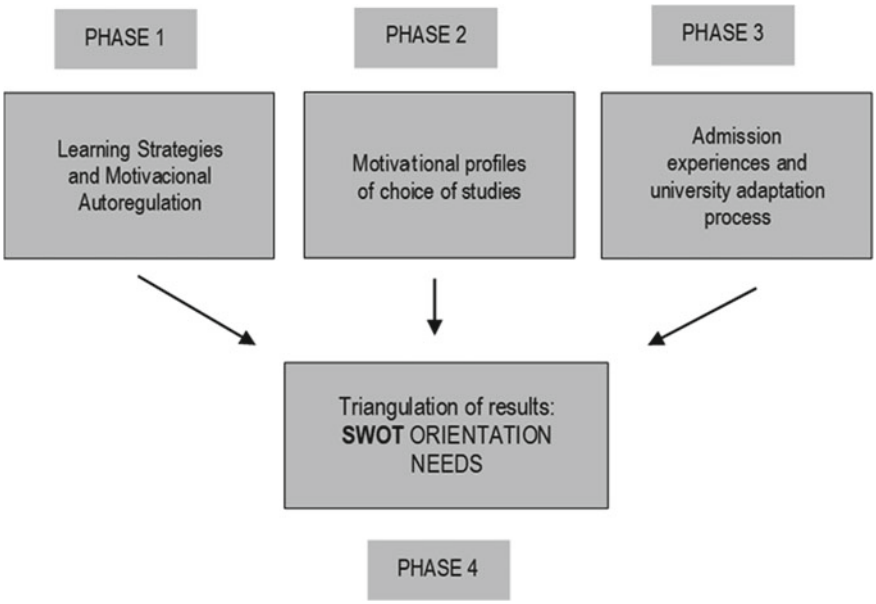


**Fig. 4.1** Phases of the study on guidance needs. *Source* Author's own work

– El *Cuestionario de Estrategias y Motivación para el Estudio Universitario-CEMEU*[1] (García-Ripa, Sánchez-García, & Rísquez, 2016) consists of 32 items referring to study situations, which are arranged into two rating scales (Likert-type from 1 to 6): (1) the first scale, *Learning strategies* (17 items) consists of three subscales obtained through a confirmatory factor analysis (explained variance: 58.98%): *Cognitive understanding*, *Review and control* and *Conceptual communication*; (2) the second scale, *Motivational self-regulation* (15 items), consists in turn of three subscales (explained variance: 61.31%): *Emotional control, Motivation and self-efficacy expectations*, and *Concentration on studies*. The overall reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha = 0.963) records satisfactory results, as do both scales (Alpha = 0.914 and 0.738, respectively).
– The *Cuestionario de Motivos de Elección de Carrera*-CMEC[2] (García-Ripa, Sánchez-García, & Rísquez, 2016) has 20 items related to the reasons and ratings involved in the choice of a degree course (Likert-type scale, from 1 to 6). The factor analysis allows identifying three factors or subscales that explain 42.75% of the total variance: *Reasons of personal improvement and altruism*; *Search for prestige and financial security*; and *Reasons of avoidance*. The analysis of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) records an overall score of 0.820.
– The *discussion group* focusing on exploring guidance needs and experiences uses a script of general questions that invite the students involved to make an open-ended contribution (García-Ripa, 2018).

The study variables and their definition are presented in Table 4.2, and then there are the sociodemographic variables (age, gender, and disciplinary area).

Three subsamples of informants have been used, one for each phase and study instrument/technique. The first (1) comprises 1,708 first-year students, who were administered the CMEU questionnaire, corresponding to 90% of the overall number of students entering the university in the 2013–2014 academic year (n = 1,907). The second (2) comprises 1,156 first-year students that answered the CMEC questionnaire, accounting for 61% of all the students that entered in the 2013–2014 academic year (n = 1,907) (Table 4.2). The third subsample (3) corresponds to those taking part in the discussion group, involving six students chosen randomly, four of them in the final years of their studies (Law, Engineering, and Social Science) and two graduates in Law and Economics (Table 4.3).

As regards the data analysis, quantitative analyses of a descriptive nature have been conducted on the data forthcoming from the administration of the CMEU and CMEC questionnaires. In turn, use is made of parametric bivariate tests (ANOVA, Student's t-distribution) with a view to identifying differences associated with the sociodemographic variables (age, gender and disciplinary area). Prior to this, the criteria of normality and the homogeneity of variance were verified. In those cases of

[1] Questionnaire on Strategies and Motivation for University Studies.

[2] Questionnaire on Reasons for the Choice of Degree Course.

**Table 4.2** Study variables

| Variables | Definition |
|---|---|
| Learning strategies | Series of actions and procedures students implement to acquire a study methodology and effective learning |
| Motivational regulation strategies | Type of behaviour adopted by the students for the suitable organisation, continuance and stability of their learning processes |
| Reason for choosing a university degree course | Reasons prevailing among students when deciding upon a discipline's professional openings |
| Motivational profiles | Series of motivational characteristics according to gender, age and disciplinary area |
| Experiences in university integration | Description of experiences in students' emotional and social integration within the university environment, which they have had during their initial period at university |
| Difficulties in studying | Type of difficulties perceived during the process of adapting to the university environment |
| University guidance | Defined as any approach made to the student by the university regarding any difficulties they have experienced |

*Source* Author's own work

**Table 4.3** Demographic profile of subsamples 1 and 2

| Categories of analysis | | Subsample 1 n = 1708 (CMEU) | Subsample 2 n = 1156 (CMEC) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 856 | 587 |
| | Female | 852 | 569 |
| Age range | 16–19 | 1,427 | 1,427 |
| | 20–23 | 206 | 206 |
| | 24 or over | 75 | 75 |
| Disciplinary area | Science, Engineering and Technical Studies | 454 | 454 |
| | Law | 268 | 268 |
| | Economics | 357 | 357 |
| | Social sciences | 517 | 517 |
| | Humanities | 112 | 112 |

*Source* Author's own work

multiple comparisons involving more than two groups, use was made of the post hoc comparison and contrast tests of Tukey-Kramer & Scheffe (Kramer, 1956; Tukey, 1953). Furthermore, regarding the data obtained from the CMEC questionnaire, non-hierarchical cluster and discriminant analysis was used to identify motivational profiles.

Concerning the testimonies obtained through the discussion group, following their transcription (audio recording), the content was analysed using a data reduction and coding procedure (structuring of categories and subcategories, and grouping according to previously defined conceptual nodes), followed by the integration of the information (forming relationships among the categories themselves and in relation to the research purposes).

Finally, the SWOT technique involving Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats was used as a strategy for the triangulated analysis of the information provided by the previous studies, thereby enabling us to value both internal and external positive and negative effects, and so identify needs and suggest ways of improvement.

## 4.5 Results

### *4.5.1 Learning Strategies and Motivational Self-regulation*

As regards learning strategies and motivational self-regulation (CMEU), the descriptive results are presented (M and SD), along with comparisons of means according to sociodemographic variables.

A comparison of the groups by gender reveals a better performance by women in most of the strategies evaluated; nevertheless, these differences are significant solely for the strategies of *Review and control*. In the case of the strategies of *Emotional control*, men self-report a better performance (Table 4.4). As regards all the other strategies, the differences between the two groups are not significant.

The comparison by age range reveals highly significant differences in most of the dimensions, except in *Concentration on studies*, where the differences are not significant. Students aged 24 or over (Range 3) record better performances in almost all the strategies assessed compared to the students aged between 16 and 19 (Range 1), particularly in *Cognitive understanding* and in *Motivation and expectations of self-efficacy*. In turn, students in ranges 1 and 2 (aged 20 and over) are significantly different to the younger ones in *Conceptual communication*, *Review and control* and *Emotional control* (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.4** Comparison of significant means: Learning strategies and motivational self-regulation * Gender

| *Scales* | Mean | SD | F (Student's t) | Comparison of means |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Review and control | 3.065 | 0.995 | 6.264* | F (3.126) > M (3.005) |
| Emotional control | 3.130 | 1.158 | 7.504* | M (3.206) > F (3.053) |

**Significant with $p < 0.001$; *Significant with $p < 0.05$. M = Male; F = Female
*Source* Author's own work

**Table 4.5** Comparison of means: Learning strategies and motivational self-regulation * Age range

| Scales | Mean | SD | F ANOVA | Post hoc (M) P = 0.05 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive understanding | 3.719 | 1.268 | 22.427** | [Range 3 (4.432) and Range 2 (4.015)] > Range 1 (3.638) |
| Review and control | 3.065 | 0.985 | 27.982** | [Range 3 (3.728) and Range 2 (3.320)] > Range 1 (2.993) |
| Conceptual communication | 3.322 | 1.592 | 21.437** | Range 2 (3.746) and Range 3 (4.163) > Range 1 (3.216) |
| Emotional control | 3.130 | 1.158 | 11,894** | [Range 1 (3.476) and Range 2 (3.419)] > Range 3 (3.069) |
| Motivation and expectations of self-efficacy | 3.669 | 1.224 | 26.905** | [Range 3 (4.562) and Range 2 (3.987)] > Range 1 (3.576) |

**Highly significant: $p < 0.001$; *Significant: ($p < 0.05$); NS = Not significant. Range 1 = aged 16 to 19; Range 2 = aged 20–23 Range 3 = aged 24 or over
*Source* Author's own work

The results for the different disciplinary areas also record major variations on most of the scales, albeit to a lesser extent in *Concentration on studies*. In general, students in Social Sciences and Humanities tend to be characterised by a better use of strategies, compared to their peers in Economics, Law and in Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies, particularly in *Cognitive understanding* and *Motivation and expectations of self-efficacy*. Furthermore, students in Social Sciences self-report a higher performance in *Review and control* (compared to their peers in Economics) and *Conceptual communication.* Students in Humanities stand out in *Concentration on studies*, compared to students in other disciplinary areas (except in Social Sciences). In turn, students in Economics, Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies, as well as Law, differ from the Humanities group by recording higher levels in *Emotional control* strategies (Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6** Comparison of means: Learning strategies and motivational self-regulation * Disciplinary area

| Scales | Mean | SD | F | Post hoc (M) (p = 0.05) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive understanding | 3.719 | 1.268 | 11.143** | [Humanities (4.005) and Social Sciences (3.957)] > [Law (3.660), Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies (3.584), Economics (3.498)] |
| Review and control | 3.065 | 0.985 | 10.377** | Social Sciences (3.274) > Economics (2.888) |
| Conceptual communication | 3.065 | 1.592 | 6.338** | Social Sciences (3.598) > [Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies (3.184) and Economics (3.141)] |
| Emotional control | 3.130 | 1.158 | 5.833** | [Economics (3.461), Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies (3.090) and Law (3.016)] > Humanities (2.987) |
| Motivation and expectations of self-efficacy | 3.669 | 1.224 | 10.757** | [Humanities (3.996) and Social Sciences (3.918)] > [Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies (3.593), Law (3.505) and Economics (3.426)] |
| Concentration on studies | 2.792 | 1.049 | 4.119* | Humanities (3.030) > [Law (2.753), Economics (2.718) and Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies (2.698)] |

**Highly significant: $p < 0.001$; *Significant: ($p < 0.05$)
*Source* Author's own work

## 4.6 Reasons for Choosing a Specific Course

The analysis of clusters (non-hierarchical method) on the data provided by the CMEC questionnaire provided five groups differentiated from each other according to the degree of prevalence regarding each reason for choosing a specific course. Table 4.7 presents these five clusters, together with the interpretation or characterisation of each one's prevalence.

A comparison of means for verifying the significance of the differences between clusters revealed a highly significant variation between the reasons for choosing a specific course across clusters 3, 4 and 5. In the case of cluster 1, there is a significant difference between *reasons of personal improvement* and *search for prestige* ($t = -3.325$, Sig. $= 0.001$). There is no significant difference between *search for prestige* and *reasons of avoidance* in cluster 2.

Bivariate analyses (ANOVA) were also conducted on the three subscales of the CMEC in relation to gender, age range and disciplinary area, although the results are not listed here. It suffices to report the identification of significant differences in

**Table 4.7** Results of the Analysis of Conglomerates (CMEC)

| Reasons | Conglomerates | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 (n = 238) | 2 (n = 201) | 3 (n = 212) | 4 (n = 267) | 5 (n = 225) |
| Reasons of personal improvement and altruism | 3.84 (medium) | 4.96 (high) | 4.98 (high) | 5.16 (high) | 4.33 (high) |
| Search for prestige and financial security | 3.98 (medium) | 3.21 (medium) | 4.37 (high) | 4.79 (high) | 2.66 (low) |
| Reasons of avoidance | 3.02 (medium) | 3.31 (medium) | 2.16 (low) | 3.90 (medium) | 1.80 (low) |
| Characterisation | Moderate motivation | Moderate intrinsic motivation | High intrinsic and extrinsic motivation | Moderate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation | High intrinsic motivation |

*Source* Author's own work

*reasons of personal improvement and altruism*, as well as in *search for prestige and financial security*, among both females and males ($p <= 0.001$) as well as among the different disciplinary areas ($p <= 0.001$). The age ranges introduced differences related to *reasons of personal improvement and altruism* ($p <= 0.001$). Nevertheless, in relation to *reasons of avoidance,* no differences were found between the categories of these variables.

The next step involved analysing the distribution of these sociodemographic variables in relation to the five motivational clusters identified. As a result of the series of preceding analyses, Table 4.8 summarises the characteristics that define each cluster.

## 4.7 Guidance Needs

Table 4.9 provides a classified summary of the results of the content analysis involving the testimonies provided by the students in their final years and graduates at UCA in the discussion group (DG) regarding their experiences in their first years at university.

The final annex to this study presents a detail of the testimonies transcribed as evidence of the system of categories obtained here.

The final stage in this study involved triangulating the preceding results in terms of guidance needs (goal 2) based on a SWOT analysis (Table 4.10).

**Table 4.8** Prevailing characteristics defining the clusters

| Cluster | Subject areas | Gender | Age ranges (in years) | Reasons for choice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sciences, Engine. and Tech. Studies, Law | Males | 16–18 | – Moderate rating in both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons<br>– No distinction of motivational prevalence |
| 2 | Humanities and Social Sciences | Females | 24 or over | – High rating of intrinsic reasons of personal development and altruism<br>– Moderate rating of reasons of search for prestige, financial security, and avoidance of unpleasant situations |
| 3 | Economics | Males | No distinction | – High rating of reasons of personal improvement and altruism (intrinsic)<br>– High rating of reasons of search for prestige and financial security |
| 4 | Social Sciences | Females | 19–23 | – Moderate rating of reasons of personal improvement and altruism (intrinsic) and reasons of search for prestige and financial security (extrinsic) |
| 5 | Law, Sciences, Engine. and Tech. Studies | Males | 24 or over | – High rating of personal improvement and altruism (intrinsic) |

*Source* Author's own work

## 4.8 Discussion and Conclusions

This study has set out to use a range of sources to understand the guidance needs of students in their first year at university.

As regards the first goal, there are different behaviours in the use and performance of the various study strategies, which reflect the heterogeneity of guidance needs in this period of academic transition. Differences are therefore detected in the use of learning strategies according to gender, age range and disciplinary area. Some studies find differences between male and female students (Aguilar-Rivera, 2010; Freiberg-Hoffmann et al., 2017; Fryer & Vermunt, 2017), while other studies do not find any such differences (Herrera-Torres & Lorenzo-Quiles, 2009). The best performance

**Table 4.9** System of categories (analysis of DG content)

| Initial categories | Categories identified in the study |
|---|---|
| Expectations and fears in the first year (EXPT) | – Reasons for choice (EXPT1)<br>– Change of study strategies (EXPT2)<br>– Fears (EXPT3)<br>– Group integration (EXPT4) |
| Difficulties arising at this stage (DIF) | – Difficulties in adaptation (DIF1)<br>– Difficulties in the organisation of studies (DIF2)<br>– Difficulties in communication (DIF3)<br>– Difficulties in understanding and further learning (DIF4)<br>– Difficulties in performing well in exams (DIF5)<br>– Difficulties in joining a new group (DIF6) |
| Experiences in tutorials or some kind of guidance received in the first year (EXTU) | – Experiences (EXTU1)<br>– Proposals (EXTU2) |

*Source* Author's own work

**Table 4.10** SWOT analysis of guidance needs

| | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|---|
| Internal analysis | • Availability of instruments for identifying guidance needs and the reasons for choosing a course<br>• Identification of needs regarding the process of entering university<br>• Students' interest in discovering their needs<br>• Availability of an inter-faculty programme of tutorial guidance for first-year students<br>• Identification of guidance needs for specific groups of students | • Students do not have enough competencies for success in their studies. They record a range of difficulties in adaptation<br>• The heterogeneity of needs observed increases the complexity of responses in terms of guidance<br>• The specific needs identified among certain groups of students are not taken sufficiently into account in guidance actions<br>• Need to provide personalised diagnosis and care, not just a group focus |
| | *Opportunities* | *Threats* |
| External analysis | • Option of conducting an initial assessment of guidance and providing the students with feedback<br>• Implement specific guidance actions according to the heeds of specific groups of students (anticipation of the needs profiles identified)<br>• Use of technological advances for facilitating a more personalised diagnosis and care | • Not having enough resources to respond to diagnosis and guidance needs in a differential and personalised manner<br>• The university's human resources for the personalised monitoring of students and of the evolution of their difficulties and needs<br>• Insufficient training of teachers in interventions that ensure a holistic approach to each student |

*Source* Author's own work

observed in the group of older students is consistent with other studies (Coertjens et al., 2017; López-Aguado, 2011). Finally, the comparison of means analysis identified the differentiated use of learning strategies according to disciplinary areas, similar to other studies (Stover et al., 2015).

In sum, the differentiated use and performance of the various study strategies reveal three profiles that may be described in terms of guidance needs (Table 4.11).

In turn, an analysis of the reasons behind the choice of studies led to the definition of five motivational profiles (Table 4.12), which are consistent with the findings reported in other studies (Balloo, 2017).

This study's findings coincide with those in other analyses (Guloy et al., 2017; Takashiro, 2016; ValleArias et al., 2010) that have reported differentiated profiles according to study goals. Furthermore, male students value the search for prestige and financial security, in contrast to their female counterparts, who value personal

**Table 4.11** Differentiated profiles according to learning strategies

| | |
|---|---|
| Profile 1 | Male students aged 16–19 that choose to study for a degree in the field of Economics. This group has a weaker performance in *Cognitive understanding* and in *Review and control*, which means they will need more advice and guidance for improving the development of these strategies |
| Profile 2 | Females aged 24 or over that have begun their degrees in subjects related to the field of Humanities, who experience greater difficulties in *Emotional control* |
| Profile 3 | Male students in Engineering, Sciences and Technical Studies, Law and Economics, of all ages, who experience greater difficulty in *Concentration on studies*, so actions need to be designed to help improve attentional strategies |

*Source* Author's own work

**Table 4.12** Profiles differentiated according to the reasons for the choice of studies

| | |
|---|---|
| Profile 1 | Male students aged 16–19, enrolled in the disciplinary areas of Law and Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies. They do not have a motivational preference and have a moderate rating of both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons regarding their choice of study subject |
| Profile 2 | Female students aged 24 or over, enrolled in the disciplinary areas of Humanities and Social Sciences. They have a high rating of the intrinsic reasons of personal development and altruism, and a moderate rating of reasons of search for prestige, financial security and the avoidance of unpleasant situations |
| Profile 3 | Male students, with no age distinction, enrolled in Economics. They have a high rating both of reasons of search for prestige and financial security (extrinsic) and of reasons of personal improvement and altruism (intrinsic) |
| Profile 4 | Female students aged 19–23, enrolled in Social Sciences. They have a moderate rating of reasons of personal improvement and altruism (intrinsic), as well as of reasons of search for prestige and financial security (extrinsic) |
| Profile 5 | Male students aged 24 or over, enrolled in the disciplinary areas of Law and Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies. They have a very high rating of reasons of personal improvement and altruism (intrinsic) |

*Source* Author's own work

development and altruism. Along these lines, other studies (Abarca et al., 2012) indicate that women's reasons for choosing a degree course are more closely linked to a vocation and to intrinsic values, while men choose their studies largely for more instrumental reasons, such as pay and professional openings.

Reasons of avoidance could reflect an undercurrent of vocational indecision among students, and they may well be identified as a group at risk of dropping out, which will require closer monitoring and a more detailed study. According to the study by Valle-Arias et al. (2010), students motivated by the avoidance of failure will be concerned at not appearing incompetent in front of others; this might suggest that the choice of disciplinary area may be driven largely by the perception of a lower level of exigency compared to other disciplines.

These results, included in the quantitative analysis, lead to the identification of new guidance needs, namely, having to cope with fears when facing new academic demands; implementing new communication strategies that allow for better handling of the subject's terminology; achieving social integration and adapting to the university; or having to adopt new ways of organising one's studies, and adjusting the processes of understanding and exploration according to the level of complexity of the subject's content. These findings are consistent with other studies on the difficulties involved in adapting to the university environment and social integration (Alder, 2016), as well as those on effective study planning and the acquisition of learning strategies that facilitate the drafting of disciplinary content (Pettersson, Svedin, & Scheja, 2017; Trautwein & Bosse, 2017; Ventura, Cattoni, & Borgobello, 2017).

In short, these results provide a raft of considerations for adopting a holistic perspective for analysing first-year students' guidance needs. The triangulation of all the results obtained (target 2) has allowed integrating and relating the different guidance needs according to the results obtained in the three study phases (Table 4.13).

In short, this study has led to the identification of a significant range of needs among first-year students, which need to be considered from the perspective of a holistic tutoring model (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2015). One of the main contributions has been the description of this broad and complex range of guidance needs in the case of a specific university, and within this context, the identification of profiles in relation to sundry variables and conditioning factors. This has been based on the combination of different approaches (quantitative and qualitative) and their triangulation, converging in a SWOT analysis of these needs, in an effort to connect the results with the actions and improvements in guidance schemes.

