



Self-career management intervention needs: a study with PhD grant holders

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Abstract

The present investigation consists of an exploratory study which looks to assess the needs for intervention in self-career management. The participants consisted of 62 graduates from the Universidade do Minho, currently research grant holders, of both sexes (40, 64.5% women), aged between 22 and 49 years old (M=29.73; DP=6.15). The assessment was conducted using the questionnaire, "A minha inscrição no Seminário Gestão Pessoal da Carreira versão B: motivações e receios (My enrollment in Self-Career Management Seminar version B: motivations and concerns)." This is composed of five questions which address the expectations, motivations and concerns associated with the participation in the seminar. The use of the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2004) revealed reduced levels of concern on the participants pertaining to self-awareness, adaptability to the labor market, as well as management of life roles. In contrast, the need for reevaluation of the vocational path, in the sense of reflecting about choices, behaviors and past decisions, as well as the definition of future objectives and development of an integrated plan of action, constitute themselves as the main focus of concern. It is therefore suggested, as other authors have (e.g., Luzzo, 2000; Whiston & Buck, 2008), that the development of interventions should focus on an initial assessment of the specific needs of the target population.

Sample

N (%)	Sex		M	SD	Age		Work mean time		Company mean time		Function mean time		Function change (%)	
	F (%)	M (%)			Min-Max	Min-Max	M	SD	Min-Max	M	SD	Min-Max		
62 (100%)	40 (64.5%)	22 (35.5%)	29.73	6.15	22-49	71.50	79.06	0-372	37.61	40.59	0-176	21.21	19.07	0-72 (32.2%)

Instrument

"A minha inscrição no Seminário de Gestão Pessoal da Carreira versão B: motivações e receios" (My enrollment in Self-Career Management Seminar version B: motivations and concerns) was the questionnaire used to measure motivations and concerns felt when enrolling in the seminar. It is composed of five open ended questions: 1) What is personal career management; 2) What is expected of this seminar; 3) Why the enrollment in the seminar; 4) Doubts held; and, 5) What help is expected from the seminar.

Procedures

Self-Career Management Seminar for Research Grant Holders (SCMS-B; Taveira et al., 2007) looks to help create a positive career perspective, define objectives at an academic and professional level, as well as, put them in play based on a plan of action. It also looks to increase self-awareness, planning capacity and decision-making in the student's professional life (Taveira & Pinto, 2008). In order to assess the questionnaire administered during the first sessions of SCMS-B, a qualitative methodology was used, with a scale designed for content analysis, based on the content analysis proposed by Laurence Bardin (2004). The scale enabled a single question analysis, in three interrelated stages: a) definition of the context units; b) definition of the record units; and c) categorization and codification of data as proposed by Analysis by Thematic Categories. The answers given by the subjects to each individual question was defined as a context unit. The record unit was identified with the extraction of information believed to be pertinent to the categories to be later formulated. A final stage designated categories on the basis of reviewed responses and already existing empirical studies on the assessment of efficacy of seminars for self-career management for research grant holders (e.g., Taveira & Pinto, 2008). The content analysis was concluded with the definition of categories based on information obtained by the participant's responses with the aim to guarantee precise coding criteria.

Results

Based on the answers given in the questionnaire completed by the 62 subjects, we obtained approximately 310 responses. The analysis of these resulted in a total of 439 record units which were categorized as showed in Table 1.

Question 1, *What is personal career management*, revealed a higher frequency in the planning category (63), more specifically in the subcategories plan of action (33) and reevaluation (16). It also revealed lower frequencies in the category management of life roles (4), subcategory personal (4) and no response in the subcategory training of others.

Question 2, *What is expected of this seminar*, demonstrated more frequency in the education category (36), particularly in sub category self-application (23) and in the category planning (38) more specifically, plan of action (17). This question also has a lower frequency in the category management of life roles (2), subcategory personal (2) and no response in the subcategory social.

Question 3, *Why the enrollment in the seminar*, more often displayed responses in the education category (35), in particular, self-application (21) and in the category planning (33) plan of action (17). Less frequently in the category management of life roles (1) and adaptability(1). There were no responses in subcategories goals, skills, anticipated consequences, personal and employment.

Question 4, *Doubt held*, has a higher frequency in the planning category (27), influence (18) specifically in the motivations subcategory (11) and category self awareness (17). The frequencies of other sub-categories have similar values between themselves with no differences in distribution or absence of answers.

Question 5, *What help is expected from this seminar*, showed a higher frequency in the planning (32) and education (25) category, action plan (15) and orientation (13), respectively. Less responses were found in categories adaptability (4), with a total lack of response in the category influence and management of life roles.

Categories	Definition	Freq.	Subcategories	Definition	Freq.
Planning	Definition of short to long-term objectives and the development of a plan of action	193	Reevaluation	Revision of course of life, integrating behaviors, choices, or goals for a better decision about the future	62
			Goals	Definition of goals to be attained in a medium to long term	37
			Plan of action	Development of a series of measures to be taken to achieve objectives	93
Education	Acquisition of strategies and practical/theoretical knowledge to be applied in the career or training of other individuals in personal career management	117	Self application	Acquisition of skills and strategies for self	68
			Training of other	Acquisition of skills and strategies to teach	1
			Orientation	Search for specialized support to direct skills in career management	49
Self awareness	Perception the individual hold of him/herself with what pertains to self-image, self-esteem and self-acceptance	85	Interests	Something that arouses curiosity by attributed importance	44
			Skills	Skill or quality to perform certain tasks or solve certain problems	41
Influence	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations which led the participants to enroll in the career intervention program, as well as, anticipated consequences in their participation	78	Motivations	Internal and external factors that determine behavior	30
			Anticipated consequences	Rational deduction of anticipated conclusion	10
			Appreciation	Participant's reactions (thoughts, feelings and reactions) to the process of career intervention	38
Life roles management	Necessity to reconcile the professional role with the remaining life goals, be those family, social or personal	19	Social	Reconciling professional role with social and/or family roles	7
			Personal	Reconciling professional role with personal aspirations	12
Adaptability	The individual's capacity to face obstacles or barriers at a professional, social, or personal level	36	Employment	Capacity to mold oneself during the professional course Skills to be able to adapt to social situations in the job market	23

Table 1. Content analysis: categories and subcategories

Discussion

In the evaluation of the main concepts reported by the participants in the questionnaire of expectations towards SCMS-B there were certain trends in areas of concern, including but not exclusive to guidance and acquisition of tools to define goals and a subsequent plan of action. Contrary to what was expected, participants indicated less concern in the categories: influence, adaptability to the labor market and management of various life roles. This study identified an uncertainty in the current vocational situation, creating a need for reevaluation of the vocational path, in order to contemplate choices, behaviors, goals and past decisions. It was found that participants focused their expectations on the development of a series of measures to be taken in order to achieve their medium to long term career objectives. Consequently, SCM stands for a search for information regarding skills and strategies and the creation of job opportunities with career prospects (Vos & Soens, 2008). Concerning the remaining concepts explored in this analysis, the results show a lack of awareness of the influence of the self in vocational exploration. This discrepancy may be related to the nature of the seminar and the fact it takes place in an academic context.

This study also revealed some limitations. One could question the validity of the structure of the questionnaire in the seminar, given that there was a repetition or lack of responses from participants (e.g., question number 5). Participants reported essentially matters of common sense, such as career planning and education. This prevents the evaluation of other aspects such as self-awareness and management of life roles. It is therefore suggested that the questionnaire used in the assessment is altered based on pre-defined concepts to allow the use of other approaches and methodologies, including a quantitative analysis.

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