Mention should also be made of certain limitations affecting the study. The first of these is that the profiles identified in the study cannot be extrapolated to other contexts, so they need to be interpreted bearing in mind the specific characteristics of the environment in which this study has been conducted. Neither can they be considered definitive within the study's specific context, as they might respond to the specific characteristics of the sample of students used here. Concerning the identification

**Table 4.13** Guidance needs according to the triangulation study

| | |
|---|---|
| Curricular academic guidance | Need for guidance on specific content or academic aspects of a specific subject |
| Methodological/procedural academic guidance | Need to improve and/or acquire learning strategies (in particular, concentration, review and metacognitive control, and emotional control, mainly in exams). Need to modify the study method, learn to organise and plan the study process, revise content and clarify conceptual doubts, learn the specific terminology and apply strategies that help to communicate that content |
| Professional guidance | Need to help first-year students to review their reasons for choosing their course, especially those with a prevailing reason of avoidance that may be reflecting doubts on the real reasons for studying the chosen course |
| Guidance during the transition | Need for social integration at the university, a positive adaptation and a favourable response to initial academic demands |
| Personal guidance | Need for advice on handling affective-emotional situations in a student's private life that could compromise their academic performance |
| Specific individual guidance | Need for guidance for different student groups, according to guidance profiles |

*Source* Author's own work

of learning strategies and reasons for studying, a further analysis is required of the dimensions identified here, as well as a consideration of other possible dimensions that explore the reasons for the choice of studies.

This study may be further enriched by its subsequent application in other university contexts or settings, with a view to establishing more valuable comparisons. This will also enable future studies to explore the type of relationship established between the motivational profile and the ensuing academic performance from a longitudinal perspective. Finally, we trust that this study will contribute to the guidance of first-year students at university.

# Annex 1. Categories of Analysis of the Oral Testimonies, GDE-1

| Subcategories | Categories identified in the study | Testimonies |
|---|---|---|
| Expectations and fears in the first year (EXPT) | Reasons for choice: reference to intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. In other cases, no reason is given (EXPT1) | "I chose this degree because of my interest in disability and I felt it was right for me. I wanted to study something that would make me feel I was helping others." (EA2)<br>"When I chose the degree, I did so because I had a grant. I saw studying Law as a way of pursuing a professional career, and what I wanted was to get a degree. I am the first generation in my family to go to university, and being a university student was what mattered to me." (EG1)<br>"I chose this degree because I was good at maths and I found it easy, and besides, my parents suggested it. I didn't give much thought to what I was going to be when I graduated or what I was going to do." (EA1)/"I didn't have any expectations." (EG2) |
| | Study strategies: change in the way of studying at university compared to secondary school (EXPT2) | "We felt as if we were still at school, still fooling around, then the weeks went by and we had to get down to work as if there were no tomorrow." (EA1)<br>"To be able to understand what I was studying and explain it, put it into practice. At first there are many more theoretical subjects that you have to digest and compare. For example, they asked me to compare authors and I had only learnt each one off by heart, but I didn't relate them." (EA2) |

(continued)

(continued)

| Subcategories | Categories identified in the study | Testimonies |
|---|---|---|
| | Fears: especially in exam situations (EXPT3) | "I failed many subjects, not being able to continue because it was so difficult" (EA1)<br>"The exams, how to sit them, as I just assumed that I was going to pass them all." (EG1)<br>"Fear of the changes, of being able to adapt." (EA3)/"I was afraid I wouldn't be able to cope." (EA1)<br>"Not to get nervous when I had to sit an exam, that's what happened the first few times and things turned out badly, and that put me off doing any more exams." (EA2)<br>"about the mid-terms, know what you have to do to pass." (EG2) |
| | Group integration: expectations of feeling part of the peer group (EXPT4) | "The key for me was to join a study group, because it makes it easier to study and you make more friends." (EG2)<br>"The Olympics [a sports event involving all the students] was the best for me, I became part of a team, I felt involved." (EA3)<br>"The idea you have of university is that it's all work and no play; and then, suddenly, you realise you're beginning to share other situations, to make friends and feel part of a new community." (EA2)<br>"you can make a lot of friends and share experiences, a whole new life." (EA1) |
| Difficulties that emerged during this stage (DIF) | Difficulties in adapting: especially among students from other cities or countries (DIF1) | "… as I came from another country, I found it difficult to settle in." (EA1)<br>"I come from Tierra del Fuego [a province at the southern tip of Argentina], I found it difficult to go somewhere new, leave my family, fend for myself, look after the house on my own, it was a complete change, being on my own in a city that was a million times bigger." (EA3) |

(continued)

(continued)

| Subcategories | Categories identified in the study | Testimonies |
|---|---|---|
| | Difficulties in organising and planning university studies (DIF2) | "We came straight from school, and until I sat the first mid-term exam, I had no idea how to study." (AE2)/"You realise how you're meant to study, and there's a big difference between school and university." (EG2)/"A big shock, I didn't know how to study and that was reflected in my marks." (EG2) "The method I was using was no good, and failing helped to make me realise how to study." (EA2)/"The problem is learning to study and organising yourself with so much course material." (EA1) |
| | Communicative difficulties in handling the specific terminology and in conveying the knowledge acquired (DIF3) | "In my case, as I had chosen Law, I had to learn a new language, handle terminology that was completely different to my normal way of speaking." (EG1) |
| | Difficulties in understanding and conceptualising the study content (DIF4) | "In my case, the difficulty was that I ignored the texts and only studied photocopies and notes. Things went wrong in the first mid-term exam. I had read everything and I thought I knew it all, but I didn't know anything." (EA2) "I did a single practical and I thought that I already understood the subject. The lecturers give you examples of mid-term exams for you to practice, but you don't pay any attention to them because you think that if the practical went well you've already understood the subject. And it turned out badly for me." (EA1) "At first you don't ask any questions because you don't think you need to, that what you've studied is enough to know the subject. When I began to ask questions then I realised how much better prepared I was and how I had understood the topic." (EG2) |

(continued)

(continued)

| Subcategories | Categories identified in the study | Testimonies |
|---|---|---|
| | Difficulties in passing exams and correctly expressing the knowledge acquired (DIF5) | "With the oral exams, as I was not used to expressing myself in that way." (EA3)<br>"… oral exams, in Law and I'd never done anything like that at school, I didn't know what to do, whether to stand or sit and I was terrified." (EG1)<br>"there were loads of us in the first mid-term exam, I felt I couldn't breathe, I got very nervous […] I felt I wouldn't be able to do it…" (EA1) |
| | Difficulties in joining a new group with the need to share many common areas (DIF6) | "… I attended classes in the evening and I worked, I found it difficult to meet up and study with my fellow students. I think my journey has been a lonely one." (EG1)/"I avoided meeting people. I was very outgoing, but when I started here, I became very withdrawn." (EA3)<br>"I found it difficult to make friends. The people were very different, I was used to living in a village and everything was very different here." (EA3)/"It helped a lot to study as a team […] I made a group of friends." (EG2) |
| Experiences in tutorials or some kind of guidance received in the first year (EXTU) | Favourable and unfavourable experiences according to the degree of response given to guidance needs (EXTU1) | "What I remember about the first-year tutorial is that the tutor summoned those students that were having difficulties. I have friends that were called in." (EG2)<br>"I still meet my tutor, the relationship we struck up in the first year was very important to me and how she guided me." (EA2)<br>"I never had a meeting, except in the first term, when we read the course regulations and that was it." (EA1)<br>"I don't think it's very successful because not many people attend the tutorials, perhaps because they don't know about them or due to a lack of information." (EA3) |

(continued)

(continued)

| Subcategories | Categories identified in the study | Testimonies |
|---|---|---|
| | Proposals on the way of organising a tutorial and which needs should be addressed (EXTU2) | "…like a course, in groups like in a workshop, because it is necessary." (EA3)/"Do it in groups, share experiences, but make it mandatory…" (EA1)<br>"Once every one or two months, more intensive and more practical." (EA2)/"The tutorial should be used to have a closer relationship with the lecturers or create a better atmosphere in class. Support the learning process."(EA1)<br>"Tutorials with a purpose, guide you on how to prepare for it." (EA1)<br>"Anyone who has a problem with their studies has other issues and maybe tutorials should take this into account […] that's what the Dean said." (EA3)<br>"Tutorial should provide guidance on study methods and being better prepared for sitting exams, and if you have some other kind of problem that can come next." (EA2)<br>"… for me, tutorials should be used to provide an idea, from the first moment, of what a university is and what it involves, in other words how to deal with it and not fall behind." (EG2)<br>"… it needs to provide guidance on how to study because you can get off to a bad start and get the wrong idea, thinking it's not the right course, yet you might be fine for that course, you simply didn't know how to study." (EG2)<br>"Personalised tutorials for difficulties with subjects." (EA1)<br>"… I think there are critical moments at the beginning and end. I needed tutorials at the end of my degree, but there weren't any. I think it would have been very useful to receive advice on finding a job …" (EG1)<br>"Tutorial for the end of studies." (EG2) |

*References*: **EA1:** Female, Civil Engineering (Disciplinary Area: Sciences, Engineering and Technical Studies); second-to-last year of the degree. **EA2:** Female, Psychopedagogy (Disciplinary Area: Humanities); final year of the degree. **EA3:** Male, Political Science (Disciplinary Area: Social Sciences); final year of the degree. **EG1:** Female, Law (Disciplinary Area: Law); graduated four years ago. **EG2:** Male, Economics (Disciplinary Area: Economics); graduated two years ago

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# Chapter 5
# Emerging and Hegemonic Discourses of Mexican Counselors


**Héctor Magaña-Vargas**

**Abstract** This chapter focuses on an analysis of the hegemonic discourse on educational guidance in Mexico, through its publications. The research carried out follows a qualitative-interpretative methodology, and the discourse analysis adopts the political discourse analysis approach of Laclau and Mouffe (2011) and Laclau (2002, 1993) with particular focus on the political analysis of educational discourse (Buenfil, 1993, 2008, 2009, 2013). It also takes up the political perspective of Foucault (1991) concerning the archeology and genealogy of ideas, to analyse the emergence and origin of guidance in Mexico. This allows an understanding of the polysemy of the term *educational guidance* and the proposal of categories of analysis: emergence and origin of the concept of educational guidance in Mexico, educational guidance as an empty signifier, the hegemonic discourse of educational guidance and emerging discourses. The research questions are: What are the meanings, in relation to the concept of *educational guidance,* in the discourses of counselors (period 1990–2011) which allow us to understand the identity of the discipline as a field of knowledge? What conceptual and ideological perspectives of educational guidance are expressed in field publications? What are the hegemonic and anti-hegemonic discourses of counselors in their publications, and the expression of the antagonisms present in these discourses? How has the identity of the professional field of educational guidance been built in Mexico? What are the theoretical and/or disciplinary debates in the publications on educational guidance? What are the arguments on which the identity of the field has been built in the different discourses of the authors, who are the educational counselors in Mexico, and how do they propose to build a voice of their own in the field of guidance?

**Keywords** Educational guidance · Emerging approaches · Hegemony in education · Mexican counselors

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## 5.1 Introduction

The main axis of this work is the analysis of the concepts of educational and vocational guidance in the intellectual production of counselors in Mexico, and these meanings are addressed in the various expressions they want to capture from their very particular point of view. Thus, a first approach is presented as a genealogical exercise in the history of education in this country. According to the first publications since 1905, guidance was conceptualized in Mexico as a profession which consisted of providing information on the importance of professional training and, in particular, on the meaning of careers or professions that were offered in higher education institutions. Thus, the concept of professional guidance was commonly adopted in Mexico.

## 5.2 Evolution of Educational and Vocational Guidance (EVG) in Mexico

Through the strengthening of educational institutions and the creation of the Secretariat of Public Education, in the 1920s, vocational guidance services were offered for the first time at secondary level. At the same time, another concept linked to the world of work (professionals, technicians and manual workers), that of professional guidance (Cruz & Juárez, 2013), began to emerge. In the 1950s, the concept of vocational guidance began to compete with educational guidance, in the discourses of some of the prominent authors of the time, Herrera y Montes (1957), for example, whose work integrated both concepts. In 1957 he published a book entitled "La orientación educativa y vocacional en la segunda enseñanza" (*Educational and vocational guidance in secondary school*). In this publication he defined Educational and Vocational Guidance (EVG) as the stage of the educational process that aims to help each individual to develop, by carrying out activities and experiences that allow the person to solve his/her problems, while at the same time, acquiring a better knowledge of him/herself. The EVG is not an external service or juxtaposed to education. It is an integral part of it (…), what is distinctive and characteristic of EVG is the emphasis on the individual needs, and on the use of specialized techniques" (Herrera y Montes, 1957).

This concept of guidance had a great influence on Mexican counselors during most of the second half of the twentieth century, where mainly guidance was seen as the aid offered to the individual that requires guidance in life. This remedial and assistance approach, at the basic level, became part of programmes, and its contents thereof the main axis of the praxis in guidance.

From the counselors approach, there is a very wide range of discourses and visions about what guidance is; above all, the discourses of a psychological nature have prevailed, among other expressions of various kinds, linked to pedagogy, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. It can be said that guidance assumes a hegemonic proposal of a psychological nature and, at the same time, a permanent dispute and

antagonism with other disciplines has been identified, mainly with pedagogy (Duarte-Bock, 2014; Alfonso-Ribeiro & Melo-Silva, 2011).

The central category of the present analysis is the hegemony in guidance, and the logic around which this category is structured with the notion of the 'empty signifier', i.e. of a particularity that assumes the representation of a universality. This constitutes what has been called 'equivalence logics', which supposes the subversion of the signifying/meaning relation. Here, the slash unites and, at the same time separates both which, in 'Laclaunian' terminology, hinders and makes possible at the same time, the significance process (Laclau, 2002, 2009).

These expressions of empty signifiers were manifested in the discourses as those that propose a definition of guidance as universal practices: Educational guidance is a universal practice, exercised in its simplest expression by a human being who, through the word, leads another; that establishes with its interlocutor an ethical or pedagogical relation and an affective bond, that assists with the knowledge of the reality, with the purpose of enabling an individual to identify their location within it, and in that sense, allowing the individual to count on elements to develop their project of life (Calvo et al., 1993, Alfonso-Ribeiro & Melo-Silva, 2011, Boaventura de Sousa, 2011).

This characterization of guidance is the product of the first stage of knowledge on guidance in Mexico between 1980 and 1992, and it manages to integrate an alternative proposal to the hegemonic one that dominated the guidance scene in Mexican schools for a long time. This study could be accomplished with the participation of several institutions, and for the first time a collegial proposal was carried out with contributions emanating from different schools. Notwithstanding the foregoing, this concept of guidance as a universal practice becomes, at the same time, a significant emptiness, since something particular, such as delivering guidance, becomes universal.

One of these proposals that has hegemonized the discourse of guidance is in associations where some counselors get together with the aim of proposing unique definitions of what guidance is or should be. The directors of the National Association of Guidance Professionals (AMPO, A. C) argued in their core document that the main aim of guidance "should be to offer inservice educational counselors, educational authorities, and the public in general, a point of view on what is understood by the discipline of educational guidance in our country" (Nava, 1993, p. 5).

The attempts to hegemonize the concept appeared when directing its discourse to all sectors, i.e. 'counselors, managers and the general public'. Later, they justified the elaboration of this aim because, in their view, there has been a lack of a consistent option for 40 years. Therefore, one of the main reasons that made this document emerge was the concern of many counselors to update the theory-practice integration of educational guidance with the social context of Mexico, since its creation in 1952 by Herrera & Montes (1957), there has not been a similar effort. For this reason, the current administration of AMPO considered it appropriate to take on the challenge of resizing its contents in the light of the new national context, characterized by crisis in all its aspects and changes, in its economic development model by the signing of the FTA (…) (Nava, 1993).

In this core document, the AMPO builds a conceptual proposal of educational guidance whilst resignifying the traditional concepts that had been presented in the previous years because they consider that there is a need to overcome those perspectives that date back to the 1950s. The following is a new conceptual proposal that connects tradition with modernity by gathering and integrating historical experiences with the current context, and incorporating innovations derived from the scientific, technological and humanistic advances of Mexico today. Educational guidance is the discipline that studies and promotes the pedagogical, psychological and socioeconomic capabilities of human beings throughout life, with the purpose of harmoniously bounding their personal development with the country's social development (Nava, 1993).

The meaning of AMPO's proposal has to do with the legitimization of the hegemonic discourse in the events of guidance, as it is said that this proposal derives from institutional seminars and the National Guidance Meetings organized by this association several years earlier. Here it is considered a discipline with a psychopedagogical character, and, although they address socioeconomic issues in the development of their proposal, they fail to adequately develop or explain its significant influence, rendering it primarily invisible.

These discourses are another form of the exercise of power, as these are events organized by a hegemonic group that pretends to reflect the domination of the national guidance. This reflects Foucault's (2010) observation that,

> The discourses as they can be heard, as they can be read, as texts, are not as one might expect, a pure and simple interweaving of things and words: dark plot of things, visible and coloured chain of words (Foucault, p. 86).

These institutionalized proposals from this powerful group of counselors seeked to generate a decisive intention to homogenize a unique and global vision of guidance, and it is precisely in the events they organized where they legitimized their discourses.

The members of this National Association of Counselors stated that they were going to postulate a 'semantic, epistemological and philosophical reconceptualization of educational guidance' (Nava, 1993, p. 48). This idea raises several questions concering what is the meant by the elaboration of a semantic reconceptualization? How do they understood this theoretical turn. Did they propose to reconfigure the concept of guidance by constructing a new approach, or did they plan to resemantize the notion of guidance as proposed by the theorists of postmodernity? Although their intention was not clear, it may be uncovered through the interpretation of the latent language employed.

In the same AMPO core document, they define with greater clarity, their position where they intend to cover from the educational guidance a set of human development processes in every student, and constitute a universal notion of the same, achieving their hegemonic proposal.

> Educational guidance contributes, as established in constitutional art. 3°, to harmoniously develop the faculties of the human being in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects, specifically in the transformation of the intellectual, emotional and social potentialities whether they are innate or learned, as well as promoting human values and awareness of

> reality and its social commitment as a person. These functions of the current educational counselor, and also of the future one (sic), inscribe the professional in the group of educators and social transformation agents the country requires (Nava, 1993, p. 48).

At the same time they went further, proposing a new epistemology and philosophy of guidance. They asserted that this will overcome the traditional models of guidance by including other factors, such as socioeconomic dimensions. Their assumption was that, by integrating other factors not considered previously, this could result in the building of an innovative proposal, consistent with the new times. Nevertheless, they had fallen short by only considering some other processes, simply agglutinating elements to reach the same point: i.e. to build a proposal of hegemonic guidance, that is, unique and agglutinating. Muñoz-Riveroll is another Mexican author who addressed the episteme of philosophical guidance and debated its meaning. He proposes a philosophy and epistemology of guidance as part of the reflective process for counselors when facing their daily work with students.

> Educational guidance in the epistemic dimension, can be understood as an everyday knowledge, also as a rational and systematized knowledge, without the latter meaning that it is necessarily considered as scientific. Not everything logical is scientific. As knowledge and everyday knowledge, based on experience, educational guidance is developed through different social practices, and through emerging characters of a particular sector, stratum or social group (Muñoz-Riveroll, 1997).

For a long time, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the theory and instrumental proposals emerged from the great capitalist cities, that export their conceptions and are reconsidered in an uncritical manner by Mexican counselors. This is what Santana explains in research about leadership hegemony:

> The guidance discourse stakeholders were more occupied in the organization and operation of the new guidance services, than in the review and investigation of theoretical-conceptual aspects; the generation of the own knowledge is neglected, and theories and approaches applied in other countries are revisited. Theoretical proposals and approaches coming from the United States are assumed again (Santana-Escobar, 2002, p. 86).

The above is shown in the results of the first state of knowledge of educational guidance study in Mexico in the 1980s, where researchers concluded that investigation on guidance in the country has been practically non-existent, and that there were no professionals dedicated specifically to build knowledge in this discipline. It can be said that there were no advances in the conceptual works on the study of the guidance, and the books and documents on the topic have been quite meager.

On the other hand, specialized journals on guidance did not exist in this period, and there were few other long-lasting publications. For example, despite the great support received by the UNAM, and being published in the General Directorate of Vocational Guidance in collaboration with the AMPO, the only specialized *Educational guidance magazine* in Mexico (UNAM-DGOV-AMPO, 1994–1996), first published in November 1987, only managed to produce four issues before disappearing in 1988. Even today, the presence of specialized periodical publications in educational and vocational guidance in Mexico has been quite limited, despite the efforts of some

institutions, teachers, researchers and counselors in generating publications of this kind (Magaña-Vargas, 2013).

So what is the reason why publications on educational guidance could not be sustained or strengthened in Mexico? There is no definitive answer, but there are some possible explanations. For instance, publishing a specialized magazine covering a whole set of requirements, with editorial, national and international editing policies, is a rather complex task, which requires the participation of a highly professional team to carry out such a process, especially nowadays where such a magazine would be in printed and digital form. One of the major problems is financing unless, for example, an institution is prepared to cover the cost of printing a magazine. If these conditions are not met the creation and maintenance of a magazine becomes a difficult and complicated task. In the case of the Journal of Educational Guidance, it could be created because the professionals at UNAM-DGOV were entrusted with the task of putting together an editorial team within its entire institutional infrastructure, and nearly the entire process of editing the journal was completely subsidized.

As soon as some changes were made in the administrative policy of the institution, the magazine immediately disappeared without any possibility of continuity. Similar situations were experienced with other national guidance magazines, such as at the University of Tamaulipas. The Normal School published a magazine called *Orien Tam* in 1994 which only managed to edit and publish two issues. The Normal Superior School of Nezahualcóyotl, with a single issue of Orienta-Te, as a product of the Master's Degree in Educational Guidance in 2003, disappeared due to the lack of institutional continuity. A further example is the magazine *Quiero Ser*, a bimonthly thematic dissemination organ of Professionals of the Educational Guidance (PROE) from Puebla State, under the direction of the psychologist Hegmann Anaya, was proposed to maintain a diversified editorial line of topics. It was addressed mainly to young students of different educational levels, appearing in 2003 but disappearing three years later, in 2006, due to financial problems.

Where there has been a continuity in the creation and maintenance of guidance publications in Mexico has been when the effort to achieve this came from the civil society, which independently and autonomously, or in Gramsci's words, as a product of the collective will, led to the creation of work teams, carrying out the responsibility of initiating an editorial project, and then giving it the continuity required (Blanc-Miguel, 2002).

The only guidance magazine which has been published for over ten years, is the *Revista Mexicana de Orientación Educativa* (REMO, http://remo.ws). So far, more than 200 articles have appeared, and since its inception in 2003 it has been commitmed to counselors and Mexican education yet remained independent of institutional ties. It started with a printed and digital format, and currently continues only as a digital version. Its website allows it to have an important visibility, and free and complete open access to each of the published documents.

The above does not mean that there have been no research works in other journals. In fact, throughout the history of guidance, works on this topic have been published in journals such as the *Journal of the Center for Educational Studies*, *Journal of Higher*

*Education* and the magazine *Perfiles Educativos* (UNAM), among others (Cabrera, 2013, Cabrera & Carbajal, 2013).

## 5.3 Emerging Approaches

In a different way, and from the perspective of the working group from the University of Guanajuato, educational guidance has begun to take place in the building of a holistic proposal and, above all, it allows the identifying of a genuine voice that generates a disciplinary identity. The discourse of these researchers develops a specific work to define the notion of guidance in the following terms, and a conclusion derived from these elements and approaches to the Educational Guidance, distinguishes that it is an indeterminate process, constructive and conscious, with coordinated knowledge, and long-life development. The Educational Guidance aims to be preventive, curricular and intended for cooperation among professionals, within a legal framework of human resources plan (Alejo, Cervera, & Ordaz, 2001, Crespo, 2008).

Together with these dominant perspectives in guidance, there were proposals against hegemonic and divergent options, sustained in concepts called critical pedagogies, which built their own proposal of guidance, presented at the II Latin American Meeting of Associations and Guidance Professionals (FAPOAL, 1990). As Muñoz and Nava (1990) identified:

> The approach derived from the neo-Marxist school sustains that education and, therefore, educational guidance must start from a socio-political vision, that is, the school is not an entity isolated from society, but an integral part of it with which it maintains a relationship of interdependence. The process of educational guidance must be placed in a context and supported by an analysis of society, and from a micro point of view, the process must be defined in a specific society and enriched by the contributions of a theoretical framework that contains all those disciplines that intervene in the solution of problems (pp. 62–63).

At some points in the history of guidance the aim was to build a theoretical framework in order to enrich the debates on this topic and, at the same time, discuss, analyse and propose alternatives that allow enrichment of the counselors' tasks. It must also be borne in mind that the new generations of counselors do not have a solid background in this discipline, and therefore updating of their knowledge and understanding is necessary. There have been seminars and specific training carried out by institutional work teams for the development of the theoretical framework of guidance. At these events the diverse conceptual perspectives of guidance were analysed, and important proposals emerged. Some of these were:

> Theoretical framework for educational guidance practice at the College of Baccalaureates. Mexico (1987–1990):
>
> (a) First Regional Educational Guidance Forum. FES Aragón UNAM, Mexico, 1990.
>
> (b) 1st. National Seminar on Theoretical Conceptualization of Educational Guidance (1993). Autonomous University of Tamaulipas. Ciudad Victoria.

There were public debates on the different approaches of guidance. These events are still organized with students and teachers from masters, specialties and graduate courses who have had a presence during this period of history. The first document, prepared by the *Colegio de Bachilleres*, proposed to build a theoretical guidance framework which would provide conceptual and epistemic support to the practice of this discipline. Its main purpose was to formalize and characterize the object and academic functions of educational guidance (Muñoz-Riveroll & Nava, 1990).

This document initiates a theoretical and conceptual building of guidance. These authors' approach falls within the non-psychological side, that is, it starts from an epistemic conception from the philosophy of praxis. From Marxism they came back to Gramsci, locating education within Freireian Pedagogy of liberation (Freire, 1972), noting that this theoretical framework conceives formal educational guidance as a historically and socially determined practice in the psychopedagogical attention to academic achievement, as well as those that are alternately occurring in the student, during the process of definition of the life project. This concept goes beyond the conventional idea of determining the object from the formal approach, rather than from the process of practice (Muñoz-Riveroll, 1987).

Two main categories are derived from this theoretical framework of guidance; one is the theory of praxis in guidance, and the other is everyday practice in guidance.

> It was decided to conceptualize praxis from a historical materialist approach because it is considered to have been one of the most objective epistemological positions regarding the explanation of human being's development and transformation in relation to work; In addition, it turns out to be one of the most integral philosophical positions based on psychological, social, anthropological and economic foundations (Muñoz-Riveroll, 1987, p. 6).

## 5.4 Convergence of Perspectives

Regarding the main category of everyday life, it is argued that in order to be consistent with the philosophy of praxis, and follow the same conceptual line, other elements must be taken into account. These elements are part of the non-formal education of the young person, and of extracurricular aspects such as family, mass media, the social group to which they belong, and social class, as well as the historical and political context in which individuals develop. All this is designed as *incidental guidance*, that is, the contextual determinants present beyond the spaces of school.

With the incorporation of everyday life as an important category for the context of practice, it is intended to demonstrate that practice of educational guidance is not the sole domain of formal education, but is also located within the dynamics of family and social groups, where daily life contributes to the shaping and reinforcement of values and expectations the person structures with respect to his/her life project. This project, after all, may or may not be included in formal education (Muñoz-Riveroll, 1987).

It is argued that these two practices of guidance, *formal* and *incidental,* will be present and without detriment to one another. They are interrelated, integrating the

practice of guidance that is present in educational institutions, and the incidental which is present in the social-historical context.

On this point, the above mentioned document emphasizes their position by incorporating a *Gramscian* perspective within its Marxist approach, in the sense of the notion of historicity and its importance of the everyday in educational guidance, raised that the mainstreaming of daily life to the framework of school guidance is important and valid to the work carried out by the educator-counselor with cultural entities and in cultural contexts, in which certain attitudes cannot be taken today, or ignore the cultural characteristics and the process of daily life, of the students and the community from which they come. It would be wrong to ignore the link the student has with the social reality, that of his/her context, with her/his cultural expectations, etc. (Muñoz-Riveroll, 1987, p. 19).

Hence, a Marxist vision of educational guidance is gradually being shaped, based on the historical and socio-cultural context in which the person is immersed. Here, the diverse signifiers appear again, dispersed and enriched by these pro-positive discourses. These perspectives allow for a resignifying of the sense of guidance, and it has to be defined as reorientation in the *Freirian* position of considering the story of the individual, where, 'The reorientation of the guiding practice has much to do with dialogue, communication or dialogicity' (Muñoz-Riveroll, 1987, p. 20). Therefore, it incorporates the individual's socio-historical experiences in relation to how they construct their future life choices. The important thing here is that these authors express a genuine voice on guidance, which sustains the same in a social and Marxist context. Throughout their work they reflect a critical stance towards formal guidance, to move towards an incidental guidance where the role of the historical and cultural is a core aspect.

The second document on the First National Seminar on Theoretical Conceptualization of Educational Guidance, hosted by the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas in the early 1990s, managed to integrate in a common space several authors working on guidance with divergent theoretical positions and philosophies, sharing their ideas with a university community that enriched the dynamics with questions, comments, and exchanges with the exhibitors. Some aspects still valid from this event are that:

1. There was a specific call for Mexican authors to discuss the conceptualizations of guidance.
2. The proposal to work on unpublished material to be presented at a discussion table to the university community and other members.
3. The fact that the call for this even was made and sponsored by university authorities to promote intellectual production on guidance in Mexico.
4. The publication of all the documents in a dissemination book, edited by the host university though, unfortunately with a short edition.

The discourses, emerging from this first and only national seminar of conceptualizations of educational guidance promoted the proliferation of proposals from different approaches. Among these proposals the work of Muñoz-Riveroll (1997) conceptualizes guidance as a social, daily and historical practice, a dialectical unit:

pragmatic, and in its quality of praxis defines its intention or purpose. At the same time, the author questions the possibility of building a utopia in guidance and he wonders about the continuity of one of its functions, the students' search for consensus regarding the values and norms of the modern school.

On the other hand, Hernández-Garibay (1998, 2003) detailed his vision of guidance and stated that it is based on the analysis of the specific reality based on the objective conditions of the historical and socioeconomic development of Mexico. He contends that the laws of history, analysing reality and globalization, particularly, the structural crisis of Mexican society, must be taken into account.

To understand objectively the scope of problems and limitations of educational guidance, it will be essential to account for the historical conditions in which national education has developed, such as the traditional problems of underdevelopment and dependency, new expressions of an unsolved crisis and its impact on the whole of society that, among other aspects, implies a complex professional labour market today confronted with the new circumstances created by globalization (Hernández-Garibay, 1998).

Espinosa and Montes (1993) take educational guidance as linked to the ethical dimensions in the counselor's training. Building ethics in guidance practice involves three epistemic moments. First, acceptance of a rupture; second, acceptance of other possibilities, something new that clashes with the old and, third, the building of a series of dilemmas that make the split between to be and having to be. These authors pointed out that the theoretical bases for these are drawn from four classics philosophers: Freud, Nietzsche, Lacan and Habermas. With the aim to integrate these divergent positions, the authors question about the definition of guidance we have, in relation to counselor's personality, about the way we build individual and subject guidance, and finally, how is the individual tied to their own language.

In the same qualitative line, the educational researcher Piña-Osorio (1993), from the Autonomous University of Chapingo, following Schutz (1970), Berger and Luckmann (1986), on the social construction of reality conceptualizes educational guidance from a sociological perspective and states that the counselor is the representative of a cultural tradition of a particular society. Just as in every society there are different social practices, and the counsellor builds a particular symbolic universe shaped by the myths, beliefs, rites and customs of both society and school.

> When the counselor assumes his/her role as *referee* of the students' actions, a permanent questioning begins for the counselor. He watches over, directs, guides others. Counselors are questioned and even challenged, but they are hardly asked about their status as arbitrators. The *referee* evaluates, but rarely evaluates him/herself. The way in which this professional classifies rests in a position of normality and adequacy of the discipline. It is a way of conceiving the social and specific professional practice (Piña-Osorio, 1993, p. 57).

With respect to Meneses (1993), his position is identified from the hermeneutic-interpretative approach, probing first the sense of guidance and the reinterpretation of the guidance itself. To achieve this, the author proposes the linking of the guidance with the humanities. Hence this requires discussion and the recognition of historicity and specific projects, the practice of guidance as a form of knowledge before other discursive productions and before the negativity linked to paradox and contradiction.

If educational guidance finds its identity in hermeneutics, all its field and strategies of realization would need to be reconsidered. The point is to generate knowledge where that facilitates understanding and agreement on what affects the direction of our actions and decisions. This requires the consideration of ethical and aesthetic elements aimed at pondering dialogue over technical actions (Meneses, 1993).

To finish the integration of this discussion, it is necessary to include the proposal of Magaña-Vargas (1993, 2013) which is based on an educational prospective approach involving the construction of a future from the present, through which possible and desirable scenarios are formulated. A prospective viewpoint aims to look forward in time, build the desired future, open new roads and formulate new alternatives to solve current problems. In this sense, prospective guidance allows the identification of some of the possible scenarios of educational guidance in Mexico.

> To be able to plan our actions in advance would seem an undeniable human quality; however, this does not happen like that, and above all, adolescents who basically live here and now, without planning for tomorrow. In educational guidance, the student is expected to develop their anticipatory processes of action and plan their life starting from today (Magaña-Vargas, 1993, p. 30).

## 5.5 Conclusions

The main aim of this study is to unveil the meanings of educational policy towards guidance, and to offer emerging proposals. Counselors have been entrusted institutionally with the application of these educational policies, and some institutional models have turned guidance into an alienating and reproductive exercise of these six-year national policies. Even in some school settings, guidance has been considered as an exercise in the reproduction of power, including some expressions of symbolic violence. Educational guidance in Mexico is an expression of the antagonisms present in Mexican society at all levels. In the genealogy of guidance studied since the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the presence of hegemonic social groups linked to institutional power can be identified. Drawing from a range of authors, this chapter presents a series of proposals and conceptual constructions that are different from the traditional models, which have hegemonized both theory and practice of guidance in Mexico. Approaches are considered in a constant search, in a debate with peers, in a critical perspective which is, at the same time, proactive. The impact of these ideas is not known for sure; nevertheless, there is the testimony of the realization of this event, and the printed historical memory that serves as a testimony of what was proposed by a group of scholars on the topic of theory in educational guidance from the perspective of Mexican authors.

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# Chapter 6
# Equity and Course Advancement in University Students: The Case of Business Administration and Management


**Pilar Figuera-Gazo, Mercedes Torrado-Fonseca, Juan Llanes-Ordóñez, and Soledad Romero-Rodríguez**

**Abstract** This chapter is part of the study *Trajectories of dropout, continuation and graduation in the Social Sciences: Validation of a predictive model*, financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (R&D Project EDU 2012-31568 AEI/FEDER.UE). One of the objectives of the study is to contribute to the knowledge of the academic trajectories of students over the course of their studies as a function of the student body profile. This chapter presents the final results of the tracking of a total of 1,130 Business Administration and Management students from the University of Barcelona (UB) during the years 2010–2016. An analysis of the institutional database for the cohort showed significant differences between the trajectories of the non-traditional student body (coming from Vocational Education Training Courses and those coming from university-entry courses for students older than 25, 40 and 45) and those from secondary schools, which casts doubt on the achievement of equity. Students who enter university via non-traditional pathways are more likely to drop out, and they have worse academic results and significantly lower graduation rates. This emphasises the importance of planning specific guidance programmes for this group.

**Keywords** University students · Dropout · Graduation · Equity · Guidance

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## 6.1 Introduction

The increasing research into trajectories of success, dropout and/or continuation of university students has been conducted at different times and periods in the international context, but it can be explained by a common aspect: the move from universities for the elite to universities for the masses and the ensuing broadening of student profiles. During the 1980s, research began to be done that sought to understand the factors that affect the way student trajectories are configured. Research has continued to evolve regarding the underlying focus of study. This focus has moved from the factors inherent to the student towards more multifactorial and systemic viewpoints, which include the university itself, the context in which it develops its activities and the interaction between the different factors involved. The review work undertaken by Cabrera, Pérez, and López (2015) in the US, Duguet, Le Mener and Morlaix (2016) in the francophone context, and Munizaga, Cifuentes and Beltrán (2018) in the South American context show that this is the case. The results have supported the development of more complex and multidimensional theoretical explanatory models which have allowed a more comprehensive view of student trajectories (Torrado-Fonseca, 2012).

The growing interest in analysing student trajectories through university, in terms of duration and results, can be seen in research papers with different objectives connected to the development of university quality assurance systems, the justification of the social spending, the evaluation of the impact of training and student retention measures, as well as the principles which have inspired reforms in university systems. In the case of the European Union, the openness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), connected to the democratisation of university teaching, has led the higher education field developing equality policies (Curaj, Matei, Pricopie, Salmi, & Scott, 2015). The definition of these policies has been carried out based on statements released by different organisations which underscore the need to include organisational flexibility, the creation of alternative pathways which improve access, the recognition and accreditation of experience and the development of orientation and guidance programmes.

One of the fundamental tenets of the current concept of the university is the social dimension as a modernising force which seeks to drive an intelligent and sustainable growth that actively promotes social cohesion. It is important, as Ariño (2014) states, to increase access to university for the entire population, backing talent not from a perspective of competition but rather one of collaboration which, contends Arthur (2014), needs to be located within a context of social justice. This entails the development of mechanisms which guarantee access and the promotion of non-traditional (or non-conventional) students. We are referring to groups which are underrepresented at university and whose participation is limited by structural factors. Kim (2007) identifies three criteria which characterise these groups: (1) age at the time of enrolment (‘mature student’); (2) background (ethnicity, lower socioeconomic status, first generation and employment status); and (3) risk factors for dropout (including variables such as delay in enrolment after previous studies, having family responsibilities, and/or lack of secondary school diploma).

In Spain, these measures have led to various initiatives which include the development of a new grant and student aid policy (Berlanga, Figuera-Gazo, & Pons, 2018) and the planning of an integrated professional training system. This shows the different levels and the interconnections needed in order to improve access to university education and guarantee mechanisms for re-entry or further education for adults and workers,[1] as well as to implement initiatives which ensure the reduction of barriers for the promotion of non-traditional groups, an ever-increasing number of whom can be found in university classrooms (Figuera-Gazo & Torrado-Fonseca, 2015a; Egido-Gálvez, Fernández-Díaz, & Galán, 2014). The review of the studies shows that the phenomenon is generalised in the international context, albeit with different timelines, and countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom, pioneers of open access policies, boast a larger body of research. Nevertheless, in recent years, promising lines of research are being developed in the international sphere, particularly in French speaking countries such as France, Belgium and Canada (Duguet et al., 2016; Roche, 2017), and South America and the Caribbean, where research has been carried out which attempts to understand the phenomenon and to seek ways to improve the situation (Felicetti & Cabrera, 2017; Flanagan, 2017; Miranda, 2016; Ramírez, 2016). The review undertaken recently by Munizaga et al. (2018), in which they analyse more than 80 papers written in Spanish and Portuguese, reveals the complexity of the phenomenon and its multidimensional and evolving nature. The need to understand the specific factors at play in university trajectories has prompted the development of research lines, broadening the models of success, dropout and continuation as related to the diversity of the student body and the different circumstances of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students (Arancibia & Trigueros 2018; Cabrera et al., 2015; Rosário et al., 2014).

One of the current concerns is the evaluation of equality policies, promoted through different mechanisms such as a more flexible organisation of the education, the development of a grants policy and the creation of alternative pathways which improve access or recognition and accreditation of professional experience (Figuera-Gazo, Torrado-Fonseca, Dorio, & Freixa, 2015). In Spain, much like the situation internationally, important advances in access can be seen in the increase in the number of non-traditional students. Nevertheless, the available data cast doubt on the effectiveness of university systems for achieving real equality of participation, that is, equality in the trajectories and results of all students (Egido-Gálvez et al., 2014). We can thus observe that retention and graduation rates are significantly lower

[1]The Royal Decree 412/2014, of the 6th of June, is the one which establishes the admission regulations for official university degree programmes in Spain. Article 3 of said Decree establishes that those who meet any of the following requirements may be admitted to these courses: (a) students who hold a Bachelor's degree and who pass the University Entrance Examinations (PAU); (b) students who hold official qualifications in Higher Level Vocational Training, of Higher Level Plastic Arts and Design or Higher Level Sports from the Spanish Educational System, or of approved qualifications, diplomas or courses or which are declared equivalent to said qualifications, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 4; (c) persons over 25 years of age who pass the entrance exam laid down in this royal decree; (d) persons over 40 with work or professional experience related to a training; (d) persons over 45 years of age who pass the entrance exam laid down in this royal decree.

for non-traditional students, who must overcome more challenges than their fellow students in order to succeed in their studies (Cabrera, Burkum, La Nasa, & Bibo, 2012; Gairín et al., 2014; Harpe & Kaniuka, 2012).

Research undertaken regarding this category of student has drawn a connection between the profile of these students and a greater likelihood of dropout, in that they are a group which is significantly affected by variables from outside the context of the university (Sánchez-Gelabert & Elías, 2017). Other factors which are mentioned in the scientific literature as influencing the trajectories of these students are previous academic experience (Cabrera et al., 2012, 2015; Figuera-Gazo & Torrado-Fonseca, 2015a), social capital (Rodríguez, 2015), the impact of time outside the system in the case of older students (Rosário et al., 2014) and personal and professional motivations (Tinto, 2017; Sánchez-Gelabert & Elías, 2017). Studies such as those by Adams and Corbett (2010) and Gilardi and Chiara (2011) indicate that having other responsibilities can also have an impact in terms of a reduction in time spent on campus, in devotion to studies and on interaction with peers and professors, a situation which brings increased stress and a reduction in motivation and academic performance, as well as a greater tendency to delay graduation or to drop out altogether. Troiano and Elías (2014) posit that the attendance and monitoring requirements of the Bologna model are detrimental to these groups, increasing drop out levels on their training projects. Other research connects performance and continuation among non-traditional students to different elements of the teaching-learning process such as the use of collaborative teaching methodologies centred on the student, in contexts in which professors value their work and life experience, or participation in guidance programmes which can help them make choices and motivate them (Tinto, 2012; Rosário et al., 2014; Rodríguez, 2015).

The most recent research has focused on a factor which, although it does impact on the trajectories of all students, may have a greater and more decisive influence in the case of non-traditional students. We are referring to unforeseen events, a factor which rarely appears in the literature (Roland, Frenay, & Boudrenghien, 2016), but which can have a particular impact and relevance for non-traditional students (Arancibia & Trigueros, 2018).

The specific characteristics of this group require the development of support and guidance services throughout their trajectory, keeping in mind that these students, as concluded by McQueen (2017) who analysed their narratives, have great potential and rather than being victims simply require suitable guidance in order to be able to overcome the obstacles they face. In this regard, various studies which have looked at the implementation of guidance and tutoring in Spain show the weaknesses of the system when it comes to developing effective orientation and guidance mechanisms which help the students' progress, and the need for a deeper understanding of the needs of non-traditional student groups (Romero-Rodríguez & Figuera-Gazo, 2016).

We point out that the objective of our study is complex and multifactorial in nature, as well as having a dynamic and temporal character (DeClerq et al., 2018; Munizaga et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Gómez, Feixas, Gairín, & Muñoz, 2015).

From a dynamic perspective, as pointed out by David and Melnik-Olive (2014), dropping out is not an end result but rather a reversible process which depends on the

student's resources, the institutions, the solutions they are offered and the capacity to mobilise all of these resources. In this regard, guidance systems and processes which are comprehensive and integrated into curriculum planning, as well as the development of instruction methodologies and the organisation of teaching, all have an important place.

As we have previously indicated, the phenomenon being studied is multifactorial in nature. Some of the factors which have been looked at in the scientific literature are: the academic culture; the approach, organisation and development of the teaching-learning process; the workload required; the models of interaction among peers and with the teaching body; the use of more active and collaborative methodologies (Triadó, Aparicio, Freixa, & Torrado, 2015); the atmosphere among the class and relationships between peers (Urbina & Ovalles, 2016); access; and previous academic experience—measured by means of variables such as entrance mark or mastery of skills necessary for the course (Álvarez-Pérez, 2013; Rodríguez, Fita, & Torrado, 2004). However, research has focused more on factors which depend on the students than on organisational systems or teaching practices, without proposing ways to improve flexibility and mobility within the system, and compatibility with the systems of employment and job training for these groups.

One of the factors which has been given most attention in recent research has been academic and social integration as a determining factor in first year dropouts (Figuera-Gazo & Torrado-Fonseca, 2015b; Strydom & Metntz, 2010; Wilkins, Butt, Kratochvil, & Balakrishnan, 2016), a fact which explains the interest in understanding the factors which affect students' initial adaptation. Studies such as those by Lent, Taveira, Figuera-Gazo, Dorio, Faria, and Gonçalves (2017) or Berthaud (2017) come to the conclusion that integration is not a crucial element for success, but that it does interact with variables which have a direct impact thereon. Older students with less favourable study conditions are more limited as regards social integration and more adversely affected in relation to their academic success. Other factors refer to expectations of self-sufficiency and the perception of social support in students as influencing (Lent et al., 2017). Finally, the need to consider economic conditions when planning educational projects increases the tendency toward risk aversion among low income students or students with issues regarding dedication to their studies. This group therefore would opt for less difficult studies, or limit their choices to those available in nearby centres, leading to an unequal distribution among university courses and fields. Daza and Elías (2015), in a recent study with alumni of two Catalan universities, conclude that clear differences exist in the social composition of qualifications as a function of economic cost and degree of course difficulty, with there being a higher presence of working class students on the least risky courses, that is, those which cost less for the person and which are less difficult. The proportion is even higher among low-income students who have applied for grants, highlighting the role of economic conditions in the expectations and strategies for choosing university courses, as has been shown by other studies (Ariño, 2014; Río-Ruiz & Jiménez-Rodrigo, 2014; Troester-Trate, 2018).

The study presented here begins with the premise that the phenomena of continuation, dropout and graduation must be analysed based on specific organisational

contexts. The chapter focuses on the class of 2010–2011 of the Business Administration and Management (BAM) course of the University of Barcelona (UB). The following questions are asked: What are the continuation and dropout rates for the course? What are the times of greatest academic risk? What is the graduation success rate? What are the differences compared to their peers from traditional pathways and to what extent is the principle of equality of participation upheld? And, finally, what are the consequences of the data for the design of guidance and teaching initiatives?

## 6.2 Methodology

The research presented uses as its starting point the previous study *Continuation and dropout in first year at University in Social Sciences: Grounds for improving retention* (a project funded by Spain's Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness), the results of which confirmed the existence of critical moments in the trajectory of the first year and the identification of personal (previous background, socio-cognitive factors, dedication to and management of study and the academic performance in the first year) and institutional factors (organisations, academic and social atmosphere, interaction with the teaching staff) predictive of the transition in the first year depending on the context (see results in Figuera-Gazo, 2015). The purpose of this R & D project[2] is to contribute to the knowledge of the academic trajectories of the students from the 2010 BAM class in the UB over the theoretical duration of the undergraduate course (t4)[3] and to learn how the relevant factors in the transition in the first year impact on graduation. Consistent with the previous methodological approaches, an explanatory and comprehensive research project is proposed that will use multi-method methodologies for the whole population and with follow-up samples.

Two levels of information have been used throughout the research: one coming from the entire population and another obtained through the participation of representative samples. This chapter presents the results of the personal and academic information of the entire cohort of students, coming from the institutional database and facilitated by the academic management of the UB. The follow-up occurred over the period from September 2010 to January 2016. The information has been analysed with the SPSS-v20 software.

During the 2010–2011 academic year, a total of 1,290 students attended. 22.7% came via untraditional pathways (20.2% from Vocational Education & Training Courses—VET—, with 2.5% from the university-entry courses for students over 25, 40, 45), 65% from secondary school and the rest (12.4%) from courses already begun and second degrees. This chapter analyses the access profile and the results of the trajectories of the students from non-traditional and secondary school pathways

[2] R + D Project EDU 2012-31568 AEI/FEDER.UE.

[3] In Spain, after the introduction of the European Higher Education Area, undergraduate courses consist of four years (t4).

**Table 6.1** Personal characteristics of the BAM students (N = 1130)

| Access pathways | | N | | Personal characteristics | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BAM | | | Age | Female (%) | Not working (%) | Higher level of studies than father (%) | Higher level of studies than mother (%) | Living at home (%) |
| | Secondary school | 838 | 19.94 | 49.5 | 66.8 | 32 | 30 | 88.2 |
| | VET | 260 | 23.75% | 47.3 | 54.2 | 13 | 9 | 83.1 |
| | Over 25–45 years old | 32 | 31.1% | 50 | 34.4 | 15 | 9 | 28.1 |

(N = 1,130); students from second degrees and with access from university courses already begun are excluded from the analysis.

## 6.3 Results

The follow-up of the cohort, over the theoretical duration plus two years (t4 + 2) has allowed us to identify academic trajectories by academic year (of dropout and continuation of studies) and over time (definitive dropout,[4] graduation and deferment). The detailed analysis in the longitudinal follow-up of the students has allowed us to discover 'atypical' cases of re-entry and repeated dropout in the same course per academic year, which shows that the student's academic record is 'live' and requires, in longitudinal studies such as the one in which we are engaged, constant verification and readjustment of the data.[5]

The personal characteristics of the students of the cohort, according to the access route to the university, establish differential profiles. The data confirm differences in the social composition. Secondary school students come from families with a higher level of education, they live in the family home, do not work and are younger. However, students defined as untraditional (or non-conventional) usually combine studies and work and live in their own homes (for those over 25–45 years old). 62.5% of students over 25 and 45 years of age are enrolled part-time (Table 6.1).

[4]It is considered definitive dropout when, after more than two years, the student does not re-enrol on the same course.

[5]The University of Barcelona provided updated registration data for the 2014–2015 course of the cohort dated December 2015. It must be considered that academic records may be modified up to graduation, as a consequence of variation in situation (extensions and/or cancellations of registration, registration defaults, transfers etc.).

**Table 6.2** Distribution of the total of the BAM study cohort (N = 1130) according to their academic trajectory in the 2015–2016 academic year (theoretical duration tt + 2 years)

| Access pathway | Graduation in 4 years | Graduation in 5 years | Still enrolled | Dropout |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secondary school | 149 (17.8%) | 260 (31%) | 207 (24.7%) | 222 (26.5%) |
| VET | 12 (4.6%) | 34 (13.1%) | 61 (23.5%) | 153 (58.8%) |
| Over 25–45 years old | 3 (9.4%) | 1 (3.1%) | 3 (9.4%) | 25 (78.1%) |

The overall view of the cohort (Table 6.2) reveals significant differences in the final trajectories of the students according to their access pathway. 58.8% of the students coming from VET and 78.1% of the students older than 25–45 drop out of the university, compared to 26.5% of the students who accessed from secondary school. The inverse trend is verified in the trajectories of success. Although the rate of academic deferment is very high in the cohort as a whole, the students who accessed university via secondary school are more likely to graduate, and in less time, than the rest of their classmates. The highest rate of academic deferment is among students from VET: after six years, half of those who remain enrolled still have more than 60 credits to complete. Meanwhile, the probability of the students over 25–45 graduating is very low.

The three trajectories identified in the follow-up of the cohort up to two years after the theoretical completion of the studies (graduation in four years, graduation in five years, definitive dropout and continue to study (academic deferment)) are significantly associated (Chi-squared 134,171, gl6 and next = 0.000) to the access pathways as shown by the two-dimensional chart (Fig. 6.1).

The performance rates during the four years of the theoretical duration of the course (2010–2011 to 2013–2014) is another indicator that differentiates the academic trajectories according to the access pathway. The analysis of academic performance and continuation after first year provides results which are clearly differentiated by type of student according to the access pathway. The outcomes of the transition used are: the submission rate (credits submitted with respect to the credits enrolled on); success rate (credits passed of those attended); and performance rate (credits passed of those enrolled on). Students who come from VET present, in general terms, academic results (in the different calculated rates) lower than classmates who are considered ‘traditional’. Throughout the first year, the differences between academic success (success rate) on the first and second semester between typologies of students are greater and significant—statistically speaking—with differences of around 20 percentage points.

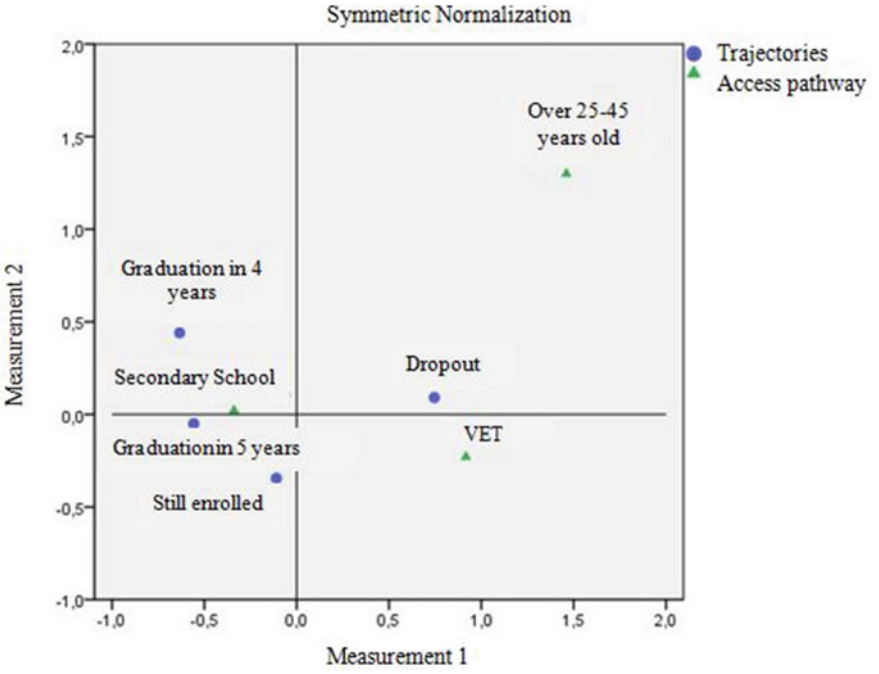


**Fig. 6.1** Association between trajectories and access route in BAM students (N = 1130)

As reflected in Table 6.3, traditional students have a greater dedication to their studies and obtain significantly better results (sig = 0.000). At the other extreme, those who accessed who were older than 25–45 show a high academic risk with values in the lower end as regards performance rates as the years go by.

**Table 6.3** Performance rate as a function of access pathway in BAM students

| Access pathway | Performance rate 1st year | Performance rate 2nd year | Performance rate 3rd year | Performance rate 4th year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secondary school (N = 838) | 70.0<br>31.4 (SD) | 67.9<br>34.2 (SD) | 64,3<br>37,2 (SD) | 62.9<br>41.9 (SD) |
| VET (N = 260) | 49.7<br>32.8 (SD) | 41.2<br>37.8 (SD) | 37.7<br>40.7 (SD) | 31.1<br>40.6 (SD) |
| Over 25–45 years old (N = 32) | 43.9<br>40.1 (SD) | 26.2<br>40.0 (SD) | 20.0<br>38.2 (SD) | 14.8<br>35.0 (SD) |

Performance Rate*: Percentage relationship between the number of credits passed by the students enrolled in an academic year and the total number of credits enrolled in said academic year

**Table 6.4** Typology of dropout in the first year of BAM students

| Type of dropout in first year (*) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Access route | Cohort | Total dropout (*) | Voluntary dropout | Premeditated dropout (Does not attend at all) | Expulsion dropout (Attends but does not pass anything) | Expulsion dropout (Attends and passes something but not enough) |
| Secondary school | 838 | 107 | 38 | 27 | 22 | 20 |
| | | 12.77% | 35.51% | 25.23% | 20.56% | 18.69% |
| VET | 260 | 77 | 28 | 10 | 22 | 17 |
| | | 29.62% | 36.36% | 12.99% | 28.57% | 22.08% |
| Older than 25–45 | 32 | 17 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| | | 53.13% | 35.29% | 23.53% | 35.29% | 5.88% |
| *Total* | *1130* | *245* | *82* | *56* | *66* | *41* |
| | | *18.99%* | *33.47%* | *22.86%* | *26.94%* | *16.73%* |

* In the total first year dropout, students who in later years re-entered the course are included. Therefore, it is not considered definitive dropout

Looking in more detail at the type of dropout in the first year, after the application of the UB's regulations regarding continuation,[6] the students were classified according to the typology defined by Torrado-Fonseca (2012)[7]: premeditated dropout, voluntary dropout and 'a posteriori' dropout (expulsion). In this last type, those who, even though they did the exams, did not manage to pass anything have been differentiated from those who passed some credits but not enough to remain in the university. As can be seen in Table 6.4, the distribution of students who drop out in BAM tends to be concentrated in dropouts related to academic performance (sitting exams and academic success) and to be associated, for the most part, with academic and organisational factors in the case of students from non-traditional pathways (see the high percentage of academic failure in the case of 'mature' students).

From a longitudinal perspective, the follow-up of the population throughout the four years (Table 6.5) has allowed us to identify students with a definitive dropout in the first three years (considering those students who have not re-enrolled during the follow-up period) and trace dropout trajectories in relation to type of access. As shown in the table, first year is the most critical time and that with the highest

[6] In the courses 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 a student at the University of Barcelona could remain if they exceeded 6 credits.

[7] Torrado (2012) identifies three types of dropout based on their academic situation in the first year: (1) **'a priori' *or premeditated dropout***, corresponds to a student who fails to take any exam and is therefore expelled from the institution; (2) ***'a posteriori'* or academic failure dropout**, refers to those students who try to stay on the course but fail to pass anything or fail to exceed the minimum required credits to remain and are ultimately expelled; and (3) **voluntary dropout**, would include any student who, even though they get enough credits to remain, decides to drop out of the courses they began.

**Table 6.5** Trajectories of BAM students in the theoretical four years from the beginning of the course (tt)

| Situation as regards continuation up to registration for the year 2013–14 (theoretical duration of the degree) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Access route | 1st year dropout | 2nd year dropout | 3rd year dropout | Continues studying |
| Secondary school (N = 838) | 90 | 62 | 31 | 655 |
| | 10.70% | 7.40% | 3.70% | 78.20% |
| VET (N = 260) | 74 | 43 | 13 | 130 |
| | 28.50% | 16.50% | 5% | 50% |
| Older than 25/40/45 (N = 32) | 17 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| | 53.13% | 6.25% | 15.62% | 25% |

risk of university dropout. In the case of non-traditional students, the risk is greater compared to those who enter the university through the traditional route.

## 6.4 Conclusions

The objective of this chapter is to present evidence concerning the access and promotion of non-traditional students, specifically students who accessed university after the implementation of the new degree courses via VET and students who are older than 25 and 45. The differences in the social composition, employment and age of the students are indicators of equality in terms of access. However, the analysis of subsequent trajectories reveals situations of inequality; thus, non-traditional students have significantly lower levels of continuation, their academic performance is lower and, in comparison, their graduation levels are significantly lower. These data coincide with previous research (Cabrera et al., 2012; Gairín et al., 2014; Harpe & Kaniuka, 2012).

From an overall perspective, this research has allowed us to confirm the main hypotheses of the study and therefore to be of help when it comes to designing institutional policies and institutional initiatives aimed at retaining university students. The high drop out rates and the deferment of studies, as well as their link with the results in first year, provide evidence so as to optimise the processes of transition to university and to strengthen guidance initiatives and university tutoring. These results also assert the importance of a contextualised diagnostic that allows us to identify the specific factors that favour or hinder the academic integration of their students in first year and to assess the involvement of the academic-organisational components in the process (Flanagan, 2017; Strydom & Mentz, 2010; Tinto, 2012).

The measures implemented in relation to equality in access to university in Spain have contributed to significantly increasing the numbers of students who come through non-traditional pathways, with the presence of students from VET who are older and who are in employment being particularly noteworthy. However, non-traditional students have an unequal distribution among research and university areas (Daza & Elías, 2015) and, as our research has shown, once in the system, their results are comparatively lower and it is evident that these groups have a risk of drop out which is greater than other traditional students. It is therefore important to develop complementary support measures in order to guarantee a truly inclusive university.

Based on a model of institutional responsibility, institutions must make a systematic effort to learn about the reasons why different groups of students progress and succeed in university and, as a consequence, develop the necessary strategies to ensure it (Tinto, 2012; Cabrera et al., 2015; Rodríguez, 2015). Guidance can and should be one of the key aspects of the change of approach. In order to take on this role, it is important that significant changes are made and that a move occurs towards a model of guidance which is guided by more holistic and comprehensive intervention approaches that encourage the promotion of these students (Romero-Rodríguez & Figuera-Gazo, 2016).

Preventive intervention needs to occur before entry, facilitating connection with the pre-access systems (vocational training centres, access preparation centres for seniors and non-university guidance services) and creating effective systems for the transition to university. The student must be able to avail of quality information so that they can be sufficiently informed before embarking on their academic course.

During first year, guidance must be closely connected with the academic environment of the students, with the aim of creating the conditions that allow non-traditional students to continue and to integrate into the system academically and socially. The importance of integration and academic satisfaction in first year has been confirmed in various research papers (Yorke & Longden, 2008; Figuera-Gazo & Torrado-Fonseca, 2015b). Students who are more motivated and satisfied with the academic experience tend to get involved and participate more proactively in the process, thus leading to greater academic achievement (Lent et al., 2017). Students' perceptions are subject to the impact of the university experiences. In this way, the ability of the institution to respond to the goals of the students is a determining factor, since they contribute to the development of the feeling of belonging, encouraging in turn the student's commitment, success and satisfaction (Wilkins et al., 2016).

In addition, the conditions and support must be provided to assist the student to find a balance between their different roles (academic, work and family), enabling them to take on a sufficient level of commitment to study and greater participation in university life. In this area, peer mentoring is a very important aspect.

It is important that more research is carried out with contextualised studies (in academic groups and academic areas) which allow us to confirm the hypotheses in academic contexts other than those studied, so that we can gain a greater understanding of these phenomena. For this, the methodological approach followed in this study has proven its strength when it comes to tackling the complexity of phenomena such as the one analysed. We must also consider that educational equality is not only linked to students' access, continuation and graduation, but also to seeing equality in terms of results. In this regard, employment access will be considered an essential factor when it comes to achieving equality. Therefore, if educational equity really exists, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic situations should be as employable as the rest of their classmates (Formichella & London, 2013).

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# Part III
# Career Guidance in Secondary Education

Part III deals with different aspects related to the delivery of *Career Guidance in Secondary Education,* and the training of practitioners who work at this educational level. Three of its chapters address specific intervention programmes and practices, such as the promotion of entrepreneurship, the development of social skills aimed at the prevention of risk situations, and parents' involvement at school to support their children's career development. The fourth chapter focuses on the improvement of secondary education counsellors' training by analysing a Master's Programme in the framework of the European Competences Standard. Chapter 7 describes a research study based on the premise that entrepreneurship is an essential tool to combat the adverse effects of different crises, whether youth unemployment or the exclusion of certain sectors of workers from the labour market. In this regard, the researchers consider that the culture of entrepreneurship requires certain competencies that must be acquired at school, among other reasons, to prevent situations such as those identified in chapter 2 (Part I). Chapter 8 presents a qualitative research study on an aspect that is not very common in studies on career guidance, and that is the implication of parents in their children's career development, in collaboration with the school. The author reflects on the specific competences that counsellors need to achieve the objective of involving families in the career education of their children. Chapter 9 presents the results of a research study focused on assessing the quality of guidance training programs, specifically the Master's Programme for Teacher Training, specialty in Educational Guidance (SETTG-EG), in two Spanish universities. Among the benefits of this study, we can highlight its usefulness for the development of educational guidance university programs, and in addition, this study on the competences of secondary education counsellors could provide references in other international contexts. The study presented in the last chapter of Part III addresses the development of social skills and their possible influence on the prevention of school bullying as well as other risks that affect students' performance in secondary education. Finally, we must also highlight the common thread that links the studies in this book, which Irving identifies, in the concluding chapter, as the construction of a meaningful life-career, emphasising the need for career guidance to promote equity. Regarding the goal of achieving equity through career guidance,

in contexts of uncertainty, it is especially important to stand out the moment in which this book is published, a pandemic that poses added challenges, in the educational field in general, and in career guidance in particular. Challenges such as the transformations that have taken place in the labour context, in which there is a slowdown in production sectors, the collapse of industries, or the redundancy of thousands of workers, evidencing the risks of the capitalist production system and emphasising the need for collective action. This situation profoundly modifies the perception of reality that is presented to the new generations, and for this reason career guidance must continue to delve into many of the key concepts presented in this book. The need to take into account the socio-political, cultural and structural factors that shape and influences a person's career, the collaboration between the different educational agents, the collective responsibility, social commitment, the role of guidance in entrepreneurship projects, the promotion of social skills and prosocial values in our secondary students, and the need to improve the training of our future career counsellors.

# Chapter 7
# The Importance of Encouraging Entrepreneurship at Secondary School


**Lidia E. Santana-Vega and Olga González-Morales**

**Abstract** Entrepreneurship is an effective tool to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis and combat youth unemployment. Entrepreneurial education teaches young people to turn ideas into actions and helps acquires necessary skills (critical thinking, problem solving, initiative and collaborative work) for them to improve their employability. Schooling plays an important role in socializing for work. This is easily verified if we look at the analogies between the education system and the productive system, hence the prevalence in recent years of the competency-based training model. This chapter reflects about: 1) the importance of promoting entrepreneurship at school, as a task unavoidable in the twenty-first century, 2) policies to promote entrepreneurship, and 3) initiatives to promote entrepreneurship in Europe and Spain. It also presents an empirical study carried out in the Canary Islands (Spain) that analyzed the entrepreneurial aspirations of 3,987 adolescents regarding self-employment and the influence of gender, age, nationality, type of school, location of the school, educational level and performance. The Logit model is used to analyze the data. The results indicate that the pupils' aspirations to be self-employed increase in the case of foreigners, of studying in a state school, of having a lower educational level and of demonstrating a low academic performance. The results were not statistically significant for the gender and age variables. Differences between those who prefer to start their own business or have a salaried job are observed in multicultural schools. This could be explained in part by the entrepreneurial character of immigrant families and, in part, by the need to create a business for self-employment. In Spain immigrants are more predisposed to being entrepreneurs than the native population as immigrants do not usually have networks of family members and friends who can help them to access the labour market; generally speaking, immigrants have to "fend for themselves" by setting up their own businesses. The curriculum and guidance programmes need to promote a spirit of entrepreneurship and creativity in young people. It is necessary to exploit the synergies of foreign students; these students,

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as found in the investigation, are more entrepreneurial and want to start their own company in the future.

**Keywords** Adolescents · Self-employed · Secondary school · Entrepreneurship

## 7.1 Introduction: The Importance of Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurial education helps people, especially young people, acquire the necessary skills (critical thinking skills, initiative, problem-solving and collaborative work) for them to improve their employability. As stated in a European Commission report (2013a), entrepreneurial education teaches people to turn ideas into actions. But entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial training should not be confused; the latter is aimed at the creation and management of companies, while the former has a more general and global sense of skills development such as creativity, innovation and employment. Thus, education and training policies should encourage specific knowledge aimed at business creation and development of skills that promote an entrepreneurial spirit. Among the most noteworthy measures proposed by the European Commission for the promotion of entrepreneurship are:

- Incorporating, in education systems, the entrepreneurial spirit at all levels of education and training, both formal (from primary education to higher education and training) and informal, and promoting lifelong learning with the aim of promoting entrepreneurship and the creation of new companies, particularly in the areas women study most such as healthcare, commerce and other services.
- Proposing content and methodologies in schools and universities that serve to promote entrepreneurial culture, integrating subjects and modules containing entrepreneurship competence in their curricula.
- Offering incentives to ensure a more balanced representation of women and men in the business sector, raising awareness among women about the possibilities of existing training in entrepreneurship.
- Collaborating with schools (from an early age) and universities so that students, especially, can carry out development projects based on real business concepts. This also encourages the development of business incubators that aim to train young female entrepreneurs so that they can put their knowledge into practice, especially those related to employment rights.
- Encouraging schools and universities to teach subjects so that girls and women can access careers in the world of science, finance and in sectors with strong growth and profitability, such as new technologies (including green technology), digital environments and computer systems.
- Investing in programs for the permanent training of female workers and businesswomen, guaranteeing continuous updating for quality professional growth, especially in the field of commerce.

- Facilitating access for female entrepreneurs to train in social skills and basic legislative issues concerning the creation and management of a company.
- Providing information on legislation and regulations affecting entrepreneurs (intellectual property and data protection, tax regulations, electronic commerce, public subsidies available, new information and communication technologies, use of social networks, online commerce).
- Offering motivation and psychological support programs to reinforce self-confidence in women entrepreneurs, so that their possible negative perception in relation to their abilities can be eliminated. This negative perception is probably rooted in social stereotypes. The social stereotypes generated around the female figure have limited their professional expectations and shaped the way in which women perceive themselves. In the subject that concerns us here, women generally believe that they lack entrepreneurial skills, and show low self-confidence, assertiveness, and willingness to take risks when creating a company. But the number of female entrepreneurs is growing, which is why young women see their future horizon along the lines of an entrepreneurial path.

## 7.2 Policies to Promote Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an effective tool to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis and combat youth unemployment. Education and training policies and, ultimately, educational centers, perform a fundamental task in creating the conditions to generate the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be an entrepreneur (Rodríguez & Vega-Serrano, 2015). The Action Plan on Entrepreneurship 2020 (Comisión Europea, 2013b) and the Communication of the Commission, "A new concept of education: Investing in competences to achieve better socioeconomic result" (Comisión Europea, 2012), were a bet on education and training entrepreneurs as a powerful tool to stimulate creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship at all educational levels.

The Law 14/2013, of September 27, 2013 on Support for Entrepreneurs and its Internationalization paid great attention to the promotion of entrepreneurship in the different stages of the system. In Article 4 on entrepreneurship in primary and secondary education, it pointed out that the curricula of Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, and Vocational Training should incorporate objectives, competences, content, and evaluation criteria for training aimed at the development and strengthening of the entrepreneurial spirit, the acquisition of competences for the creation and development of the different models of companies, and the promotion of equal opportunities and respect for the entrepreneur and the businessperson, as well as for business ethics. At the same time, the different educational administrations have to promote measures so that the students participate in activities that allow them to strengthen their entrepreneurial spirit and business initiative. In Spain, education for entrepreneurship is integrated into the curriculum through three modalities: (1) transversal integration; (2) integration in curricular subjects; and (3) creation of specific subjects. In Compulsory Secondary Education, the subject in

the specific subjects block of "Initiation in entrepreneurial and business activity" is aimed at developing a "sense of entrepreneurial initiative and entrepreneurial spirit" competence through three large content blocks: personal autonomy; leadership and innovation; and business and finance projects.

There are numerous studies on entrepreneurship policies; of all of them, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is the one that conducts a more systematic and continuous analysis collecting disaggregated information on different levels and variables worldwide. GEM (2017) understands that policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurial education should have an impact on the availability of human capital in countries starting and running businesses. They should also influence the degree to which training in business creation or management is incorporated into the education and training system at all levels. To successfully meet these objectives, the GEM analyzes the following three lines of action:

(1) Entrepreneurial education in the schooling stage (primary and secondary). Education in the primary and secondary stages contributes to: (1) stimulating creativity, self-sufficiency and personal initiative; (2) providing knowledge about the functioning of markets; and (3) encouraging entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial spirit can be enhanced through the different subjects in the curriculum, or through specific entrepreneurship programs worked on in tutoring.
(2) Entrepreneurial education in the post-school stage (higher education: technical training, university, and business schools). Universities and higher education institutions can provide suitable and quality training for the creation of companies and their growth in higher education, degrees and master's degrees in administration, management, and business management, among others.
(3) When analyzing the set of public action lines that configure the conditions of the entrepreneurial framework for the population as a whole, some interesting differences can be found between the total number of countries in the world, Europe and Spain. Table 7.1 shows the evaluation (between 1 and 9) of the experts on the effects that these policies are having on the promotion of entrepreneurship. The results suggest that entrepreneurial education in the school stage is the worst valued, especially in Spain (2.7 out of 9). These results point to the need to reformulate educational policies if we really want them to have the desired effect.

The objectives of entrepreneurial education do not seem to be met in the schooling stage, so it is necessary to reformulate the exiting policy measures. To do this, it is necessary to conduct previous research to gather information from both the business community and the students. The information obtained from the companies can guide the educational system about the demands of the employment market and help it to adapt educational competences to the competences demanded by the companies.

Furthermore, it is necessary to know about the business structure to act on those characteristics requiring greater public support (Table 7.2).

In the case of Spain, according to the Central Directory of Companies (DIRCE Spanish anachronism), prepared by the National Institute of Statistics (INE Spanish

**Table 7.1** Policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, 2016

| Item (1 = very insufficient and 9 = highly sufficient) | Total number of countries GEM | Europe | Spain |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Funding | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.0 |
| 2a Government policies: support and importance | 4.2 | 4.0 | 3.0 |
| 2b Government policies: tax and bureaucracy | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.2 |
| 3 Government entrepreneurship programs | 4.3 | 4.5 | 5.1 |
| 4a Entrepreneurial education in the schooling stage | 3.1 | 3.3 | 2.7 |
| 4b Entrepreneurial education in the post-school stage | 4.6 | 4.6 | 3.5 |
| 5 R&D Transfers | 3.8 | 4.1 | 4.4 |
| 6 Commercial and legal infrastructure | 4.9 | 5.2 | 5.4 |
| 7a Internal market dynamics | 4.9 | 4.9 | 4.5 |
| 7b Internal market burdens or entry regulation | 4.2 | 4.5 | 4.6 |
| 8 Physical infrastructure | 6.5 | 6.8 | 5.7 |
| 9 Cultural and social norms | 4.7 | 4.3 | 4.5 |

*Source* GEM (2017). Prepared by the authors themselves

**Table 7.2** Self-employed population in Spain according to age

| Age of the self-employed person | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Under 25 | 38,260 | 1.9 |
| 25–39 | 504,749 | 25.3 |
| 40–54 | 913,882 | 45.8 |
| Over 55 | 538,799 | 27.0 |
| Total | 1,995,690 | 100.0 |

2019 *Source* Data on the self-employed population from the Department of Social Security in Spain, 03/31/2019

anachronism), in 2018 there were 3,337,646 active companies, with 55.3% of the companies not having any employed workers, which indicates a small size of company. Self-employed affiliates registered in the Department of Social Security in Spain according to age show that only about a quarter were under 40 years of age.

## 7.3 Promoting Entrepreneurship: An Unavoidable Task in the Twenty-First Century

Schooling plays an important role in socializing for work. This is easily verified if we look at the analogies between the education system and the productive system (Santana-Vega, 2013, 2015; Santana-Vega & del Castillo; 2016), hence the prevalence in recent years of the competency-based training model. One stands out because of its relevance for the creation of employment and for socio-labor insertion: entrepreneurial competition. The educational system, in general, does not train the students of secondary stage in this competence. However, the policy on education and social and employment guidance in Europe has been emphasizing for several decades now the need to inculcate the *initiative and entrepreneurship spirit* in young people, in a way which the intention is to promote self-employment as well as to fill the gaps in an employment market that is 'lazy' when it comes to generating employment. Self-employment, learning to be an entrepreneur, or to 'become your own boss, by being an entrepreneur', is not the panacea to the structural problems of youth unemployment, and can aggravate the situation of young people who invest money, their own or someone else's, in the creation of companies. If a market study is not done, many of the companies may be unprofitable in the short term; this further aggravates the economic outlook for young people.

The educational system should not only promote the entrepreneurial spirit, but also the spirit of initiative, in all its stages. This is the best way to inculcate responsible behavior in the citizens regarding their potential contribution to the overall improvement of society, and not only to the development of the business fabric.

The reports drawn up at the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties on guidance in different European Union countries pointed to a series of common tendencies, with special emphasis on promoting the spirit of initiative (Watts, Dartois, & Plant, 1987; Watts, Guichard, Plant, & Rodríguez, 1994; Watts, 2001).

The European Commission (2012) considers that the education system should prioritize "education for initiative", that is, it should try to promote the entrepreneurial spirit, which requires:

- Planning, organizing, analyzing, communicating, performing, reporting, evaluating, and recording skills.
- Skills for the development and implementation of projects.
- Ability to work cooperatively and flexibly in a team.
- Ability to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses.
- Ability to act decisively and positively in the face of change.
- Ability to evaluate risks and assume them in the best possible way and at the right time.

The attitudes that are part of this competence are: (1) willingness to show initiative; (2) positive attitude towards change and innovation; and (3) disposition to identify areas in which one can demonstrate entrepreneurial skills (in the family, workplace and community).

The promotion of the skills and attitudes required for the development of the spirit of initiative are in line with the competences required by European companies in the future: (1) learning to learn; (2) knowing how to manage information according to situations and contexts); (3) capacity for deduction, analysis, and strategic reasoning; (4) ability to make decisions in complex and multicultural societies; (5) ability to communicate and master several languages; (6) ability to work in a team in collaborative environments;(7) imaginative and creative capacity to give alternative and innovative answers to old and new problems; and (8) capacity for self-management, self-development, and flexibility.

However, as Marina (2010) points out, the traditional view of the school, focused more on cultural transmission than on cultural innovation, does not favor the entrepreneurial spirit, but neither does the purely economic approach of this competence. It is necessary to create entrepreneurial schools and entrepreneurial teachers to educate entrepreneurial students; 'autonomy' should necessarily be the objective of this type of teaching, and 'self-employment' should be understood as only one of its many applications.

The Action Plan on entrepreneurship 2020 prepared by the European Commission (2013a) set out different lines of action for the promotion of entrepreneurship. Among the proposals for measures affecting entrepreneurial education are the following:

1. Educate and train in entrepreneurship to promote growth and business creation:
    - The development of a pan-European entrepreneurship learning initiative that brings together and makes European and national knowledge available for impact analysis, knowledge, methodological development, and peer support of professionals in the Member States.
    - The setting up, together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, of a guidance framework to encourage the development of entrepreneurship schools and vocational training centers.
    - The dissemination of a guidance framework for the entrepreneurial university; facilitation of exchanges between universities interested in applying the framework; the gradual promotion of the framework in higher education institutions of the European Union.
    - The support of suitable mechanisms for the creation of companies driven by the university (such as nursery companies) and ecosystems between universities and companies that support this creation.
2. Defining models and reaching specific groups: entrepreneurs as a model. Establishing, within the framework of the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Week, 'EU Entrepreneurship Day' throughout Europe, aimed at students in the last year of secondary school.

## 7.4 Initiatives to Promote Entrepreneurship in Europe and Spain

This section is a review of European and Spanish initiatives designed to promote entrepreneurship. They are of interest in the European context:

- Entrepreneurial Skill Pass (ESP). This is an international qualification for students who participate in mini-companies. They must complete two self-assessment questionnaires and a final examination on business skills. The ESP certifies that the student has had real experience in entrepreneurship and has acquired the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to start their own business (http://entrepreneurialskillspass.eu/).
- The Entrepreneurial School. This is a virtual guide on entrepreneurial learning that serves as a practical resource for teachers of primary, secondary, baccalaureate, and vocational training. It offers educational material for the implementation of entrepreneurial training in any subject and in any course (see http://theentrepreneurialschool.eu/).
- Innovation & Research Entrepreneurship Education. This is the new Erasmus + project whose objective is to analyze the impact of entrepreneurial education and ensure that young people have entrepreneurial experience when they finish secondary education (see http://icee-eu.eu/)
- European Entrepreneurship Education NETwork. This is a network of experts committed to entrepreneurial learning. The network promotes and drives the development of competences, and recommends educational policies that promote entrepreneurial training in Europe, as set out in the 2020 entrepreneurship action plan (http://www.ee-hub.eu/).

In Spain, a number of interesting initiatives have taken place with different degrees of success, such as the design of optional subject and entrepreneurship programs to promote entrepreneurial experiences (Marina, 2010). The most noteworthy initiatives are the following:

- Young Entrepreneurs. The program is aimed at students in the last two years of Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, and Vocational Training. The students can choose how to approach each project according to their particular interests. All the projects can be entered for the *Reto-Emprende* prize, be selected to participate in a four-day entrepreneurship campus in Barcelona, and have the opportunity to win the final prize of a training trip to Silicon Valley (https://www.educaixa.com/es/-/programa-jovenes-emprendedor-1).
- European Youth Enterprise. This is an educational project designed by Valnalón for the development of entrepreneurial skills in different stages of the education system; it is aimed at students in the third and fourth year of Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, and Vocational Training so that they can create and manage their own mini-company in the classroom in the legal form of a cooperative society. This will build commercial relationships with mini-companies from other autonomous communities in Spain or other countries with

the goal of 'importing' and 'exporting' products to and from each other. The imported products will be marketed in the local market and the results are analyzed afterwards, with the profits made then shared out, the same as any real company. The Project facilitates the acquisition of all basic skills (http://www.valnaloneduca.com/eje/).

- Young Social Entrepreneurs. This initiative is aimed at Secondary School students. The students create an association whose activity teaches them about the social realities and the situation of people from other less developed countries. They also contact school associations in other countries to learn about how their peers live in the country in question, and collaborate in NGO projects. The initiative is open to youths between 13 and 15 years of age. The students have to create the association, manage it and get results; they collaborate with the Red Cross and Entreculturas, among other NGOs, while having teaching materials at their disposal (http://www.valnaloneduca.com/jes/).
- Entrepreneurship Workshop. This educational program is framed within the Program for the Promotion of Entrepreneurial Culture and is aimed at students of Vocational Training, Baccalaureate, and Occupational Training. It takes place in all the centers of the Principality of Asturias. It includes talks, training courses, business ideas competitions, business project development and business plans that can be put into practice. The program consists of a Motivation Day to show entrepreneurship opportunities, Entrepreneurial Training Courses to enhance entrepreneurship skills and a Business Projects Competition (http://www.valnalon.com/ver_noticia/112/cursos-taller—of-entrepreneurs).
- European Center of Companies and Innovation of Navarra, Government of Navarra. This initiative develops programs in all educational stages. The program is aimed at all schools that wish to promote entrepreneurial spirit in students, from Primary Education to Vocational Training. Being an entrepreneur requires skills and competencies such as creativity, teamwork, observation, analytical and critical thinking, initiative, autonomy, flexibility, and adaptability. The main programs are: 'School goes to the market' (Primary), 'European Youth Enterprise' (Secondary), 'Educating for initiative' (Vocational Training). It includes Ideas Contests for students of Compulsory Secondary Education and Vocational Training as well as teacher training courses (see http://www.cein.es/).
- Educating for entrepreneurship, Regional Government of Andalucía. This initiative has several programs to promote entrepreneurial culture in different educational stages, with a goal of solidarity with and knowledge of other cultures. The main programs are: 'Juventud Emprendedora Solidaria', 'Empresa Joven Europea', 'Emprende joven', 'Gente Emprendedora Solidaria' and 'Emprender en Europa' (see http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/webportal/web/cultura-emprendedora/presentacion).
- Entrepreneurship at School, Regional Government of Madrid. This initiative gives awards to students in all the educational stages ('Dream today to start up tomorrow'), while teacher training courses are held, as well as an Entrepreneurs Workshop organized for students from eight to 12 years of age with didactic units

to promote entrepreneurship, where they play simulation games such as 'Play and learn entrepreneurship'.

- Junior Achievement Spain. This initiative includes programs designed for Primary, Secondary, Baccalaureate, and University students. The programs are supported by 'learning by doing' activities. The programs try to improve the student's personal confidence and communication skills, prepare them to position themselves better in the employment market, and teach them solidarity, honest work, leadership, creativity, teamwork etc., which helps them overcome their fear of failure (see http://fundacionjaes.org/).

Further initiatives are being developed in Aragon, in the Basque Country (Basque Association of Development Agencies), and in the Canary Islands, both of which are examples of the interest the authorities have in this competence. In the case of the Canary Islands, there is no specific overall regional strategy, although various public and private institutions are involved in the design and implementation of education programs for entrepreneurship, and their integration into the curriculum complies with all the legal requirements. The provision of practical experiences is concentrated in Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education, and Baccalaureate. The experiences 'Enseñar para Emprender', 'Método Oreoh' and 'Jóvenes Creactivos' have a common goal of fostering young people's interest in entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. As for the teachers, they receive specific training and have access to material for work in the classroom, receiving support and advice from the coordinators during the development of the activity (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2015).

The research project *The academic and socio-professional transition of young people: Design of a computerized educational and career guidance program for Compulsory Secondary Education* collected information from 292 companies on competencies and characteristics concerning employment. It found that demand was not only focused on skills associated with entrepreneurship (initiative, ability to adapt to change, teamwork), but mainly on proactive attitudes (Santana-Vega, González-Morales, & Feliciano, 2016a; Santana-Vega, Feliciano, & Jiménez, 2016). Further research was conducted in the same project with the aim of detecting the entrepreneurial spirit of students in the school stage. The study by Santana-Vega, González-Morales, and Feliciano (2016b) analyzed the characteristics of students in compulsory secondary education and their aspirations to work for themselves.

## 7.5 Why to Research About Entrepreneurship: Our Investigation

### *7.5.1 Background*

The educational system plays a fundamental role in promoting the attitudes and skills associated with entrepreneurship. The European Union has designed different strategies and action plans for the promotion of entrepreneurship. An entrepreneurial system of education that promotes creativity, innovation, and self-employment needs to be enhanced at all education levels.

There is a discussion in the literature about whether the educational system should encourage entrepreneurship in students (Lourenço & Jayawarna, 2011). Supporters of introducing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills into the curriculum argue that this should begin at the infant stage and continue throughout compulsory schooling. The research work of Peterman and Kennedy (2003), which used a sample of 200 students of different ages, shows how the formation of autonomy skills and personal initiative at an early age helps students define their career.

In Spain, as in other countries, educational policies are oriented more towards the uniformity of thought than fostering imagination, creativity, or divergent thinking at an early age (Sternberg, 2002; Sobrado-Fernández & Fernández-Rey, 2010). The Spanish education system has generated measures of attention for diversity to preferentially support failing students, but students with a high level of initiative or creativity are usually neglected.

Education systems should develop creative abilities in students, which allow them to develop complex cognitive processes: imagining, speculating about innovative hypotheses, discovering, and inventing (Schleicher, 2003). These capabilities are essential in order to make vital decisions in a calm and prudent way (Santana-Vega, Feliciano, & Jiménez, 2012; Santana-Vega & Feliciano, 2011; Santana-Vega, Feliciano, & Cruz, 2010).

Self-employment is becoming increasingly important because of its relevance in the global processes of job creation and economic growth (Baumol, 2010). Policymakers have to find ways to maintain and generate entrepreneurship in countries (Sanyang & Huang, 2010). The development of policies to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment among young people requires knowledge of the characteristics of students who aspire to become self-employed.

This study analyzes: (1) the aspirations of young people to become self-employed; and (2) the characteristics of compulsory secondary school adolescent pupils according to their desire to start their own company.

### 7.5.2 Methodology

This research studied 3,987 adolescent pupils in the Canary Islands in 2011. The secondary schools were specifically selected as they had to fulfil the following criteria: (a) be located in the larger or smaller islands; (b) be located in rural, urban, or periphery areas or be a multicultural school; and (c) to be a state or privately owned school.

The Academic and Career Guidance Questionnaire was designed for the study. The questionnaire collects information on students' academic, family, and personal characteristics, and on their academic-employment decision process.

A logistical regression was applied to calculate the probability that a pupil wants to start their own business. This type of model was used when the dependent variable is a categorical variable with two separate and mutually exclusive alternatives. The dependent variable in this analysis is the desire to start a company (alternatives: yes or no). The explicative variables are gender, age (11–16 or over 16), nationality (Spanish or foreign), type of school (privately or state owned), location of the school (peripheral, multicultural, rural, or urban), educational level (first to second year or third to fourth year of Compulsory Secondary School) and performance (low or high according to their academic results). Four models were performed to evaluate the results and to select the most parsimonious model with the greatest predictive capacity. The gender, age, and location variables were discarded. The nationality, type of school, educational level, and performance variables were used to construct the model

### 7.5.3 Results

The model predicts 57.3% of all the cases. This model has a high explicative capacity for the pupils who want to start their own company because it correctly classifies 89.3% of these pupils. Table 7.1 shows the estimated coefficients of the model and the individual significance of the variables. The statistical tests show the suitability of the model. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test for goodness of fit of the model shows that the overall fit is good (there is no significance Sig. 0.810). The aforementioned test has a high value of predicted probability (p), which is associated with result 1 of the dependent variable.

A detailed observation of the calculations in relation to the characteristics of the pupils studied shows that: (1) a Spanish pupil has less probability of being self-employed; (2) being a pupil at a private school reduces the probability of being self-employed; (3) as regards to educational level, pupils in first and second years of Compulsory Secondary School have a greater probability of being self-employed than those at higher levels in Compulsory Secondary School; and (4) underperforming students are more likely to become self-employed.

### 7.5.4 Discussion and Conclusion

The decision to be self-employed in adolescent pupils increases in the case of foreigners, of studying in a state school, of being at a lower educational level, and of having a low academic performance.

The absence of gender differences is noteworthy, because of the few differences produced by the percentages obtained from the male pupils and female pupils about their wish to start up a company in the future. This result is similar to results obtained in other studies, which consider that there are no differences between men and women regarding their predisposition to entrepreneurial initiative, above all at early ages; nevertheless, most pupils pointed in the opposite direction when the real data on entrepreneurship was analyzed. A circumstance that may influence these results is that, in recent years, educational authorities have promoted the inclusion of entrepreneurship education, improving knowledge of the company and the employer in the curriculum, as well as the launch of new lines of public action aimed at developing equality policies that appear to have attenuated gender differences.

Differences between those who prefer to start their own business or have a salaried job are observed in multicultural schools with students from over 53 different nationalities. This could be explained in part by the entrepreneurial character of immigrant families and, in part, by the need to create a business for self-employment. Immigrants in Spain are more predisposed to being entrepreneurs than the native population as immigrants do not usually have networks of family members and friends who can help them to access the labor market; generally speaking, immigrants have to 'fend for themselves' by setting up their own businesses.

The results of this study show the need to reflect on the characteristics of the pupils, which affects their attitude towards entrepreneurship. Teachers should take these features into account in order to promote them in the classroom. Those responsible for education policies should design appropriate strategies to enhance the entrepreneurial skills of pupils in schools.

Academic and career guidance should help pupils to reflect on the importance of entrepreneurship. Coordination between the integral parts of the education system and business is essential. Mentoring becomes a fundamental orientation tool if carried out by professionals trained in the coordinates of the information and knowledge society (Castells, 1998).

Mentoring has extended to the mothers and fathers of pupils since their influence is considerable at these ages (Santana-Vega & Feliciano, 2011). The family should consider other training options apart from university, as a means of access to the labor market (professional training and occupational training). Employers should get closer to the world of young people and try to convey entrepreneurial attitudes, through teachers or by any other means. In order to encourage entrepreneurship among adolescents it is necessary to improve the knowledge of the figure of the entrepreneur and the self-employed person in secondary education.

Teachers and counselors training in new skills and updating curricula are prerequisites to respond to the changing realities of post-modernity. Work needs to be done

on entrepreneurial competence in the classroom, defined as the individual's ability to turn ideas into action. Therefore, education should foster the following in students: (1) creativity, innovation, and risk taking; and (2) the skills to plan, manage projects, and achieve the objectives above, taking ethical values into account. The acquisition of such skills and abilities must be useful not only in the pupils' working life but also in their personal life. Acting with autonomy means we have the ability to make and implement our life plans and personal projects. Autonomy competence and personal initiative are relevant to succeed in the social, cultural, economic, employment, political, emotional, or ethical plane. Furthermore, possessing the above skills increases the possibilities of people starting their own business.

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# Chapter 8
# Can Career Teachers Support Parents in Helping Their Child in Career Development?


**Annemarie Oomen**

**Abstract** Various countries focus politically on involving parents in the career development and educational planning of their children in secondary education, encouraging informed or collaborative interventions of schools, communities and families. If a career teacher takes up this challenge, what (additional) competences are required? This chapter reports on a qualitative study with six Dutch career teachers who were involved in the design and execution of a parent-involved career intervention at their school. In designing and performing this parent-involved career intervention, career teachers reported the need for specific knowledge and skills, and particularly an attitude to actively being able and wanting to move into the unknown needs of parents. Additional competences are also needed by other members of school staff such as tutors. The study showed that an apparent 'light' intervention of ten hours challenged both their competences as well as the school organisation. This chapter states that parental involvement in career education and guidance should be treated as an educational innovation.

**Keywords** Parental involvement · Career education and guidance (CEG) · Secondary schools · Career teacher · Career leader · Competences · Innovation

## 8.1 Introduction

Various countries have a political focus on the role of parents in secondary education related to the choice of study, for instance Denmark (Katznelson & Pless, 2007), Northern Ireland (Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister for Education, 2016) and Australia (Department of Education and Training, 2019). Also, in the Netherlands, parental involvement in career education and guidance (CEG) in secondary schools is a 'hot item' in educational policy in 2011 and 2013, assuming that involving parents to a larger extent would reduce the dropout rate in higher education (HE) (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2013).

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In implicit and explicit ways parents influence their adolescents' (educational) career with outcomes such as those quoted by Young et al. (2001, p. 191): vocational aspiration and achievement; career decisiveness; career exploration; career commitment and career self-efficacy. Adolescents perceive their parents as the major collocutor (Otto, 2000), as highly interested in (Katznelson & Pless, 2007), and most involved in the educational choices to be made. The school, in the persons of the (career) teacher and the tutor, comes in second place (McMahon et al., 2001; McMahon & Patton, 1997; McMahon & Rixon, 2007), but is perceived by secondary school students as complementary to their parents' support in career development (Oomen, 2016a).

Regardless of socioeconomic status (SES), parents report a need for help in providing support in career development and in educational planning throughout childhood and adolescence (Arrington, 2000; Otto, 1989). Some parents are not able to support their child in educational and career decision-making for reasons such as unemployment or migrant status. Also, as Sweet and Watts (2006) argued, CEG can play a specific role for 'first-generation' HE students and their parents in compensating for the lack of knowledge, skills and network contacts at home. By supporting parents to enlarge or develop their parental capacity to support their child in career development and in educational planning, schools can contribute to combatting social injustice in our society (cf. Golombok, 2008).

In many countries, schools provide general non-personalised, information-centred interventions, targeted at parents and related to the educational choice to be made soon. It is less common to find examples of career interventions, involving parents and children actively, which aim to improve parents' capacity to support their children in career development: family learning (Oomen, 2016b). As part of the international trend to evolve from individual to community-based careers work (Law, 2013; Thomsen, 2013), there was a call for such informed or collaborative interventions of schools, communities and families (special issue of the IAEVG-Journal 2015, *15*(2)). The call referred to the limited practice and research in relation to parent-involved career interventions, which is illustrated by the inventory developed by Oomen (2016a), that also revealed that most of such initiatives are not sustained.

## 8.2 A Parent-Involved Career Intervention

The Dutch Ministry of Education funded a research and development (R&D) project for parental involvement in CEG through a career intervention with three main objectives: meeting the current information needs of parents; improving the communication between school, students and parents; and supporting parents in their parental role of helping their child to make career choices.

This R&D project has been executed with the career teachers of six senior general secondary schools (HAVO) between June and December 2012. Dutch career teachers are teachers in academic subjects who take up additionally the task to support students

in the mandatory CEG. In their role as 'career leader' they also support tutors and teachers in delivering the career provision in their school.

Based on a needs analysis among parents in the six experimental schools, objectives were set for the career intervention, which involved for the parents:

A. To be up to date and well-informed about various subject clusters, HE possibilities, financial consequences, the labour market, information resources and the child's own possibilities regarding subject clusters and/or HE possibilities.
B. To be able, as a parent, to make considered career decisions with their child and be a fully-fledged conversation partner in the career decision-making process.

Supported by the researcher, the career teachers designed together a career intervention of four successive sessions (ten hours in total). Table 8.1 provides an overview of the programme.

The intervention was designed as a learning activity (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick Partners, 2009–2015) for parents, in interaction with their child, considering the way adults learn (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2012; Kolb, 1984) and making parents and students less dependent on school staff (cf. Van der Wolf, 2013). Its pedagogy involved small group discussion alternated with selected plenary sharing of experiences, and with opportunities for parents to work directly with their child. The physical presence of both parent(s) and the child facilitated family-learning (Oomen, 2016b). Parents, as well as upper secondary students and first-year HE alumni, served as role-models. These multiple resources, which reflect the diverse nature of the wider school-community, helped the project to realise community-interaction (Law, 1981).

**Table 8.1** Overview of the parent-involved career intervention's programme

| Session | Focus |
|---|---|
| 1 | How the needs analysis outcomes have informed the design of the sessions;<br>The role(s) parents perceive for school staff in CEG and vice versa;<br>The school's aim and activities in CEG in general and this year;<br>Dos and don'ts for parents in talking with their child and practising simple steps to initiate a conversation |
| 2 | The non-linear nature of career development;<br>Speed dating activity with parent answering the questions of students about their career development;<br>Exploring in-depth the child's strengths and interests;<br>Reliable tests and how to discuss test results |
| 3 | Dilemmas in career choice making;<br>Current information: upcoming choices, trends in HE enrolment/access;<br>Experience-sharing by older students about career decision-making;<br>Comparing and using career exploration websites |
| 4 | Study costs and (financial) issues related to HE study;<br>Provisional study choices by students;<br>Drafting a plan of follow-up steps |

Pairs of parent(s) and child volunteered for the career intervention, which took place at the school site, mostly in the evening. Three schools involved the pairs of parent(s) and student(s) (14–16-year-olds) in the third year ($n = 92$) while preparing for the cluster and optional subjects choice in the spring. Three schools involved the pairs of parent(s) and student(s) (16–18-year-olds) in the fifth year ($n = 83$) while preparing for choice of study course in higher education (HE) after graduation. Each career teacher executed the career sessions at their school site, with the support of tutors, teachers and heads of department.

Two of the research questions for the R&D project were:

1. How does this career intervention differ from your current practice as a career teacher in your school? and
2. If so, which competences are needed additionally for a career teacher?

## 8.3 Methodology

*Participants*

The opportunity sample for the study were the career teachers of six HAVO schools around the Netherlands, who (an inclusion condition) had at least two years' experience as a career teacher/leader of the HAVO department. All were female, ranging in age from 32 to 60 ($M = 43.3$, $SD = 10.0$).

*Instruments*

The following qualitative data were collected, while executing the career intervention (October–December 2012):

- Each career teacher handed in a colour-coded script after executing each career intervention session, indicating what had not been done, what had been added as it felt needed in the circumstances and what should be done differently next time.
- Oral report self-evaluation by each career teacher took place during three focus group sessions, sharing common experiences on attitudes and competences. During each focus group session, common issues, derived by the researcher from the handed-in scripts, were analysed and discussed. These sessions have been recorded in a written report and verified by each career teacher.

Interview transcripts were produced of the six in-depth standardised open-ended interviews of each individual career teacher with the researcher. Questions posed were:

(1) "In what ways does what you as a career teacher did, in the career intervention for parents and students, differ from your existing school practice?";
(2) "What knowledge, skills and attitudes do you need as a career teacher, specifically in the *design* of the career intervention for parents and students together?" and "What have you learned from it?";
(3) The same questions as in (2) above for executing the career intervention; and

(4) "What are your observations for these groups of staff at your school involved in executing the career intervention: tutors, teachers, colleague career teachers?"

These interviews of 30 minutes took place alongside the last focus group session.

*Analysis*

The recording of the three focus group sessions with the career teachers was analysed in the same way as the transcripts of the individual interviews. Thematic analysis was adapted, a "matrix based method for ordering and synthesising data" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 219) and the Framework Method (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) as an appropriate approach to the qualitative data analysis. The six prescribed steps by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) were followed: become familiar with the data; generate initial codes; search for themes; review themes; define themes; and write-up, using the CASQAD, NVivo version 11 and Excel.

## 8.4 Results

The career teachers compared their existing practice to their 'new' practice of four career sessions for parents and students together.

One of the main findings was that the career teachers didn't have any insight into the actual questions of parents at the time their child was going to make an educational/career choice. The information they provided in the traditional on-off session was built on their own assumptions, on what was important in their own eyes, or following the tradition of the previous career teacher.

When asking for the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of them as career teachers, specifically in the *design* and in *the execution* of the four career sessions for parents and students together, and what they had learned from doing this, the main findings were:

In the area of knowledge:

- Up to date knowledge of developments in higher education, information resources, the labour market and world of work. And *knowing* that this knowledge is up to date.
- Knowledge of how to design interactive sessions.
- Knowledge of the role and influence of parents in the career development and educational planning process of their child.

Concerning the appropriate skills, the career teacher:

- Can assess parents' needs by grade levels, and translate these needs into a demand-driven provision for parents and students.
- Can design, alone or in collaboration, a series of meeting(s) for parents and students with the following features:

  - a draft converted to a script with: entrance, emotional icebreaker, explanation/information, practice, evaluation and scheduling;
  - a process that supports the content;
  - an interactive process, with a balance of plenary versus group work.
- Can make a statement about their own role (and that of others in the school, e.g. tutor, teacher) as careers supporters, as well as about role expectations. For parents these are: to get into a conversation during the career sessions with their child; for the student: to take an active role.
- Can organise, plan, monitor time and communicate clearly to those directly and indirectly involved in the school, and clearly and fully prepare, as well as instruct the co-executors as to their role and duties.

Required attitudes of the career teacher to design and execute a parent-involved career intervention:

- Have courage and persuasiveness both towards the participants and the co-executors.
- Be open to and actively empathize with what parents do not seem to know, such as by:
  - respectfully and consciously starting with the dream of their child; and
  - anticipating respectfully both in content and pedagogy with regard to parents.
- Is aware of the differences, in the initial situation, among the participants in terms of level of information and the relationship between parent and child, and responds appropriately.

Additionally, career teachers noted that they were not the only members of staff lacking specific competences:

- Tutors and teachers are not accustomed to cooperate in activities with the career teacher in supporting students and parents in their career development and educational planning. This requires a renewal of agreements within the school's organisation.
- Facilitating meetings with parents, and also with parents plus students, puts additional demands on the skills of tutors in interview techniques and attitudes.

One main finding went beyond career teachers' practice, careers work, and referred to the impact of the career intervention on the school organisation, shared in the following observation:

> It is unusual to have, for any issue in the school: demand-driven sessions (*communication*), with parents and students together, voluntarily, interactive and with a sequence of sessions (*pedagogy*), with participation varying between 13 and 49 pairs of parents and students (*scale*).

As part of this finding, some career teachers noted the more active role of the tutors and also their resistance to an increase in their workload. Other career teachers noted the enthusiastic response of the cooperating colleague career teachers.

## 8.5 Discussion

At one level the parent-involved career intervention looks like a modest intervention: schools are running a few classes after school, facilitating the parent-child communication and improving parents' capacity to support their child's career development. These features reduce the influences from outside for the school and make them controllable from a school system theory perspective (Biesta, 2010). But various factors inside the school turn the career intervention into a radical change for the school. Most of these can be found in the shared observation of the career teachers above, which indicate the impacted operational sub-system factors. To this can be added the facts that career teacher(s), tutors, teachers as well as the head of department and older students were involved (*coordination*), and that the career intervention took place after lessons (*day structure*; *budget*) and with a variety of room and technical requirements (*operational systems*).

By these 'unique' and cumulating factors, a different phenomenon appears in the school's operational subsystem which challenges the limits of the complexity the schools can handle. It disrupts the school system with the risk that it has to reformulate itself and will counteract the disequilibrium with feedback to maintain a steady state. This feedback may come from various angles, such as tutors not showing up, teachers lacking time discipline, reluctant students and critical parents. Somewhere in the process, school management teams will pick up on the feedback loops with their own feedback in their role of monitoring and controlling the school system. Their feedback may be 'balancing' feedback, with an attempt to delay or restrain the changes taking place, reducing or adjusting the gap between the present state and the desired school goals. Or it could be 'reinforcing' feedback to achieve more movement in the same direction towards the desired school goals. After the project, school management teams may also decide on a (very) reduced parent-involved career intervention, whereby the nature of the intervention easily turns into a traditional information-centred session and the pedagogy gets lost: the so-called system archetype of 'drifting goals' (Senge, 2006).

## 8.6 Conclusions

The challenge of involving parents in the career development and educational planning of their children in secondary education was taken up by six Dutch career teachers. Supported by the researcher, they designed a parent- and student-involved career intervention, which then they executed with staff colleagues in their own schools. In the qualitative research for the R&D project it appeared that experienced career teachers/leaders expressed the need for additional knowledge and skills for such a promoted initiative or collaboration. Specifically, they emphasised the attitude needed of each member of the school staff: be able and wanting to actively move into the unknown needs of parents. The career teachers involved also noted that tutors

and teachers aren't acquainted with providing a demand-driven provision in which they support parents in helping their child and are directed by their career teacher.

There are many good reasons to promote collaborative career interventions of schools, communities and families. However, having an excellent programme with excellent research results is not enough to make such interventions work and/or sustainable in a school. One barrier in achieving more community-based careers work with schools was found to be the present school system. Such an intervention turns out to be an educational innovation. Organisational learning in the school seems unconditional. This includes 'professional learning communities' to build school and teacher capacity—personal, interpersonal and organisational—to increase communication, collaboration and collective learning among teachers within and across grades levels (Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007), while building this across a group of schools can be considered an important prerequisite for a school's ability to change and sustain improvement. The promotion of sustainable community-based careers work with schools has implications for the competences of the school staff involved as well as for the competences of external career professionals, e.g. in supporting the organisational learning that needs to take place in or among schools.

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# Chapter 9
# Competences Analysis in Initial Training of Secondary Education Counsellors and European Standards


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**Abstract** The main objective of this chapter is to analyse the competences designed for the initial training of educational counsellors in secondary education at two Galician Universities (Santiago de Compostela and Vigo—Ourense Campus) and establish the correspondence with the European Standards elaborated within the framework of projects NICE I and II (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe) between 2009 and 2014 (NICE, 2015). Guidance professionals' training in the educational, labour and social contexts occupies an important place in the international field in European Union countries (NICE, 2012), especially Spain at university level through the Master's Programme for Counsellors in the framework of the Master's Degree in Secondary Education Teachers' Training, specialty in Educational Guidance (SETTG-EG). Linked to this, there is the need to identify the quality of the Master's programmes in Counsellors' Training through the contrast criteria and correspondence between the designed competences in it and the European Competence Standards (Schiersmann et al., 2016). Regarding the research methodology, a qualitative approach was used, based on document analysis, discussion groups and in-depth interviews. The topic studied is considered as an emerging research tendency; therefore it must be studied in-depth as it can have great impact and can be very useful, especially at university level and in the professional Spanish context. It is also transferable, with the necessary adaptations, to other European and international contexts, above all in Latin America, due to cultural, social and educational similarities with the analysed setting.

**Keywords** Competence · Standard · Counsellor · Training · Secondary education

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## 9.1 Introduction

Nowadays, counsellors' training and their professionalisation in the educational, social and labour framework, play a relevant role in national and international contexts (Nota & Rossier, 2015). In the Spanish context, when a reference is made to guidance counsellors training in education, it is necessary to mention the university training through the Master's Degree in Secondary Education Teachers Training (SETT) specialty in Educational Guidance (SETT-EG). Competence-based training of educational counsellors is common at university level in various countries in the European Union (Cohen-Scali, Rossier, & Nota, 2018).

The main objective of the study presented in this chapter, is to analyse the competences designed for initial training of educational guidance professionals in the Universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo, as well as to consider the correspondence with the Europe Competence Standards of the NICE II project during the period of 2012–2014 (NICE, 2015).

## 9.2 Theoretical Framework

The European Commission has defined the main initiatives in the fields of research, science and education, aimed at reform of study programmes: a three-level system (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor of Philosophy) of competence-based education; open system of training; recognition of abilities and qualifications; mobility in agreement with the Bologna process; and international cooperation and transfer of experience and knowledge between universities (ECTS Users Guide, 2015).

One of the most relevant strategies for education, especially among children and young people, considered by the European Union, is efficient guidance delivery and the training of educational counsellors to undertake new challenges (DICB-DPEC, 2013). The professionalisation of career guidance practitioners to promote lifelong life and career management, as well as the creation of sustainable counselling networks with other countries of the European Union, are of great relevance.

There is a need for future development of competences and international career guidance (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2010). The European Commission (CEDEFOP, 2011) considers the education and training of career guidance counsellors, and the quality of guidance services provision in education as one of the most important issues for achieving the strategic objectives of the European Union in the field of social and educational development.

Efficient lifelong guidance and counselling in the European Union should be enforced by means of European cooperation and partnership between the providers of guidance services, social partners, counsellors in the field of guidance and counselling in education, as well as universities and institutions providing training for guidance counsellors in education (Kreutzer & Iuga, 2016).

In the European context, educational counsellors are expected to make use of new knowledge, skills and competences: knowledge of the theories on lifelong career development; respect of cultural differences; ethics and moral norms; social educational and intercultural sensitivity; respect of gender equality; professional approaches to problematic situations; and use of educational and social mediation (Thomsen, 2012). Furthermore, knowing the trends and differences in the field of education, guidance and counselling is useful, while the active use of ICT in the national and international fields is also relevant (Kraatz & Ertelt, 2011).

## 9.3 Objectives

Regarding the study's main objective, it is focused on analysing the competences designed for the initial training of educational counsellors in secondary education at two Galician Universities (Santiago de Compostela and Vigo—Ourense Campus), as well as establishing correspondence with the European Competence Standards (NICE, 2015) elaborated by the projects NICE I and II (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe).

Taking into account the main proposed goal, the specific objectives are:

- To identify the formative competences of the Master's Programme for Teachers' Training in Secondary Education (Educational Guidance specialty).
- To select a set of the described competences and corresponding standards, which will serve as a basis for the discussion groups proposed.
- To analyse and value the correspondence between the students' acquired skills and the formulated standards.
- To design and conduct in-depth interviews in order to complete the information obtained through the discussion (focal) groups.
- To present the main results and conclusions and formulate some improvement proposals.

## 9.4 Methodology

To achieve these objectives, the research methodology proposed has a qualitative character (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Tojar, 2006), mainly based on document analysis, group discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews. In addition, we have worked with a table of specifications between the curricular competences of the Master's Programme and the European Competences Standard to guarantee the validity of content, established as an evaluation criterion. The techniques used are further explained in the sections that follow.

## 9.5 Document Analysis

The Reports of the mentioned Masters' Degrees in Galician Universities which offer the Guidance specialty were revised: University of Vigo (UVigo) and Santiago (USC). Likewise, the contributions of the project NICE II (2015) and the linked key competences of such Masters' were included.

The criteria for the election of the NICE five European Competence Standards (ECS) that are related to some of the curriculum competences in the Secondary Education Counsellors Training Masters' Degrees (SETT-EG) specialty in Educational Guidance, are:

- A matrix framework that is a previous elaboration of Standard specifications with the afore-mentioned competences to guarantee the content validity.
- Approximation to the legal regulations and to the institutional guidance model of the Galician educational system.
- Real observation of the counsellors' roles and relevant professional functions in this educational level.

The mentioned ECS and the analysed competences are presented in Table 9.1.

**Table 9.1** Selected competences for the study

| ECS | SETT-EG Master | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. To identify websites, self-assessment tools and other sources which provide career information for the particular client target group, responding to the explicit interests, abilities, skills, competences and needs they have formulated | UVIGO | CE-G7. To know and apply resources and information strategies, tutorial and educational and career guidance |
| | USC | CE-E6. To know, select, design, and apply strategies and information plans, as well as career guidance for the transition to the labour market and their employability<br>CE-M17. To know guidance intervention techniques, resources and instruments |
| 2. To report about the quality career services based on specific quality criteria and standards for career guidance and counselling | UVIGO | CG-13. The same<br>CE-G9. To participate in the definition of the educational project and general activities in the school , according to quality criteria, attention to diversity, learning difficulties prevention and coexistence |
| | USC | CG-13. To know the legislative and institutional organisation of the educational system and quality models with application to the teaching centres<br>CE-M16. To identify the counselling guidance service organisation and working in educational contexts |

(continued)

**Table 9.1** (continued)

| ECS | SETT-EG Master | |
|---|---|---|
| 3. To assess clients' informational needs, related to their interests and competences, the relevant labour market, and vocational and educational systems features, to confront informational problems such as information overflow, stereotypes, disinformation and lack of information | UVIGO | CEG8. To know the professional and academic main development and strategies that can be used with students of the Secondary Education Master |
| | USC | CG-19. To know the students' psychopedagogical characteristics in order to be able to evaluate them and issue the required reports<br>CE-E12. To know and value the psychopedagogical diagnostic and assessment techniques<br>CE-M17. The same |
| 4. To assess particular resources, interests or other relevant characteristics of an individual client using a high validity suitable career assessment approach in a collaborative way, to provide the client personal relevant information | UVIGO | CE-G7. The same |
| | USC | CG-11. To develop tutorial functions and students' guidance process in group<br>CG-19. The same<br>CE-P3. To plan, develop or evaluate an intervention plan in an educational guidance and psychopedagogical counselling framework<br>CE-M17. To know guidance intervention techniques, resources and instruments |
| 5. To design recommendations about how to overcome a career-related conflict based on a fair evaluation of all involved partners' interests | UVIGO | CG-9. To know the interaction and communication processes and to achieve the domain of necessary skills and social abilities in order to encourage learning and coexistence in the classroom, as well as to deal with discipline problems and conflict resolution<br>CE-G5. To know the interaction and communication processes in the classroom and at school, as well as to deal with and solve possible problems |
| | USC | CEP3. The same<br>CE-M19. To acquire communication abilities, reflexive thinking and personal and group improvement |

*Legend*:
**CG**: General Competence; **CE-G**: Specific competence linked to the generic module; **CE-E**: Specific competence linked to the specific module; **CE-P**: Competence linked to the Practicum; **CT**: Transversal competence; **CE-M**: Subject specific competence; **SETT-EG**: Secondary Education Teachers Training-Educational Guidance; **ECS**: European Competence Standards.

*Note*. Adapted from *The European Competence Standards for the Academic Training of Career Professionals* by NICE, 2015; *Máster Universitario en Profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obrigatoria e Bacharelato, Formación Profesional e Ensinanza de Idiomas* by USC, 2016; *Máster Universitario en Profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obrigatoria, Bacharelato, Formación Profesional e Ensino de Idiomas* by UVigo, 2016.

## 9.6 Discussion Groups

According to Suárez (2005), Barbour (2013), Denzin and Lincoln (2018), this technique's proper procedure was followed in both universities and the corresponding report was produced later. Its design is presented in Table 9.2.

Regarding the information shown in the previous table, the focal groups were composed of seven to ten members; all of them students, teachers and participant counsellors in the Master's Programme, as well as another one who played the moderator role (Barbour, 2013). At the same time, a programme teacher participated as observer, and produced the final report.

Several focal groups were organised in accordance with the different training programmes offered at the universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo. The discussion groups procedure was conducted according to findings formulated by experts (Callejo, 2001; Gutiérrez-Brito, 2008) related to planning (time and place), group composition and sessions recording. Each group discussion session was carried out in three parts: presentation, discussion and closure. The duration of each session was approximately 90 minutes and the participants' statements were recorded in audio format for later reproduction and analysis.

In addition, a protocol was created to guide the process, including the following main topics :

1. Previous considerations about counsellors' initial training, received through the current Teachers' Training Master's Programme, such as structure, contents, competences to be developed, student learning monitoring, career guidance and insertion into the labour market.
2. The competences development in counsellors' initial training through the Master's degree pursued : competences acquired and not acquired, their importance to the career guidance profession, as well as the specific time during training when they were developed.

**Table 9.2** Participants' selection and distribution criteria in the focal groups held

| Criteria | | UVIGO | USC | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Master's Teachers | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Current students and others of previous training editions. | | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Master's active counsellors and internship tutors | | 2 | – | 2 |
| Moderator | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Observer | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| External expert | | – | 1 | 1 |
| Gender parity | Men | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| | Women | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| | | | | 19 |

3. Knowledge transfer to the work context in order to facilitate insertion into the labour market.
4. Analysis of the deficiencies and strengths regarding the development of the required competences for practice, in the initial training through the Master's Programme.

## 9.7 In-Depth Interviews

To conduct the in-depth semi-structured interviews, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018) and Kvale (2008), relevant people were selected according to their relevant training, experience and professional performance in the guidance field, specifically an inspector (UVigo) with teaching experience in the Master's Programme and a practitioner of one of the specific guidance teams (Ourense)existing in Galicia.

In order to carry out the interviews, the protocol described in the discussion groups was used.

## 9.8 Analysis Results

### *9.8.1 Discussion Groups and Interviews*

Taking into account the collected information, the most relevant contributions for each technique are presented in Table 9.3.

Taking into account the results showed in the previous table, the discussion groups and interviews show the limitations found in the acquisition and development of guidance competences in relation to the considered ECS framework (Table 9.1), which can be due to the following factors: short duration of the Master's programme (it lasts only one year), and especially of the Practicum period (one month); excessive compartmentalisation of the subjects; partially efficient teaching coordination; lack of experience of some teachers, in relation to guidance practice; methodologies insufficiently oriented to projects and real problem fresolution; certain dissociation of the Master's Final Thesis, (MFT) with the theoretical and practical module contents and, finally, limited follow-up of students.

## 9.9 Conclusions/Improvement Proposals

The training of counsellors is a theme that captures the attention of many professionals and experts working on the subject. It is a difficult group to attract to the educational profession, perhaps, due to the existing tradition in their training in which the contents of their respective specialties prevail more than the skills of the

**Table 9.3** Analysis results

| ECS | Discussion groups | Interviews |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | SETT-EG Master's contributes, in general, to concepts acquisition (teaching guides contents), although the practical application required by some competences (CEG7) linked to European Standards 1 and 4, is at least, difficult to achieve | To acquire basic concepts related to educational and career guidance (and tutorship) is typically achieved in the general and specific module. It is more difficult to acquire competences related to knowing *how to do* (CE-G7 and CE-E6) |
| 2 | There are certain aspects related to the competences (CG13 and CE-E16) which are achieved; but the programmed contents extension delves deeper into specific aspects of guidance professional functions in educational centres<br>The practicum, in spite of its short duration offers students a learning experience that allows them to identify the guidance professional profile. There is a larger difficulty regarding the first part of competence CE-G9, as it is more related to managerial functions. . . Only learning in terms of qualitative improvement of guidance plans and tutorial actions was achieved | The concepts linked to this standard ( regulations and institutional guidance model) are achieved. The guidance profession and its role in education quality are limited, in general, to the experiences linked to the Practicum.<br>Applied knowledge regarding planning and guidance quality evaluation processes in Galicia cannot be guaranteed, due to lack of a proper coordination between the theoretical and practical phase and because it is, to a great extent, a legal competence |
| 3 | Master's students get a very general introduction to this Standard through the competences (CE-G7, CG19, CE-E12 and CE-M17), with limited access to evaluation techniques or management tools related to educational and career guidance. Depending on the month when students do their internship, they can participate in psychopedagogical evaluations, interviews, and even some interventions | The course reduced time does not contribute to the achievement of these competences (CE-G7, CG19, CE-M17), linked to this standard |
| 4 | This standard is achieved throughout the Masters (CE-G7, CG11 and 19, CE-E6, CE-P3 and CE-M17) in its theoretical part, and partially in its real work component | Concepts are acquired to understand and value educational/-career guidance; however, some difficulties exist in order to transfer them to practice |
| 5 | To achieve competences (CG9, CE-G5, CE-P3 and CE-M19), an extensive psychopedagogical knowledge is required, which is very difficult to acquire during the Master's. | Guidance practitioners in the centres have been very busy, because of conflicts between students for which the administration gives protocols, but not training<br>Acquiring competences to engage in effective mediation and conflict resolution depends on the centre and the guidance departments |

counsellor. In this context, there is a growing mismatch between the new competences demanded by the knowledge society and skills acquired in the initial training of this group of future practitioners.

This problem is common to all of Europe, so it is necessary to reflect on this formative period. The opinion of the experts consulted has allowed us to observe a series of weaknesses and strengths in the training of counsellors. The detected weaknesses are linked to the highly generalised training where knowledge about know-how prevails. Few professional contexts are explored and little emphasis is given to education in socio-emotional skills, cooperative work, professionalism, flexibility or empathy. In addition, it is observed that the didactic methodology, the excessive compartmentalisation of the subjects and the evaluation techniques used, do not facilitate a competence-based approach.

Regarding the strengths of the training received, the growing importance of educational guidance is emphasised, the perception of the counsellor as mediating and integrating agent and the existence of a normative framework that regulates it.

Finally, in accordance with all the previous issues, it is necessary to draw up some improvement proposals: to update the Master Verification Report so it complements the new regulations, more linked to the current Master's Programme for Counsellors in Secondary Education; to increase the duration of the Master's Programme and, in particular, the time allocated to the Practicum; to establish a Practicum period (internship) in educational centres before/during the subjects' delivery; to promote a greater coordination between intramodule and intermodule teachers, including the Practicum; to establish students' rotation among different teaching institutions, previously selected according to the activities that are carried out; and to promulgate new guidance legislation according to the current existing needs in schools (cooperative networking, prevention, needs assessment, and specific educational needs that require additional or specialised support).

To conclude, with regards to the link established between the European Standards and the selected curriculum competences, a relative correspondence between them was observed, as well as a partial achievement of both on the part of the students in these Master's courses, predominantly the theoretical aspects of the practical domains.

## 9.10 Contribution of This Study

The authors of this work believe that the research will contribute to knowledge in the field of educational and career guidance, and increase transparency between European Competence Standards and the Curriculum Competences in Training Masters (Schiersmann et al., 2016), as well as the qualifications achieved in educational guidance and counselling training provided at universities in Spain and other countries of the European Union. They also believe, in turn, that this will contribute to transfer career guidance innovation procedures in higher education, not only within the framework of universities but also in other educational institutions (secondary education

centres). They also believe that it will help facilitate the expansion of the possibilities of higher education and guidance training for educational and career counselling practitioners, and to strengthen cooperation between higher education institutions and universities in European Union countries (Kraatz & Ertelt, 2011).

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# Chapter 10
# Importance of Social Skills in the Prevention of Risk Situations and Academic Achievement in Secondary Education in Spain: What Do Teachers Expect from Their Students? How Can Coexistence and Well-Being Be Improved?

**Berta García-Salguero and Maria J. Mudarra**

**Abstract** The purpose of this chapter is to broaden empirical knowledge and reflect upon the importance of social skills (SS) as a critical protective factor for the social and personal well-being of secondary education students in Spain, with particular reference to academic achievement. Through guidance and teacher and student training strategies that take into account their perception of SS according to individual and context variables, the goal is to help to prevent risk situations and overcome barriers to coexistence such as risk of bullying and disruptive/aggressive behaviour. Among the main results, significant SS were identified which, being consistent with teacher expectations and specifically taught, can help prevent maladaptive behaviours, diminishing the vulnerability of certain students and optimising social relations and academic achievement. Among the prosocial behaviours with the highest potential of student well-being, which are consistent with teacher expectations, and extend beyond individual characteristics or the schools they belong to, are the SS of cooperation, responsibility and assertion. Evidence is provided in relation to guidance practice that, based on an accurate assessment of SS, contributes to educational equity to enhance students' academic pathways and, above all, to prevent risk situations that might threaten their well-being.

**Keywords** Social skills · Academic achievement · Risk situations · Teachers · Secondary education

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## 10.1 Introduction

One of the main conclusions of the State Observatory for School Coexistence (Observatorio Convivencia Escolar, 2010) is that one of the most urgent and significant needs recognised by management teams and counselling departments is the need for teacher training on how to improve coexistence, with a focus on solving the issues it generates and creating student teams to improve it. It seems clear that prosocial behaviour can have an inhibiting effect on negative social behaviours and therefore it is a key factor to promote social competence in secondary education, a stage during which the development of SS plays a crucial role in social adjustment (Zsolnai, 2002) (Fig. 10.1). In the Spanish context, after considering sex and age variables, the predictive value of prosocial behaviour has been amply demonstrated in relation to the use of alcohol and cannabis, demonstrating that the likelihood of consuming these substances is lower among adolescents with positive prosocial behaviour (Redondo, Inglés, & García-Fernández, 2014).

Therefore, SS are essential in the prevention of risk conditions that increase student vulnerability in the face of social maladaptation, emotional and behavioural disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, victimisation, violence and even a higher risk of adult psychopathologies (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Lane, Carter, Pierson, & Glaeser, 2006; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001; Walker & Severson, 2002).

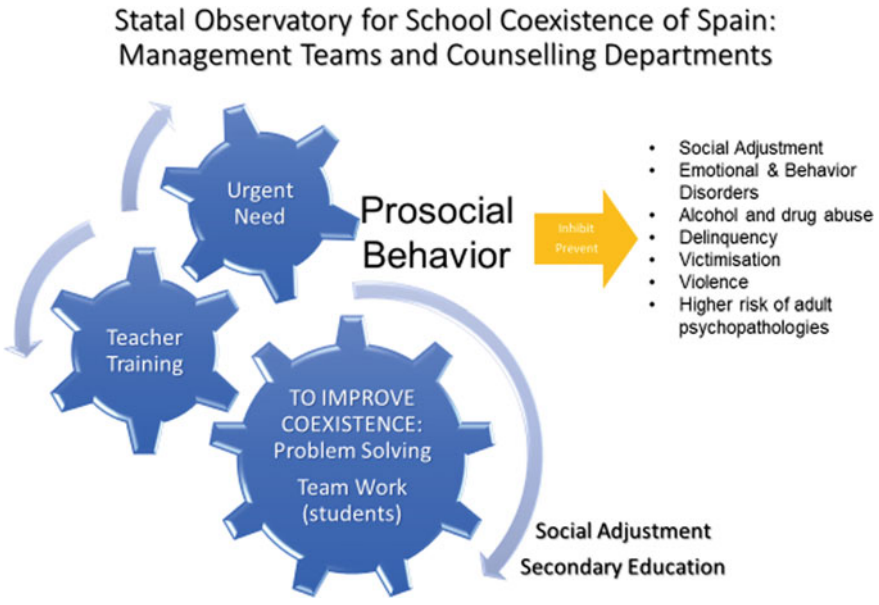


**Fig. 10.1** Prosocial behavior and coexistence

In Spain, some factors strongly linked to academic success/failure are difficult to modify, such as social background which, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), accounts for 50% of the differences in school performance (Enguita, Mena, & Riviere, 2010). Thus, it seems even more necessary to act upon areas that can be improved whose positive impact upon the whole class, improving school self-perception and academic self-efficacy, has been empirically demonstrated (Gutiérrez & Clemente, 1993; Garaigordobil, Cruz, & Pérez, 2003; Ray & Elliott, 2006).

However, lack of SS has not only been related to various negative outcomes (behaviour problems, difficulties to relate to peers); the Observatory itself has highlighted the need to overcome barriers to coexistence through a comprehensive assessment of multiple indicators (Observatorio Convivencia Escolar, 2010). Among those identified, are aspects associated with academic results essential to assess coexistence (Fig. 10.2) such as student relations, interaction problems with teachers and, especially, certain violence risk factors such as being a victim/participating in situations of exclusion and humiliation as well as perceptions on disruption and discriminatory treatment.

Teachers perceive that the most frequent barrier is student disruptive behaviour (for example, disturbing, talking back or interrupting a class by talking while the teacher is explaining something). In turn, these students tend to have academic problems and experience greater difficulties in achieving 'positive' attention in learning, with higher rates of grade repetition, lower expectations of continuing education and lower engagement with the school.

According to Bisquerra-Alzina (1989), education must prepare human development, which also includes prevention. In educational terms, human development is

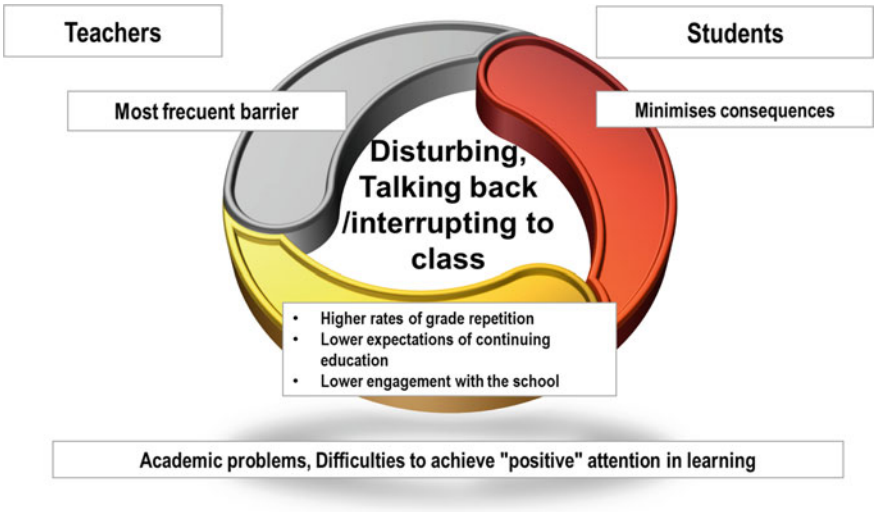


**Fig. 10.2** Student disruptive behavior

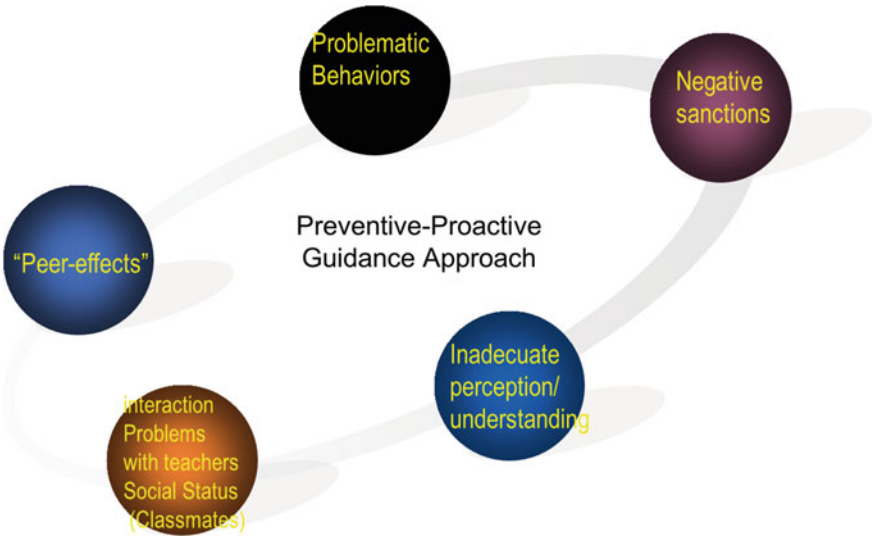


**Fig. 10.3** Social competence of students and well-being

related to prevention in the broad sense of the factors that may hinder it (violence, stress, anxiety, depression, risk behaviours etc.). In our current society there is a generalised loss of values, and if one aims to educate for life, a priority is to attend to emotional aspects, given that emotional education can be considered education for life.

From the perspective of a preventive-proactive counsellor (see Fig. 10.3), we should not wait until problematic behaviours emerge in class that need to be addressed with negative sanctions; rather we should be proactive and strengthen the social competences of students given their significant relationship with well-being (Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013) and happiness (Garaigordobil, 2015). Inglés et al. (2009) also discuss the peer effects (positive and negative) of classmates on school achievement.

Nevertheless, SS can be learnt. At times, inhibiting social behaviours or aggressiveness can limit children's and/or adolescents' opportunities to bond using assertive behaviours (assertiveness). For these social relations difficulties, interventions are appropriate to teach and train the most effective skills, giving individuals the possibility of acquiring knowledge, maturity and, consequently, happiness.

The report by García-Rojas (2010) shows the results of studies proving that SS training is effective to teach children and adolescents socially effective behaviours, with an abundance of techniques, strategies and procedures that can be used to teach social interaction behaviours. These results have currently led to "many interventions being considered to teach adequate interpersonal competences to students both in compulsory and post-compulsory education" (García-Rojas, 2010, p. 229).

However, several authors have expressed their views regarding SS training in secondary education. Monjas-Casares et al. (2004) and Monjas-Casares (2006)

conducted studies on adolescents and SS, showing that the youths in their studies possessed interpersonal and communication skills, and illustrated effective cognitive skills, as well as control over their own emotions and stress. According to these researchers, socially skilful adolescents have a good self-concept and high self-esteem; they also self-report positive and pleasant feelings. They are more assertive when defending their ideas, opinions and rights in a socially appropriate way without violating the rights of others. In contrast, adolescents with social skill difficulties, that is, passive, inhibited or aggressive, generally show a negative self-concept and low self-esteem. Furthermore, they self-report more feelings of loneliness or social dissatisfaction, present higher social anxiety levels and more depressive behaviours, and renounce claim to their rights or tend to assert their rights and views through aggressive behaviours" (Monjas-Casares et al., 2004, cited by Cardozo, 2012, p. 91). Other authors such as Mantilla-Castellano and Chahín-Pinzón (2006) contend that the greater the ability or skill an adolescent has to behave in the psychosocial field, such as establishing a positive relationship with themselves, with others and with the broader social environment, the more personal options they will have to achieve their goals by making a better use of available internal and external resources. Therefore, social skills, in particular empathy, must be considered a relevant factor to explain social development and social interactions (Mantilla-Castellano & Chahín-Pinzón, 2006, cited by Cardozo, 2012)

Bandura, who is regarded as the founder of social learning theory, has made important connections between the social variables of learning and behaviour both during childhood and adolescence (Bandura, 1986). As Coronel, Levin, and Mejail (2011) point out "adolescents with high academic self-esteem tend to prioritise prosocial values" (p. 246). That is, they are youths with already embedded and value prosocial behaviors. However, we can say SS are learnt in a given context and that a specific "skill may be valued by a cultural group but not another one" (Coronel, Levin, & Mejail, 2011, p. 245). In this regard, educators such as Medina-Rivilla (1988) highlighted the importance of interpersonal relations in a particular context as a key element to favour teaching-learning. Students must learn key skills to help them correctly interpret the various teaching-learning situations, to learn strategies that allow them to understand tasks and generate appropriate behaviours to adequately respond to demands placed upon them (psychosocial, personal, etc.) (Medina-Rivilla, 1988, p. 23).

Therefore, following research by García-Jiménez, García-Pastor, and Rodríguez-Gómez (1992–1993), experts have shown that one of the main flaws of students with sociocultural handicaps is the development of social skills and processing social information. Research in this field has demonstrated how the lack of social skills is one of the causes of existing conflicts with classmates, teachers and authorities, and how strategies focused only on class control do not necessarily generate greater interest in learning.

However, this raises the question of which SS are the most significant and have greater potential to diminish the vulnerability of students in secondary education, optimise their social relations and promote their academic success according to their teachers. To identify which are the critical SS for student academic achievement,

and to verify the possible impact of individual and context variables, are significant *objectives*. Since teachers are privileged agents in the promotion of cooperative structures and optimal social relations, they can foster an interest in learning and, with this, prevent risk situations and academic failure for their students.

## 10.2 Methodology/Development

Through non-probability sampling, due to accessibility, we selected a sample of 198 teachers working in schools from all the Spanish Autonomous Communities, except Navarre, Extremadura, Ceuta and Melilla. There was a predominance of female teachers (60.1%) from public schools (78.8%) and with over ten years of experience (66.2%), essentially in upper secondary (37.9%) and lower secondary education (31.8%) levels.

To identify the critical SS, we used the Spanish adaptation of the *Social Skills Improvement System* (SSIS) created by Gresham and Elliott (2008). After adapting it to the Spanish cultural context, we obtained a scale made up of 46 items and seven dimensions (Communication, Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, Extroversion and Self-Control) ranked on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low and 5 = Very High).

Through descriptive and essentially non-parametric statistical procedures (Chi-squared, Kruskal-Wallis tests, Median and Mann-Whitney's U) implemented with SPSS (version 19), we evaluated the degree of importance of each dimension of the SS as well as the existence or not of significant differences in said dimensions based both on individual teacher variables (i.e. sex, years of experience) and on context variables (type of school, stage they teach).

## 10.3 Results/Discussion

The following are some of the main results. The sample of teachers surveyed estimated that all SS dimensions of the SSIS are crucial for academic achievement, with no significant differences found by stages (lower secondary education, upper secondary education, vocational education and training). However, there were some SS that were more important in upper secondary education than in Vocational Education and Training (VET), such as respecting turns to speak or joining ongoing activities, whilst activities identified as more important in VET than in upper secondary education were maintaining eye contact, accepting feedback or resolving conflicts calmly.

Individual teacher characteristics such as sex did show certain significant differences: female teachers particularly valued communication SS while male teachers

placed more emphasis on assertion. Finally, compared to their peers with intermediate experience, teachers in public schools with over ten years of experience significantly underestimated students' ability to behave well without teacher supervision (i.e. Responsibility), as well as the ability to introduce themselves to others on their own initiative (i.e. Extroversion).

## 10.4 Conclusions/Proposals

The empirical evidence provided in this chapter ratifies previous studies by Gresham et al. (2000), Lane, Wehby, and Cooley (2006), Lane, Pierson, Stang, and Carter (2010), demonstrating the consistency of teacher expectations about the importance of their students' SS, particularly for academic achievement. Therefore, we found a repetition of the importance of cooperation and self-control (Lane et al., 2010), although it is striking that Spanish teachers expressed a higher value for Assertion than Self-Control compared to their American peers, which may be due to cultural differences and expectations.

Especially noteworthy were certain critical SS that if acquired could improve students' ability to respond to the specific demands of their educational contexts, reducing risk situations and enhancing their interest to learn. Mastering the SS that teachers value because they help establish a good learning environment in class is a true 'protective factor' that also promotes students' well-being, is directly related to *Cooperation and Responsibility* (following instructions, performing tasks without disturbing others, respecting group rules, behaving well without teacher supervision, respecting others' property) and is incompatible with disruptive behaviours towards teachers and mistreatment of other students (for example, due to their diverse origins, culture, special educational needs etc.). Even the highest valued *Assertion* SS are directly related to students' ability to express their problems, defend themselves, ask for help or share feelings which would allow them to avoid/resolve conflicts, for example, bullying and reducing the risk of being chosen as a victim.

Consequently, when verifying that the SS precisely most valued by teachers also appear to play a significant role to eradicate risk situations and improve coexistence quality according to the School Coexistence Observatory (Observatorio Convivencia Escolar, 2010), it would be reasonable to prioritise this type of SS in individual or group intervention strategies but always for counselling and training students and teachers because, although schools have significantly incorporated the teaching of these skills, this should be reinforced so SS are properly used by *all* students in *all* schools. Socially and emotionally competent teachers develop supporting relationships with their students and create activities to help them acquire the SS needed in class based upon their own strengths (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

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# Reflections on Career Practice for Challenging Times

**Barrie A. Irving**

## Introduction

Reflecting many of the issues raised in the studies presented in this book, this final chapter explores three key questions concerning the concept of career, challenges for career practitioners, and the relationship between social justice and career theory and practice. After contextualising each question, the discussion that follows is located within a critical social justice perspective.

## How Career is Understood, and Is It Still a Valid Concept?

In recent times there has been a re-examination of how career might be conceptualised, alongside a re-appraisal of the historic values that have been attached to this particular term. In contrast to a traditional conception of career that has served to elevate the social standing of some (such as those within the professions), or has only been of relevance to those in organisational settings that provided structured pathways within an employment hierarchy, the 'new' career paradigm reflects increasing fluidity, openness, and unpredictability (Irving & Raja, 1998; Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011; Watts, 2001). Thus, greater consideration is now being given to how the concept of career might become more inclusive and all-encompassing, intersecting with concerns about the place of social in/justice (Arthur, 2014; Irving, 2010a). This has led to a shift in thinking about what a career is, and how it may be formed, forged, constructed and enacted.

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Ostensibly, the boundaries are being redrawn, creating spaces for the emergence of an all-encompassing life-career which allows for multiple ways of being and incorporates all aspects of life. Recognition is given the ways in which lives might be constructed differentially, encompassing a multiplicity of relationships that help to define how we might see ourselves, and how others may see us (Young, 1990), articulating more closely with the multilayered realities of contemporary life (Richardson, 2009, 2012). In New Zealand, and in many other developed countries, career is positioned as holistic and multifaceted, encompassing the many roles, and activities we are engaged in that give meaning to our lives. For example, the New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE) guidelines for career education and guidance state that a career "embraces life roles in the home and the community, leisure activities, learning and work… Everyone has a career" (MoE, 2009, p. 6).

To clarify, what this suggests is that how we construct our career, and give meaning to what we do in and with our life, is no longer contingent on our occupational identity or whether we are economically active. Hence it becomes an all-inclusive concept, accommodating a diverse range of lifestyles and situations. Furthermore, it accommodates culturally diverse ways of life, where a collective sense of belonging, and the obligations this may entail to family and community, supersedes individual desires (Arthur & Collins, 2011; Barker & Irving, 2005; Watson, 2010). Thus having and enacting a career becomes a signifier of the complexities of life, encompassing the choices individuals make, and actions they take, whether by accident, design, or circumstance. Accordingly, the individual is freed from the need to be defined, and to define themselves, by laying claim to a dominant occupational title. Moreover, in theory at least, they are liberated from the negative recognition ascribed through reductive economic discourses that construct social inclusion and cohesion on the basis of market relations which over-emphasise notions of individual, competition, merit and achievement (Alexiadou, 2005; Levitas, 1996).

The concept of the life-career can thus be applied to any meaningful activity in the private/personal domain (Coutinho, Dam, & Blustein, 2008; Richardson, 2009). For example, those who choose not to be active within the labour market for whatever reason, attribute primary meaning to their lives through active pursuit of their interests (such as hobbies, sports, educational courses), or even engage in actions that may directly challenge the hegemonic practices of capitalism (through environmental activism or as members of anti-capitalist movements for instance), can also be positioned as enacting their career. Ostensibly, therefore, constructing, having and enacting a career is not automatically economically quantifiable, but a signifier of the complex ways in which lives play out within a social context.

That is the theory at least. It is now necessary to move on to consider whether 'career' remains a valid concept, a question given its social complexity and the unproblematic ways in which it is generally presented in the media as relating to employment and/or occupations. Whilst there appears to be an apparent clarity in contemporary thinking about what a career is, and how it is constructed, a degree of uncertainty and confusion lies beneath the surface. For example, a quasi-traditional understanding of career is constantly communicated through media representations,

where the term tends to be located within a discourse relating to professions, occupations, or jobs. Whereas New Zealand academics Humphries and Dyer (2005) have identified that it is commonplace in the career talk of most people to relate this to the job they do, academics from England (Barnes, Bassot, & Chant, 2011) and New Zealand (Vaughan, 2010) have noted that school students tend to associate 'career' with 'money', and immediate post-school progression. This appears to reflect a broader social inscription, where the term 'career' is commonly utilised as an identity marker which is associated with 'good choices' that signify economic and personal 'success' (Richardson, 2012a).

Moreover, there is a tendency to position career as an individual 'possession', thus shifting attention away from the multiple and complex ways in which dominant political and economic discourses shape how career might be conceptualised and delineates what forms of career are 'acceptable'. This can be seen in many OECD and World Bank reports, and the policy guidelines for career practice in many western countries, where the primary focus rests primarily on the development of self within an occupational or employment context. Here, a meaningful life is delimited by the expectations that the good society is the product of a strong economy. The privileging of paid over unpaid 'work' reinforces the economic basis of career discourse, marginalising those who are not deemed to be economically productive. This can result in their social exclusion (Levitas, 1996) positioning them as 'careerless', the insignificant 'other' to the economically productive subject (Dyer, 2006). For example, in the literature, having children, or becoming a full-time parent, tends to be positioned in opposition to a 'real career' which involves being in employment, rather than acknowledged as a *different* career path (Baker, 2010). Finally, many career theorists, policymakers, and academic practices, appear to be preoccupied with the need to explain measure and assess career learning and development in relation to occupational choice and employability. There is little research which explores the ways in which meaningful life-careers might be, and sometimes are, constructed outside of the economic context, and what may constrain their enactment, hence rendering them invisible.

This leads to the question of whether career remains a valid concept in contemporary times, and highlights the importance of naming more clearly the practices we are referring to in discussions of career, such as educational progression, occupational identity or employment readiness and so on.

## What are the Key Challenges for Career Practice in These Uncertain Times?

Whilst we could talk about the inadequate provision of resources for career education and counselling, the quality and availability of training, the position of the career educator in schools, and the narrow outcomes set by governments to measure the effectiveness of career interventions, the purpose is to focus the answer on the career

education curriculum, as this presents career educators with both challenges and opportunities.

It is important to begin by emphasizing that what happens in career education cannot be understood in isolation of what is happening in, and to education as a whole (Harris, 1999), where schools are being increasingly pressured to demonstrate measurable outcomes, such as the acquisition of qualifications, or student progression into education, training or employment. Yet this does not negate the belief that career educators still have some scope to construct a career education curriculum that effectively engages students in a meaningful interrogation of career construction.

Over the years much research has identified career education as a contested and confused curriculum area, lacking both cogency and direction (Barnes, 2004; Harris, 1999; Irving, 2015; Vaughan & Gardiner, 2007). British academics, Best, Ribbins, and Ribbins, for example, observed the problematic nature of this back in (1984) where they noted:

> 'careers education' needs to be distinguished carefully from other, related, activities with which it is sometimes confused [such as career development], because it is (or, at least, should be) concerned with much more than the giving of information, advice and practice in the skills of choosing and procuring an appropriate job (p. 69).

This ongoing lack of clarity has resulted in career education becoming a 'catch-all' curriculum term, used to incorporate a range of diverse activities that include career development, career management, employability learning, and career information, advice, guidance and counselling. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that career educators are able to make links with other curriculum areas, career learning is generally construed as relating academic subjects to employability skills or occupations, such as the completion of CVs in English, or how 'science subjects' might be used in particular jobs. It is also noticeable that career education is generally dislocated from learning that takes place in other areas of the social curriculum, such as social studies or social geography, where the subject material covered would appear to be particularly pertinent as it is often concerned with the everyday complexities and assumed 'realities' of life. The dominance of career psychology and counselling, the focus on 'employability', and the competition for curriculum space, appears to have pushed a broader understanding of career *education*, where it might be construed as a critical social practice, to the margins (Irving 2013).

In part, this can be seen in a recent Erasmus report concerning the quality of career guidance in secondary schools, (Sultana, 2018), the career education curriculum is still conceived primarily as a school-to-work activity, thus delimiting discussion of how career construction might be more broadly understood. Moreover, whilst the importance of community links and the role of trade unions within career education programmes is highlighted, little attention is paid to ways in which issues of discrimination might be explored, identified and addressed in the workplace, and how these relate to what is happening in the wider society.

Paradoxically, those countries that lack a cogent and coherent career education curriculum may, ironically, provide career educators with opportunities to think critically and creatively about what is possible within any given constraints. Yet this

leaves career education, and career educators, on precarious ground, therefore it is imperative that transformative career education curriculum(s) are developed that look beyond the demands of the labour market. Whilst I recognise that it is important for schools to ensure that young people acquire the skills, competencies, attributes and resilience required to navigate their way in an uncertain labour market, this should not be confused with the provision of a career education curriculum which, for example, should engage students in critical exploration *about* the nature of work, interrogation of the injustices that can occur *within* the labour market (and how these link with society at large), and how those who fail to conform to the dominant career and employability discourse risk becoming demonised and socially marginalised. Hence there is a need to think differently, by presenting students (*and* practitioners) with opportunities to "act as a cultural critic of his [sic] society" (Bristol, 2012, p. 80), and understand how they might become champions of socially just change.

To have substance, career education needs to be philosophically sound, academically defensible, and socially engaged. Here, learning *about* how social, economic and political discourses shape the multi-layered ways in which career might be conceptualised and enacted, can lead to a deeper critical *educational* understanding of self in the world (Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2009; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Irving, 2013). This helps to locate the notion of the holistic career within a social context thus facilitating examination of the socio-political influences on career construction, and the complex ways in which meaning might be given to career. Productive links could then be made with other aspects of career learning such as career development and/or counselling activities, and closer relationships established with those curriculum areas that are particularly concerned with the social dimensions of life, such as the arts, health and physical education, sociology, and social studies. In addition, a deeper, and more nuanced, social justice insight could be incorporated through exploration of the ways in which non-dominant cultural values and worldviews are positioned by society, and *where* these are seen to 'fit' in relation to career construction.

When career education is understood as a critical *social* rather than an individualised psychological practice that is underwritten by embedded imperatives (Irving, 2013), this subject area can disrupt the pervasive influence of neoliberalism on all aspects of career learning and development (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018) by facilitating deeper understanding of the diverse ways in which life-careers might be meaningfully constructed and enacted. Exploring the concept of 'career' in holistic ways, and locating it within a wider and more inclusive socio-political context, facilitates critical reflection on the world. Through critical exploration, and the envisaging of alternative versions of the world that are truly participative and democratic (Brookfield, 2012; Brown, 2004; Freire, 1996; Hyslop-Margison & Pinto, 2007; Irving, 2010b), career education can contribute to transformative and sustainable practices (Sterling, 2011) by helping to contextualise the complex and competing ways in which 'careers' might be formed and framed. Hence, the inclusion of participative and democratic approaches within career education has the potential to provide learning opportunities that legitimate critique, positively encourages meaningful engagement with social issues (Blake, Sterling, & Goodson, 2013; Meyers, 2008), and facilitates

the pursuit of social justice. Thus the scope to re/imagine multiple and alternative life-career options for themselves their families, their communities, and society as a whole is extended.

**There has been much discussion in the IAEVG in recent years about the need to build a closer relationship between social justice and career practice, yet what effect has this had?**

Given the resurgent interest within the international literature as well as at recent IAEVG conferences, it is important to put this question into context. It appears to me that greater attention is now being paid to the socio-political nature of careers work, which was first articulated by Watts (1996). As a result, there has been a noticeable discussion regarding whose interests are being progressed through career theory, policy and practice. This has led to debate about whether or not a social justice framework is feasible, or desirable, for career practice. For example, some academics and policymakers have voiced concerns that the inclusion of a social justice agenda, or framework, will 'politicise' career practice (Metz & Guichard, 2009), thus jeopardising the efficacy and assumed impartiality of academics and practitioners alike, and ultimately affect its status as a 'helping' profession. Allied to this is a pragmatic view that an overt, or even implicit, focus on the promotion of social justice within career practice will adversely affect the funding provided by governments, unless the social justice approach adopted align with the imperatives of nation states which, in contemporary times, appear to be driven by economic competitiveness and measurable outcomes. What such standpoints fail to recognise, however, is that the positioning of career practice as 'neutral' is in itself a political act through attempts to divorce it from the everyday social realities that discursively shape who we are, and who we might be/come.

Yet what is meant by 'social justice'? It would appear that there are few who would oppose the inclusion of a social justice dimension in the construction of career theory, development of policy, or delivery of practice. Yet if we were to ask those engaged in the field of career for a definition of social justice, and an explanation how it shapes, and is brought to life, in and through practice, this might present a greater challenge, and probably lead to some interesting discussion and debate! British educationalists Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) have noted that, "Like 'equality of opportunity' or 'choice', 'social justice' is one of those politically malleable and essentially contested phrases which can mean all things to all people" (p. 549). For example, although the term 'social justice' may have become more visible in a range of forums, it often appears to relate to somewhat vague notions of equality of opportunity, and is used loosely to justify everything, and anything.

Therefore, there are real concerns about the extent to which the concept of social justice is articulated, understood, and enacted within the career arena. All too often, the meaning of career, and how it is theorised and put into practice, is being shaped and driven by the policy whims of those most powerful (such as politicians, affluent philanthropists, business leaders, and organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank), where reference to social justice is couched in economic terms, and individual well-being is measured against economic outcomes. Learning to survive, manage,

and compete in a fractured labour market thus becomes the *official* mantra of career, overshadowing commitment to a transformative model of social justice which seeks to promote equity, fairness, compassion, respect, and justice for all, whatever their economic status. Hence, there is a need for those working within the career arena to develop a deeper understanding of different conceptions of social justice, and gain clearer insight into how the intended outcomes differ.

So what should the relationship between social justice and career practice be? Whilst this remains open to debate, this chapter argues that a transformative social justice philosophy which seeks to facilitate the development of critical and informed citizens should provide a foundation stone for career theorizing, and hence lie at the heart of career practice. Career theorists, career educators, and career counsellors are all engaged in a social practice which, by its very nature, is political as it is concerned with equity and equality, difference and diversity, individual and collective rights, recognition and respect, collective responsibility and cultural connectedness—all of which are key elements of social justice (Irving, 2005, 2013). Thus, the instrumentalist needs of employers in relation to the acquisition of 'appropriate' skills, attitudes and behaviours, and labour market demands for the development of a compliant, flexible and work-ready labour force should have a restricted place at best. From a career learning perspective, these should aspects be positioned as areas for critique, rather than regarded as essential attributes and desirable outcomes.

Given the lack of conceptual resources currently available, there is a need to provide opportunities for career practitioners to think more deeply about competing conceptualisations of social justice, explore the how these might impact on how meaning is ascribed to career, and play out in multiple ways in practice. This could be facilitated through the development of a social justice matrix. Such a matrix could provide an overview of different forms of social justice, enabling practitioners to reflect on their understanding, locate their practices, and critically evaluate what they are seeking to achieve. Although this might appear to be idealistic, there is evidence of how this matrix can be applied in, and to practice. Utilising the social justice framework developed in earlier work (Irving, 2010a, 2018), incorporating the typologies of socio-political ideologies identified by Watts (1996) and applying the critical pedagogical approach of Simon, Dippo, and Schenke (1991), Middtun and McCash (2019) discuss how they have used these in a career development context. Their evaluation shows how it is possible to enable those engaged in career development activities to actively reflect and review what social justice means to them personally, and how social justice concerns might inform, and be located, in their professional practice. Opportunities for career educators/practitioners to participate in a process of ongoing reflexive exploration of their personal worldviews, critical examination of professional expectations (such as 'measurable outcomes' or adherence to particular models of practice) and critique of educational practices (Irving, 2010a; Sultana 2014) within a safe and supportive environment will help enhance personal growth, contribute to socio-cultural understanding, and potentially provide a foundation for transformative practice.

## Conclusion

Career development, in all of its forms, is ideally placed to promote equity and advocate for meaningful forms of social justice that look beyond getting and keeping a job. There is support for this. For example, the communique released by the IAEVG (2013) following the Montpellier conference affirms positive support for social justice. This is an important step to ensuring that social justice concerns are given the attention they deserve, providing practitioners, and the professional organisations that represent them, with a foundation on which to build. Gaining a clear understanding of their relationship to power will help inform academic, researcher, and practitioner alike how, as public intellectuals, they might translate the wor(l)d differently, enabling them to act critically to disrupt dominant discourses and advocate for socially just change (Giroux, 2011) through their career thinking, theorising, policymaking and practices. As it has been argued elsewhere (Irving, 2010a), although those engaged in career learning and development may be subject to the political discourses and aspirations of the state, "they do not have to become totally ensnared by the rhetoric, nor should they regard themselves as hostages to fortune" (p. 58).

Therefore, as we enter a new decade, it will be timely for career theorists, academics, researchers, or practitioners, to begin to think deeply about how educational and vocational guidance might contribute more robustly to social and environmental justice. For example, greater attention could be paid to an exploration of the complex ways in which occupational choices can impact on social and environmental justice concerns. In part, this change in focus might be achieved through a shifting away from psychologically derived notions of innateness and talent, rejecting neoliberal preoccupations with individual responsibility and labour market readiness, and looking beyond the narrow confines of educational and occupational choice. This change in perspective will open up creative possibilities to rethink the value of 'work' in contemporary society and provide a more nuanced understanding of the multilayered ways in which career(s) might be conceptualised, constructed, and enacted. As Irving suggested earlier in this publication, if career is to become an inclusive concept it should encompass the private/personal domain, where the construction of a meaningful life-career is not restricted to, and may not even include, economic participation. Clearly, educational and vocational guidance can play a pivotal role in the promotion of equity. However, issues of social and environmental justice must be given greater prominence if we are to assist individuals to construct of meaningful life-careers in thoughtful and respectful ways.

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